



Dialectal Movies and Heterogeneity of Contemporary Culture

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Abstract

To start a research on the application of dialect in movies and their formation causes and social functions, we must place the questions into specific social and cultural background and examine the relations between dialect, mainstream language and the cultural views of audiences. This paper attempts to take Chinese movies as a starting point to discuss heterogeneity issues in filmic culture by tracing back the history of dialect development and its contemporary cultural conditions. Such thought roots in two aspects. One is “verfremdungs effect of cultural heterogeneity” of dialects and the second is “the multiple natures of cultural heterogeneity”.

Keywords: Dialect, Cultural heterogeneity, Postmodernity, Beijing opera

1. The cultural connotation under dialect context

“Dialectal movie” is a concept formed due to the monopole position of mandarin in China. Hence, it is a relative concept rather than a type of movies. What is more, in history, the concept of dialect is also relative. For example, compared to Zhongyuan culture in core areas (Jianghuai area and Yellow river area) at that time, Lyric Song of Yuan Dynasty, a typical literature pattern of Yuan Dynasty, could be counted as a dialect song. It is not until the time Ming Cheng Zu moved the capital to Beijing, the position of northern dialect was constantly consolidated and became the communication model that has political core influence. From then on, the commonly used pronunciation habits, through the cultural patterns that are suitable for the artistic tastes of common people, such as Ming and Qing novels, dramas and songs, folk melodies and arts, and Pingshu (a monologue discussing historical events), gradually evolved to be the mandarin in modern literature. Therefore, as a commonly used pronunciation standard, mandarin originally developed from northern dialect. Seeing from the modern cultural equilibrium and diversity, when one commonly used language develops, in cultural art, towards one “pole” or “end” to certain extent, the other end of the cultural scale will certainly react. In postmodernist literature, such reaction shows itself in a deep mode of interlaced two poles; while in the globalization of culture (that is certain type of postmodernist culture), it shows itself as an extensive, diversified, easy and exoteric literature deconstruction tendency (Note 1). If so, in developing countries where tradition and modern phenomenon co-exist and which are deeply influenced by cultural colonialism (Note 2) and globalization, it is no wonder that dialect, as an important element that has rich sound images, becomes a focus in topics of the diversity of Chinese movies.

The fuse for the upsurge of dialectal movies is *Crazy Stone* directed by Ning Hao in 2006. This movie arouses the interests of various comment fields due to its explosive box office, many of whom pay special attention to the application of dialect in this movie. After the success of this movie, a lot of ideas with dialects as the main selling points were put forward for domestic movies. Even, some articles took other characteristic Chinese dialect movies as examples to emphasize the ticket rallying point of dialect, based on which this paper transfers the discussion of dialect in movies to the vision of cultural comment and tries to combine the diversified application of dialect in movies with the contemporary cultural development mode to make a basic analysis.

Now that we see “dialect” as a relative concept, to discuss dialect in movie culture, we must first explore the relationship between dialect and main stream speech model. As a matter of fact, in contemporary movie art, the relationship between mandarin and dialect is not two confronting poles that are tit for tat and are not of crossing-complementary relationship where one grows and the other eliminates, either. Their co-existence is determined by the demands of movies and hearings on the differences of the two. The demands come from two aspects. One is that movie makers choose the description language differences to express images and the other is audiences’ preference on their hearing experience related to “the heterogeneity of languages”. However, generally speaking, the images of movie makers and the preference of audiences will ultimately (necessarily) become consistent with each other. Otherwise, misunderstanding will be generated. The consistency of the images and preference should also focus on the analysis on “heterogeneity”. The heterogeneity by languages has long been applied in performance art. In the late Qian Long period

of Qing Dynasty, Hui Ban drama entered the capital city, which brought the flourishing of Beijing Opera. At the beginning of Min Guo, Beijing Opera had become a common entertaining art in northern China and gradually extended to southern cities, such as Shanghai and Guangzhou. At present, the “Hui Aria”, originated from Anqing, Anhui province, still exerts significant influence on Beijing Opera aria, which could be considered as a typical example to show the long-living-and-flourishing of dialect in performance art. Although Beijing opera originated from Hui aria, why, after hundreds of years of evolution, could this dialect aria be retained by a strange melody and be promoted? A major reason for it is that the heterogeneity of dialect brings audience with “verfremdungs effect lure in hearing feelings”. The majority melodies of Beijing opera are about the ancient historical stories with Zhongyuan culture as the background. For the Man people levels of Qing dynasty, these stories are foreign culture. Then, when accepting foreign stories, these audiences at the earlier stage needed a different aria from northern dialect to meet their demands on the imagination of foreign culture, which is also the first level effect of verfremdungs effect lure. At the late stage of Qing dynasty, the Man and Han culture were gradually combined. The offspring of Beijing opera were influenced by capital city culture and the status of Hui aria was challenged. However, because the audience groups gradually become common, Hui aria, as a stage art language higher than common people’s life, continued to be favoured and loved by audiences, which is the second level of verfremdungs effect. After Min Guo period, when the influence of Beijing opera extended to the entire nation and when Beijing opera was introduced to foreign countries as the quintessence of China, the aria of Beijing opera was regarded as a pure and mature stage art tradition and was retained. On one hand, it catered for common people’s entertainment and on the other hand, as the “heterogeneity object” of 4th May New Culture, the tradition of Beijing opera was also for people to criticize and to recall, which is the third level of verfremdungs concept. It is not hard to see that to do research on the application of dialect in performance and film arts, we must place the specific problems into material social and cultural background and analyze the Game relationship among dialect, mainstream discourse, and the cultural tastes of audiences.

Just as stated before, in modern Chinese society where tradition, modernity and region nature and globalization coexist, the culture game of dialect seems to be extremely complicated (Wang, 2001). At the present stage, it will not conform with the contemporary social and cultural requirements if we put all “dialect movies” into one category and to see it as a whole (Byron, Allen Harold and Linn, Michael D., 1986). Therefore, I have to divide the discussion on the “heterogeneity” of dialect into two parts: one is, based on the transfer from tradition to modernity, the “verfremdungs effect of heterogeneity” formed by the deeply interlacing between dialect and commonly used language and the other is, based on the exceeding development of certain modernity under the influence of globalization process and cultural colonialism, the “the multiple natures of heterogeneity” formed by bricolage and putting-together among dialects.

2. The verfremdungs effect of heterogeneity

“Verfremdungs sense”, among the language qualities caused by dialect, is conducive to audiences to form in their minds the special imagination images on heterogeneity life (Dai, 2007). Compared with real life experience, the interest of audiences usually tends to focus on the imagination images of heterogeneity. For example, when we watching foreign movies, we prefer to listen to the original dialogues and read the captions and then gradually discard the demand on dubs, which indicates that the imagination images caused by the heterogeneity are more attractive to us. There are many kinds of imagination images, such as the aforementioned “Hui Aria”, which offers people with difference heterogeneity imagination images at different historic periods (such as the imagination images on foreign lands, the imagination images on stages which are beyond life, and the imagination images on the criticism of traditional culture or on memory type); For another example, in movies on significant historic subjects produced after the reform and opening up (such as *Da Jue Zhan* and *Kai Guo Da Dian*), the political characters (Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Jiang Jieshi) spoke their dialects, which offers audiences with true historic imagination images; through the dialect of Fenyang, Shanxi province, the movies directed by Jia Zhangke at his earlier period (such as *Xiao Wu* and *Ren Xiao Yao*, and etc) offers typical regional cultural imagination images. However, no matter how complicated it is, in post traditional or modern literature, its “heterogeneity” mod could hardly deviate from a kind of deep verfremdungs effect, which is the pursuit for deep realistic imagination. It has to be made clear that the concepts of “heterogeneity”, “Verfremdungs” and “imagination images” do not conflict with the modernism thought advocated by realistic films. The modernism in movies must keep itself from the actual life at a distance or separation level so that the “beauty” and “meaning” could be generated. Therefore, for modern reality, the only way to maintain the depth of reality is to construct and keep a deep difference and verfremdungs (Wang, 2001). For example, at the beginning of the movie *Mobile Phone (Shou Ji)*, the protagonist, Yan Shouyi in his early young, was presented as nostalgia on the screen. The deepest impression on it should be the asking sound in Henan dialect, “Niu Sanjin, Niu Sanjin, your wife is Lv Guihua. Lv Guihua let me ask you whether you will get back home recently.” The application of dialect deepens the reality recognition degree of audiences on old imagination images, which also provides a comparison and reference imago for the description on the superiority and convenience of modern information spreading in movies (Lu, 2007). Therefore, although this period has passed by, because of verfremdungs sense brought by the sound element (the dialect from the loudspeaker), it is very realistic. There are other similar examples. In *Peacock*, the Henan Anyang dialect is used throughout the film, and in *Mei Shi Tou*

Zhe Le, Tianjin dialect is used. In modernism frame, the application of dialect in movie products always following the principle of “being close to realistic imagination images” and constantly meet the demands of audiences on modern aesthetics, “from but beyond life”.

3. The multiple natures of heterogeneity

However, beyond modern reality, the disequilibrium of the development of Chinese contemporary culture forces us to consider the exceeding elements of cultures that are connected with international level and are influenced by globalization (Chen, 2004), which is also another element of dialect in contemporary movie culture comparison, “the multiple natures of heterogeneity”. Although we are reluctant to admit that Chinese culture shows certain post modern features, we, incorporated into global culture system, could not deny the possibility to make use of this global culture theory to explain contemporary Chinese culture. Because post modernism does not belong to the types of culture, but is the comprehensive representation of global culture interaction. In areas where culture awareness develops ahead of time, people could not just follow strictly modernism economy basis and could not ignore the western “post theory” that comes like storms. On the contrary, the awareness of the consumption, aesthetics and life of post modernism has already penetrated into the life of the public in China through modern economy and media means. The concept of “the multiple nature of heterogeneity” originates from the pilot of post modernism thought, Foucault (Foucault, Michel, 1969). Foucault pointed out that items do not have nature or their natures are formed by its accumulation of the heterogeneity with items. From Foucault’s words, we could deduce the following features of post modern culture; firstly, in post modern literature, people tend to discard the deep thinking pattern based on two dimensional opposition and choose to the anti-deep, shallow and complation of idea awareness (Black, 2002); secondly, because of the losing of trust on nature, the direction of literature is not that important and could not be found anywhere. Therefore, the “polarity” of “duality” does not exist anymore and is replaced by the filling, mixing and patching up of multi-culture (Dennison, Stephanie and Son, Hwee Lim, 2006); thirdly, in post industrial society, as the main body of society, human beings are dissimilated and the freedom of spirit fade out in the free bodies (Kieslowski, 1999) and gradually becomes of the “machines” of consumption.

Therefore, when we choose a post-modernism view point and put the sound imago “dialect” under contemporary trend, the meanings represented by the heterogeneity of dialects is not just the “Verfremdungs effect” of modernism, which is shown in the “disappearance of nature”. Just as we described, in post modern cultural awareness, the deep nature thoughts disappear. The dialect that originally exists in realistic context and represents realistic Verfremdungs sense (realistic effect) suddenly loses its aim and direction nature (in movie works, dialect loses its dependent body, then lose its objective positions, and the necessity of existence disappears); what has gained is the interest on its appearance. Therefore, dialect re-starts its road and as an independent object, it replaces the inherent nature (or we could directly say, it replaces the essence of nature) and appears in modern Chinese movies. In post modern movie culture, one example that could be used to compare with the main body of “dialect movies” is Visual spectacles produced by Hollywood. We call the movies produced by the western producers with large investment and large design the “big films”. The reason is not that the stories of those movies are better than domestic movies and it also does not mean that the art appreciation value or tastes are higher than the movies produced in China. The real reason is that those “big movies” has huge investment in scenes and visual special effect. These effects are more attractive than common movies. However, the auxiliary visual feature that originally is used to describe the main body of the movies becomes the pronoun of this type of movies, which indicates the spirit personality of post modernism, that is to give prominence to visual idea, to neglect the inherent nature of narration depth, to put the attached as the main and to extract full weight from a small part. To put it in other words, in post-modern culture, what attracts audiences in a film is no longer (or not only) the stories, deep images and the impressive ending. As the movie art idea, “visual spectacle” also shoulders the task of main body to attract and impress audiences. Similarly, dialect could also become the main body mark for movies and become a main element to attract Chinese audiences to go to the cinema and consume. When we watch Hollywood grand movies, we neglect the rallying point of stories, plot, stars, and suspense because it brings audiences with visual feelings. We like dialect movies because it brings audiences with language and hearing enjoy to audiences. The hot discussion on dialect movies is also generated under the guide of this kind of thought. Its strategy lies in that the nature of movies is shown through the heterogeneity of dialect. Of course, the superficiality of the idea of post modern culture does not mean it completely discards the problems and depth. In the following part, we will also mention the sense of responsibility and worrying mode of dialect in post modern culture.

After the discussion on relationship between heterogeneity and nature, let us discuss “multiple” nature or the pluralism. For dialects and movies, multi-nature has two concepts. For one aspect, it refers to the representation of nature by the “multi-pattern and patching up” of heterogeneity; for another aspect, it advocates a type of “multi-view point” to treat culture nature. For the first aspect, multi-pattern and patching up is the mark for post modern literature. In recent years, we could see that more and more movies of dialects, such as *Gui Zi Lai Le*, *Not One less*, *Xun Qiang*, *Beautiful Big Feet*, *Mei Ren Cao*, and *Huan Die*. However, compared to *Crazy Stone*, the biggest difference lies in that the former are regional movies with only single dialect and the latter is the region edge movie with diversified dialect patching up.

“Regional” does not mean that it has limitation and just means that the space of the stories and the application effect of dialects suit each other; “Regional edge” (Marginalization) concept actually comes from the “geological political aesthetics” by F. Jameson. It mainly discusses the communication, context and conflicts beyond geographical concepts and different regional culture. Therefore, regional edge movie tend to the mixture of certain spaces and regions and provides the chance of creation for the application of dialect. Although *Crazy Stone*, the main scene place is Chongqing, we found that the application of dialect in the movie is not only the Chuanyu dialect. We could hear the dialects of Baoding, Qingdao, Jinan and Tianjin, even Cantonese. No doubt, the diversified dialect patching up and the regional feature shown by multi elements do not fit each other. However, due to the existence of multiple nature, the space imagination of audiences exceed the geography limit is extended unlimitedly and finally, the accumulation and mixture of dialect result in that the relevant multiple element space conflicts and shocks in the minds of audiences. In addition, the patching up of dialects obliterates the rationality of the fitness itself and regional concept, which is also the exiling nature of contemporary culture and the representation that floats on idea. Even, we could call this phenomenon “regional edge dialect aesthetics”. If we consider at a wider range, the application of languages in *Journey to the West* could also be compared. In this movie, although there is not much application of dialects, it uses English, Japanese and many unrelated words, which reflects the thinking of Hong Kong movies on globalization and cultural colonialism. In the dialect movies of China whether the accumulation of many dialects indicates that the entire Chinese culture tends to have certain trend or the expediting crossing and combination among Chinese regional culture? For another aspect, the languages in *Journey to the West* not only reflect the distrust of post modern literature on the logic of languages and their rationality degree. At the same time, it shows that in post industrial society, human beings, originally as the main body of languages, experience heterogeneity crisis, which is that human beings gradually lose their spiritual main body position in post modern society. In this society full of imagination and desire, human beings unconsciously change from the main body of consumption to the consumption machine. Therefore, from spirit to behaviour, all of the human beings could be incorporated into the unconscious “consumption” actions. So do languages. If we explain “Wu li tou” as our consumption on languages, then whether the dialect mixture that “has lost the rationality fitness of regional feature” could be considered as a feast of dialect for audiences to consume? Similar large-scaled consumption on dialects is frequently seen in movies, such as *The Stories of Cooking Team (Chui Shi Ban De Gu Shi)* and *My Own Swordsmen (Wu Lin Wai Zhuan)*. Of Course, to use consumption mode to explain the irrationality expression of language in texts is just a wide method for culture criticizing. For particular problems, we need to make specific analysis. For example, in *Ni Qiu Ye Shi Yu*, the mixture of dialects also appears. However the mixture of dialects in this movie has reasons. It mainly represents the life of labour workers from other areas working in Beijing. Therefore, we could not think that this movie represents the post modern culture miss position and mixture between dialects and regions just because the character performed by Ni Ping speaks Jiaodong dialects and the story occurs in Beijing. As a matter of fact, most of the application of dialects in movies still remains at the realistic level of modern literature (Lin, 2005).

Let us turn back and see the other aspect of “multiple nature”. We will treat the culture character of dialect phenomenon from multiple view points. As a matter, it is not a cultural strategy but it advocates a kind of multi-elements and open culture criticism. For example, in contemporary movie art dialect game, there exists cultural theory of “difference” and “sameness”. For one aspect, according to the multi-element post modern literature thought, we could explain the existence of dialect in certain movies as follows. It is the explanation on the recognition of audiences on language because the heterogeneity of dialect does place the challenge against the single polarity of languages. Hence, it is regarded as the cultural representation of searching for heterogeneity; for another aspect, if we could uncover the idea of “the diversified nature of languages” and careful probe into the connotation of context, we could surprisingly find out that all of use are sharing the same meaning. Audiences of different regions might have similar cultural tastes, attitude, and concept. The difference of culture is just nominal, and dialect is just a camouflage. It may raise a question for us. Is the hot trend of dialects in movies the last memory on heterogeneity left by multi-culture? Whether it is true that what the multi-culture value ideas depend on in dialect movies is not the rich and diversified literature connotation but reflects the culture and identifies recognition of Chinese audiences which is tending to be the same? Seeing from a macro-perspective, the contemporary movie hot trend also reflects the self anxiety of post modernism and is the anxiety on globalization culture colonialism and sameness. Therefore, it could be concluded that although they are all the movie culture criticism on dialects and they all apply multi-element culture view point, the conclusions are opposite, which is also where the “multiple nature” of dialect in culture field lies in. Actually, the key difference of the opposite theory lies in that: one part thinks that dialect is helpful for the movie art develops towards multi-culture direction and is pursuing difference; However, the other party thinks that under the disguise of multi-culture, dialect pursues the even nature of language meanings and puts the application of languages under single polar awareness mode with multi-element shape but with no true common flourishing. Although it is the best reflection of sameness trend of culture, it is not good for stopping the nibbling of globalization culture colonialism tend on Chinese region culture diversities. Facing with this dilemma, objectively, we think that dialect is experiencing an independent game in movie culture; subjectively, we wish it develops towards “discarding sameness and pursuing peace. The opposite word of sameness is peace rather than difference. For globalization and national culture, the win-win ending is not sameness but is peace, that is having

difference in sameness and pursuing peace in difference and being win-win. The game of dialect in contemporary culture is also the same reason.

Note: This paper is translated by Lixue.

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Notes

Note 1. Deconstruction tendency refers to the afore mentioned the evolution from modern literature to post modern culture, which is the turning from the clear and two element deep and complicated structure system to the two polar melting, multi-element combination and deep complanation deconstruction strategy.

Note 2. Tao Dongfeng sees cultural colonialism the same as post colonialism. Please refer to *Post Colonialism, Post Colonialism Theory and Post Colonial Nature*, and *Culture Research*, 2003-4.



On the Construction of “Sunny Finance” Frame in China

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Abstract

“Sunny finance” is an inevitable requirement of public finance. Its essence is lawful financing, scientific financing, and democratic financing. China has already gained lots of valuable experiences in the construction of “sunny finance”. However, it deserves deepening researches on how to construct the frame of “sunny finance” and make it be systematic and institutional. In this paper, the author discusses this issue.

Keywords: Public finance, Sunny finance, Thoughts

1. Necessity of the construction of “sunny finance”

The essence of “sunny finance” is lawful financing, scientific financing, and democratic financing. It needs perfect legal system, scientific management, and democratic supervision. In the theoretical aspect, “sunny finance” is a precondition for actualizing the public finance, carrying out the scientific development view, and constructing the harmonious society. In the technical aspect, “sunny finance” can help to make finance performance evaluation.

1.1 “Sunny finance” is a precondition for actualizing the public finance

Public finance is the financial operation mode under the market economy condition. In order to satisfy social public needs and supply public goods and services, the financial revenue collected by political power will be used to pay for government’s public activities. Public finance aims at guaranteeing the normal operation of state apparatuses, insure the safety of the state, maintaining social orders, and actualizing the coordinative development of society and economy. In other words, the primary function of public finance is to satisfy social public needs, legal regulation, and macro control. To make up the market malfunction by supplying public goods and services embodies the value of public finance. These public goods and services are non-profitable and not supplied by market. All individuals can benefit from public goods and services equally, namely “equalization of public services”. The public benefits embodied by public goods and services are based on the common benefits of individual ones, being supervised by electorates. Here “sunny finance” becomes a must. Therefore, “sunny finance” is a precondition for actualizing public finance.

1.2 “Sunny finance” is a precondition for carrying out the scientific development view

Scientific development view is a human-oriented, comprehensive, coordinative, and sustainable development view. To be human-oriented is the core and essence of scientific development view. “To be human-oriented is to give absolute priority to people’s benefits in all works, meeting people’s diversified needs continuously, and driving people’s all-round development.” Without public and transparent finance, the public has no chance to know government’s financial allocation activities and can not advance suggestions, advices, and supervisions. To be human-oriented becomes an empty word. Therefore, “sunny finance” is a precondition for carrying out scientific development view.

1.3 “Sunny finance” is a precondition for constructing the harmonious society

The essential connotation of harmonious society is civilization, fairness, justness, common prosperity, share, stability, orders, and solidarity. The core is social fairness and justness. Harmonious benefits are the most primary issue of harmonious society, which are firstly embodied in benefits balance. “Sunny finance” is to promulgate the allocation process of government’s public resources. The public’s participation and supervision can reduce “black box operation”. Meanwhile, it is a benefit balancing process among different social classes, groups, and departments, as well as a process of harmonizing benefits. Therefore, “sunny finance” is a precondition for constructing the harmonious society.

1.4 “Sunny finance” is a precondition for evaluating financial performance

Recently, many countries began to reform public services based on market standards and make performance evaluation

on government finance, what must depend on the scientific classification of government expenses and transparent expenses, namely “sunny finance”. China’s budget income and expenditure in 2007 is arranged by new subjects, taking government’s expenses as the core and making classification, including class, amount, and item, which serves as the base for evaluating the government efficiency.

2. Principles, key, and breakthrough of constructing “sunny finance” frame

2.1 Principles of constructing “sunny finance” frame

(1) Law

The precondition for constructing “sunny finance” is to build “sunny government”. Finance is merely one of department of government’s all departments. The publicity of government finance must be legal. It includes two aspects: firstly, “sunny finance” does not mean to make government’s all resource allocation activities open to the public. Contents concerning state safety and national defense are not allowed to be promulgated. In fact, many countries constitute the law of keeping secret that regulates the contents allowed to be open to the public. China is not an exception. As we promulgate government’s financial expenditure, we must obey the rules of law. Secondly, there are still no unified legal regulations for norms, orders, principles, contents, and procedures in actualizing “sunny finance” in China. Concerning how to construct “sunny finance”, local governments have different understandings considering their different development levels. Some local governments make lots of exploration. Take Liaoning province for example. In recent years, Liaoning provincial government promulgates many regulations on management, concerning scientific and democratic decision, budgeting, centralized state treasury receipt and payment, government procurement, non-taxation income management, and government debt management. In Liaoning at the provincial level, except directly-controlled departments, transportation, education, prison and re-education systems, all departments in budgeting actualize centralized state treasury receipt and payment. Fourteen cities also actualize centralized state treasury receipt and payment. Seventeen counties are in the process of turning centralized accounting into centralized state treasury receipt and payment. Liaoning government actualizes the separation of government procurement’s management departments and centralized procurement departments, empowering them with different functions. In July, 2007, the provincial procurement center founded the “Liaoning Government Procurement Association” and set up an expert base for government procurement evaluation. The central government should summarize the practices of “sunny finance” in different regions, absorb foreign advanced experiences in this field, and constitute “directive outline suggestions for actualizing ‘sunny finance’ in China” as soon as possible according to China’s real conditions, making up principles for norms, orders, procedures, and contents in actualizing “sunny finance” in China, driving the progress of “sunny finance” by law.

(2) Efficiency

“Sunny finance” must emphasize efficiency, namely the input-output ratio. In the input aspect, we should notice three problems: firstly, “sunny finance” is costly in many fields. It needs to collect, process, and promulgate amounts of data. Secondly, the publicity of information has to depend on relevant platform, which needs more inputs. Thirdly, the allocation process of government resources is usually based on specialized knowledge and techniques that are hard to understand by common people. Therefore, it may cause a “zero profit” issue. In the output aspect, the initial effect of “sunny finance” may be visible: saving how much money. However, more effects are invisible. “Sunny finance” reflects the idea of democratic financing, legal financing, and scientific financing. It can improve people’s trust in government, what is necessary to construct the harmonious society.

2.2 Key and breakthrough of constructing “sunny finance” frame

(1) The key is to promulgate the standards of government budgeting

Government allocates social resources chiefly by state budgeting. China’s budgeting is in such a condition that “both laymen and makers do not understand or know it clearly”. As the National People’s Congress is examining the budget, they usually can not grasp the budgeting standards exactly due to the principles of “keeping secret” and “returning back after examination”. If not promulgate budgeting standards, the budgeting result is hard to be judged. Therefore, the key of constructing “sunny finance” frame at present is to promulgate the budgeting standards.

(2) The breakthrough is to apply “sunny finance” to “people’s livelihood finance” firstly

Since 1949, China has reformed its finance system many times. Generally speaking, the reform before 2000 chiefly focuses on the income system, including tax federalism, income tax sharing, and rural taxation. The reform after 2000 mainly concerns the expenditure aspect, including departmental budget, centralized state treasury receipt and payment, government procurement, income and expense. In China the finance system should follow this order in development: “construction finance” ----- “public finance” ----- “people’s livelihood finance”. In 2007 China increases its expenses in social security, employment, education, medical treatment and many other fields concerning people’s livelihood greatly, exceeding the growth rate of GDP during the same period. What the public cares about mostly is people’s

livelihood. Therefore, the breakthrough of “sunny finance” should be people’s livelihood finance naturally. People’s extensive participation completely embodies the advantages of socialism.

3. Thoughts of constructing “sunny finance” frame

3.1 Enhance the fiscal transparency

According to the Manual on Fiscal Transparency (Kopits & Craig, 1998) issued by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), fiscal transparency is to make information concerning government structure and functions, trends of fiscal policies, accounts of public departments, and fiscal prediction open to the public to a great degree. The information should be reliable, detailed, timely, understandable, and comparable. Electorates and financial market can exactly evaluate the condition of government finance and the real cost and income of government activities according to the information. The Manual explains the meanings of fiscal transparency in detail from three aspects: institutional transparency, accounting transparency, and indexes and prediction transparency. D. D. Lassen (2003) thinks that the transparent budgeting procedure has four characteristics: firstly, fewer budgeting files can release more information, which make it easy for the public obtaining and supervising the information; secondly, experiences prove that in the convincing and reliable connections, the possibility of being the key and independent proof can improve its transparency; thirdly, in the budget words are exact and classification is scientific, clear, and definite; fourthly, reduce blind items in budget and stop government’s random interference.

In June, 1999, the “audit report for the implementation of central budget and other financial income and expenses in 1998” issued by the National Audit Office is regarded as the a start that arouses the fiscal transparency issue in China. This report factually releases the severe problems in the implementation of central government budget, such as the serious economic losses caused by false decisions and ineffective management in key national investment projects, wide and severe appropriation of social security capitals, special funds, and materials and funds for disaster relief. For another instance, some enterprises, especially non-banking finance institutions conceal incomes, escape from legal taxes, keep double accounts, found small private coffers, and devour and waste corporate assets as will. Problems are still very serious (Guangshun Li, 2007).

China’ fiscal transparency is low. In 2001, Price Waterhouse Coopers finishes a report for “opacity index”. It investigates 35 countries and regions, grade and rank them according to the opacity indexes in five aspects: corruption, law, financial policy, accounting principle, and government regulation. The score of China’s opacity index is 87, higher than that of Singapore (29) and America (36), whose ranks the lowest class. China is listed as a country with lowest transparency.

In western countries, people generally think that human being is selfish in nature. They must be restrained by something, such as religious belief and institutional constraint (transparency constraint). For a long time, Chinese emphasizes on human being’s subjective initiative too much, what leads to such a result that rule of man surpasses rule of law. Under the market economic condition, China should use institutions to restrict government behaviors. A must for actualizing “sunny finance” is to enhance fiscal transparency.

3.2 Set up the information network platform for “sunny finance”

First of all, promulgate the budgeting information and construct “sunny finance” by “monetary and financial project”, making government financing be scientific, standard, and transparent. We can learn experiences from OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, reporting before the budget (three months), yearly, in the middle of the year, in the end of the year, and for the long run. Then, release important information timely, such as GDP growth rate, employment rate, inflation rate, changes and adjustments of budget, government liabilities, financial and non-financial assets, and possible liabilities.

3.3 Perfect the “four in one” fiscal supervision system

The “four in one” fiscal supervision system includes: National People’s Congress (NPC) supervision, financial department supervision, external audit supervision, and social supervision. Firstly, enhance the supervision of NPC’s special budget censorship. The budget censorship includes people from fiscal departments (non-temporary), specialized experts and scholars, and NPC’s internal trained persons. Especially, specialized experts are necessary in the budget censorship, who can improve the power of NPC supervision. Secondly, enhance the independent supervision of audit institutions. Absorb audit departments into NPC field and perfect the audit mechanism of NPC to fiscal budgeting conditions. Thirdly, enhance the supervision of social medium agencies. Employ accounting firms to audit the fiscal capitals. Fourthly, enhance social public supervision. “Sunny finance” needs the extensive participation of the public because: corruption = monopoly + black box operation – participation of the public. Whether the public participates is an important sign for whether the finance is sunny or not.

3.4 Probe into the reform of budget accounting regulations based on the income and expenses classification reform

China’s present budget accounting regulations were issued in 1997 and put into practice in 1998. The regulations are

based on cash basis. However, the cash basis can not reflect the government liabilities that happen currently but still not in cash, what leads to the distortion of government liability information. Meanwhile, the cash basis can cause the distortion of account statements information because the cash basis regards the time of receiving cashes or paying cashes as the accounting document. It is easy to cause the mismatch of rights and duties and lead false government decision. Therefore, for some assets and debts businesses, we can adopt the accrual basis. For the budget paying business, we can still focus on the cash basis. By this way, we can solve the mismatch of duties and effects and avoid the abnormal phenomenon that the former borrows money for projects and the later pays for the debts.

3.5 Explore the payment form of “sunny finance”

We can enlarge the pilot range of official card payment. Official card is a kind of credit card used by workers in budget departments, chiefly for daily official payments and financial reimbursing operations. As a modern tool for payment and settlement, official card is convenient and has high transparency. However, official card can not draw cashes directly. It is only used for daily official payments and financial reimbursing operations. Using official card can effectively help to stop corruptions in official consumption. It has positive effects on improving the transparency of fiscal expenditure. Official card is an effective carrier for extending “sunny finance”.

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Forecasting Movement of Stock Index – Use Of Spread between E/P Ratio and Interest Rate

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Abstract

The earnings-price ratio (E/P ratio) of the NSE Nifty index and the spreads between the E/P ratio and interest rates are widely used by market practitioners to forecast the stock market outlook. The present paper employs several statistical and econometric tools (viz., correlation analysis, regression analysis, Granger's causality test and measures of out-of-sample forecast performance) for rigorously assessing the usefulness of spread in explaining stock market return in India. The database includes the weekly and monthly closing values of NSE Nifty index over the period January 5, 1997 to December 31, 2007 (11 years). The two measures of interest rate considered are Bank rate and call money rate. Empirical results reveal that spread seems to have reasonably strong causal influence on return and the causal model helps achieving forecasts slightly better than the random walk model.

Keywords: Stock market, Granger's Causality, E/P ratio, NSE Nifty, Cross-correlation, Regression, Efficient Market Hypothesis, Random Walk

1. Introduction

Trading in stock market indices has gained popularity in major financial markets around the world. Accurate predictions of stock market indexes are important for many reasons. Chief among these are the need for the investors to hedge against potential market risks, and opportunities for speculators and arbitrageurs to make profit by trading in stock index. Clearly, being able to accurately forecast the stock market index has profound implications and significance for both researchers and practitioners. There exist vast literatures which concentrate on the predictability of stock market return. In almost all cases, the performance metrics and the acceptability of the proposed models are measured by the deviations of forecast value from the actual values. Different dealers, investors, and other market players adopt different trading strategies, so the forecasting models which rank first in terms minimization of forecast error may not be suitable to meet the expectation of the dealers or investors. It is because the trading driven by a particular forecasting model with a minimal forecast error may not be profitable as trading guided by an accurate prediction of the direction of movement of stock index. Therefore it is very important to forecast the direction of movement of stock index for developing effective market trading strategies.

There exists vast research articles which predict the stock market as well pricing of stock index financial instruments but most of the proposed models focus on the accurate forecasting of the levels (i.e. value) of the underlying stock index. There is a lack of studies examining the predictability of the direction/sign of stock index movement. Given the notion that a prediction with little forecast error does not necessarily translate into capital gain, an attempt is made to assess the usefulness of spread between E/P ratio and interest rate in the context of Indian stock market. For this the has taken a

case of S&P CNX NIFTY Market Index of the National Stock Exchange, one of the fastest growing financial exchanges in developing Asian countries.

Empirical evidence for the developed economies suggests that the information on the spread between E/P ratio at the stock market and a measure of interest rate is sometimes useful in predicting stock market movements. In case of emerging markets like India, the issue has, however, not received adequate attention. The earnings-price ratio (E/P ratio) of an individual stock is widely used by market practitioners to forecast the movement of the stock. Similarly, the E/P ratio of a stock market index is used to forecast the overall stock market outlook. The spreads between the E/P ratio and interest rates are other indicators used to monitor the stock market. These spreads are used for “market timing” such that, based on the signals generated from the spreads, a decision is made to invest in the stock market index or in bonds. The reason behind such use is that theoretically the E/P ratio and long-term interest rates should have an equilibrium relationship, as investors will arbitrage between stocks and bonds. Whenever there is a deviation from the equilibrium, stock prices will move the E/P ratio and long-term interest rates to the direction of the equilibrium. It is also noted that some central banks’ financial stability reports include measures of whether stock markets are overvalued by looking at E/P ratios. This paper studies their usefulness as indicators of future Indian stock market conditions.

For analyzing the relationship between spread and return, a number of analytical tools, viz., correlation analysis, regression analysis, Granger’s causality test and measures of out-of-sample forecast performance have been employed. The paper is organized into six sections. In Section 2, a brief review of literature is presented. The basic premises of considering the spread as containing advance information about stock market movement are also discussed therein. The methodology and analytical tools used in the study are presented in Section 3. Section 4 deals with describing the basic database and the derivation of measures for return and spread series in the study. In Section 5, empirical results on the relationship between spread and return are presented and interpreted. Finally, Section 6 summarizes the main findings with concluding observations.

2. A Brief Review of Literature

The issue of whether the spread between Earning/Price (E/P) ratio (also known as earnings yield) and interest rate contains useful information about the movement of stock market is a matter of empirical investigation in recent years (Rolph and Shen, 1999). There exists considerable evidence showing that stock returns are to some extent predictable. Most of the research is conducted using data from well established stock markets such as the US, Western Europe, and Japan. It is, thus, of interest to study the extent of stock market predictability using data from less well established stock markets such as that of India. Along with different indicators, market practitioners often use different measures of spread to analyze and predict market movements. A number of business publications in developed countries also give importance to spread in their discussions of overall market conditions and outlooks. Though a number of research papers attempted to explain/predict future stock return by considering some of the regressors among E/P ratio, yields, interest rate, earnings per share, etc., (Cutler et al, 1991; Lander et al, 1997; Mohanty, 1997; Pesaran and Timmermann, 1995; Qi, 1999; Qi and Maddala, 1999; Samanta and Rajpathak, 2001; Shiller and Campbell, 1993), the literature on direct evaluation of the usefulness of spread between E/P ratio and interest rate as an indicator for overall market outlook is at a nascent state.

An intuitive explanation on why spread may contain information about future stock market return is discussed by Rolph and Shen (1999). The information content follows from the notion that relative to the interest rate (say, i_t) there is an equilibrium level of spread. Under the assumption that expected future growth rate of P/E ratio is positively related to the current spread $[(E/P)_t - i_t]$, a higher spread leads to higher expected growth for the P/E ratio, which in turn gives higher expected market return. In other words, when the spread is higher than its equilibrium level, the P/E ratio is more likely to grow faster, thus reducing the E/P ratio and spread towards its equilibrium levels and vice-versa. Basu (1977) examined the performance of various portfolios on the basis of their P/E ratios for 1957-71 and found that return on company stocks with low P/E ratios was significantly higher than the return on companies with relatively high P/E ratios (Keith, 1998, Page 209). Pesaran and Timmermann (1995) also used both E/P ratio and interest rates along with several other influential variables for explaining stock market movements. Lander et al (1997) also documented strong evidence that both earnings yield and interest rates matter for short-run stock market performance. They used linear combination of E/P ratio and bond yields to predict returns on S & P 500 index in a regression framework.

Fuller et al. (1993) study the usefulness of E/P ratios of individual stocks in forecasting their returns. They find that stocks with high E/P ratios generate above-normal returns and those with low E/P ratios generate below-normal returns over the eighteen year period from the fourth quarter of 1973 to the third quarter of 1991, based on the US stock market data. Campbell and Shiller (1998) investigate the relationship between the E/P ratio of the S&P 500 index and the general stock market outlook, and find that the E/P ratio at the beginning of a 10-year period is positively correlated with the return of the S&P 500 index over that 10-year period using data from 1872 to 1997. Lander et al. (1997) find that a market-timing trading strategy based on a simple error-correction model using the expected E/P ratio of the S&P500 index and long-term interest rates yields a higher average return with smaller volatility than that generated by

simply buying and holding the S&P 500 index. Rolph and Shen (1999) find that the historical extreme values of the spreads between the E/P ratio of the CRSP index in the US and the long-term and short-term interest rates contain information on the direction of the stock market. A trading rule based on the 10th percentile of the historical values of the spreads produces a higher average return (not statistically significant) and a lower variance (statistically significant) than that produced by simply buying and holding the stock market index.

In another study, Qi (1999) outlined a recursive modeling procedure to examine the predictability of S & P 500 index returns using linear regression (LR) framework and neural network (NN), a nonlinear framework. The explanatory variables considered by him are dividend yield, E/P ratio, 1-month Treasury Bills rate, 12-month Treasury bond rate, inflation rate, growth rate in industrial output and money growth. He found that the NN model outperforms LR-framework in terms of both within-sample fit as well as out-of-sample forecast accuracy. In the Indian context, Mohanty (1997) examined the relationship of P/E ratio and earnings per share (EPS) with stock price. Using annual data he concluded that one could make excess return by forecasting the directions of movement of EPS based on publicly available information. Use of spread variable in explaining Indian stock market return is available in Samanta and Rajpathak (2001). Though, they have not investigated detail relationship between spread and return, they constructed a composite indicator by combining partial information contents of spread in addition to E/P ratio, yields and a few other economic and financial variables, for forecasting/tracking future stock market returns.

3. Methodologies and Analytical Tools

For assessing the information content of spread about future stock market return, following analytical tools and methodologies are employed in the present study.

Correlation/Cross-Correlation Analysis: A preliminary assessment of the strength in relationship between return and past values of ‘spread’ may be assessed through appropriate correlation analysis. For this purpose, one can calculate cross-correlation coefficients between spread and returns for different orders/lags (i.e. correlation coefficient between spread and future return) and can test for their statistical significance. The cross- correlation of order k between spread and return (denoted by ρ_k) is simply the correlation coefficient between S_{t-k} and R_t , k being any integer. If ρ_k ’s for some positive k, are significantly different from zero, one may expect that past values of spread would have some impact on present/future return.

Regression Analysis: The explanatory power of ‘spread’ in capturing the movement of stock price return could also be assessed in a regression framework. For this purpose, return series could be regressed on past information on ‘spread’ variable. Following Rolph and Shen (1999), the form of the regression equation may be kept simple as below.

$$R_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_{j=1}^p \alpha_j SP_{t-j} + e_t \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

where p is a suitably chosen positive integer; R_t and SP_t are as defined above, $e_j, j=0,1,2, \dots, p$ are unknown parameters and e_t is the usual disturbance term. Some of the widely used statistics, like R^2 (i.e. adjusted- R^2), Durbin-Watson (D-W) statistics and Ljung-Box Q-Statistics (denoted by Q-Statistics) will be used for assessing the strength of the relationship presented in equation (1).

Granger’s Causality Test: For a formal assessment of the influence/usefulness of ‘spread’, Granger’s causality test may be performed using an extended regression equation.

$$R_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_{j=1}^p \alpha_j SP_{t-j} + \sum_{k=1}^q b_k R_{t-k} + e_t \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

As in case of equation (1), relationship presented in equation (2) may also be assessed in terms of R^2 D-W statistics and Q-Statistics. In addition, if all ρ_j ’s in equation (2) are statistically zero, the null hypothesis of no causality from spread to return is accepted. Usual F-statistics may be used for performing the causality test.

Assessing Forecast Performance: The regression diagnostics discussed above pertain to the within-sample characteristics of the data. The usefulness of ‘spread’ may also be assessed in terms of improvement in degree of accuracy in out-of-sample forecast of return by using spread. Therefore, it would be interesting to exploit the relationship between ‘spread’ and stock market return for forecasting return out-of-sample.

For this purpose, through recursive/rolling regression, forecasting exercise will be repeated several times and based on the forecast accuracy (or error in out-of-sample forecasts) in every repetition, an overall measure of forecast accuracy, say the widely used Mean Error (ME), Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Root-Mean-Square-Error (RMSE), will be derived for different competing forecasting models, viz., (i) random walk (RW) model; (ii) regression model as in equation (1); (iii) and causal model as in equation (2). Here RW model is considered as a benchmark model to represent

the behaviour of the stock market/prices under the weak-form of efficient market hypothesis (EMH). If the magnitude of forecast errors in cases of (ii) and (iii) are lower than that of case (i), one can conclude that spread helps in improving accuracy of out-of-sample forecast of stock price return.

4. Database and Research Design

In the present study, both weekly and monthly data are used. The basic variable covered in weekly database pertain to weekly average stock price index, E/P ratio of the index portfolio and a representative interest rate from the week ended January 5, 1997 to the week ended December 31, 2007 (eleven years). The monthly database also covers these basic variables for the months from January 1996 to December 2002. The data on return and spread are derived from these basic variables.

As regards stock price index, it is preferable to choose a market representative index. In India, a number of stock price indices are available. Notable among them are BSE 30 share price index (Sensitive Index or Sensex), Economic Times 30 Index, Financial Express 30 Index, S&P CNX NIFTY Market Index, BSE national index consisting of 100 shares (BSE-100), Economic Times 100, Financial Express 100, BSE- 200, Business Line 250, CRISIL 500 index and several other regional exchange indexes. In an interesting study, Balasubramanian and Narasimhan (1999) made an attempt to assess to what extent various indices reflect the market performance. Accordingly, they analysed in detail, various aspects of BSE Sensex, BSE-100 and BSE-200. Their empirical results suggest that there is no significant difference between these three indices.

In this study, closing value of S&P CNX NIFTY Market Index (hereafter referred to as NSE Nifty) is considered for calculating stock market return. The data on E/P ratio pertain to NSE Nifty index portfolio. The National Stock Exchange (NSE) in India provides a fully automated screen based trading system for futures and spot market transactions, on a nationwide basis and an online monitoring and surveillance mechanism. It supports an order driven market which provides complete transparency of trading operations and operates on strict price-time priority. NSE Nifty is a well diversified 50 stock index accounting for 24 sectors of the economy. It is used for a variety of purposes such as benchmarking fund portfolios, index based derivatives and index funds. NSE Nifty is owned and managed by India Index Services and Products Ltd. (IISL), which is a joint venture between NSE and CRISIL. IISL is India's first specialised company focussed upon the index as a core product. IISL have a consulting and licensing agreement with Standard & Poor's (S&P), who are world leaders in index services. The base period selected for NSE Nifty index is the closing price on November 3, 1995. NSE Nifty index stocks represent about 59.49% of the total market capitalization as on May 31st, 2007.

The selection of an appropriate interest rate plays a vital role; so far as the usefulness of the spread is concerned in this paper, we have used short-term rates for deriving spread. In the Indian context, possible proxies for short-term interest rate would be 'call money rate', 'yields on certain Treasury Bills', 'Deposit Rate', 'Bank Rate', etc. Among these, two rates, viz., the Bank Rate and the call money rate are generally used (Roy et al, 2000). The present study also has used the call money rate and the Bank Rate as indicators of short-term interest rate. In this study, one-period stock market return (i.e. return is weekly for weekly data, monthly for monthly data, and so on) at time point t , say R_t , is simply defined as $R_t = \log(P_t) - \log(P_{t-1})$; where P_t is a stock price index.

In Indian context, many studies (Madhusoodanan, 1998; Mohanty and Kamaiah, 2000; Samanta and Rajpathak, 2001) have used equation (3) for compilation of return series. In case of equation (3), K -period return is simply the addition of k consecutive one- period returns. Moreover, log-transformation also may reduce a bit of volatility/heteroscedasticity and/or may help to get normal distribution.

The information on 'spread' variable is derived by subtracting interest rate from E/P ratio associated with BSE-100 stock price index. Depending upon the proxy of interest rate, following two measures of spread are used in this study;

$$SP_B_t = E_{y_t} P_t - BR_t \dots\dots\dots (4)$$

$$SP_C_t = E_{y_t} P_t - Call_t \dots\dots\dots (5)$$

Where SP_B_t and SP_C_t are measures of spread at time t ; $E_{y_t} P_t$, BR_t and $Call_t$ are E/P ratio, bank rate and call money rate respectively at time point t .

5. Empirical Results

To start with, in Table 1, we present the estimated ρ_k for $k=1,2, \dots, 20$ (5 months) using weekly data. From Table 1, it appears that the magnitude of correlation coefficient between SP_B_{t-k} and R_t (i.e., ρ_k) is low for $k=1$ to 6. The maximum correlation coefficient (in magnitude) is observed for $k=16$ followed by $k=10, 9$ and 3. In case of SP_C_{t-k} , estimated ρ_k is low for all $k = 1$ to 13 and the highest is evidenced for $k = 19$, followed by $k=17, 18$ and 20. Estimates of ρ_k 's, $k=1,2, \dots, 14$, using monthly data (Table 2) show that the relationship between SP_B_{t-k} and R_t is reasonably strong for k above 4, particularly for $k = 5, 9, 12$ and 14. In case of SP_C_{t-k} , however, corresponding relationship is likely to be

important only for lags $k=6, 9$ and 14 . It is interesting to note that the results based on monthly data are more or less consistent with the same based on weekly data, i.e., as k increases, the cross correlation (s_k) also tends to increase.

Thus from correlation analysis, it is seen that the relationship between past values of spread and present value of stock market return is possibly strong only in longer lag, say for about 2-months or above (i.e. corresponding to 9 to 14 weeks or more). For exploring the strength in relationship between return and spread, a number of simple regression and causal-regression models are estimated and the empirical findings are interpreted. In this context, it may be noted that for estimating different regression equations (simple or causal models), lag selection is an important task.

For this purpose, we first fix an upper limit/ceiling to the maximum lag and select only the important lags within the chosen limit. In all subsequent regression/causal models, upper ceiling for maximum lag was fixed at 20-weeks for weekly data and 14 for monthly data.

5.1 Regression Analysis

Initially return series was regressed on constant and own past values. Relevant empirical results (presented in Table 3) show that the underlying relationship in case of weekly data is similar (in terms of R^2 , D-W statistics and cl statistics) with that for monthly data, though in former case R^2 is relatively low. In both cases, D-W statistics is very close to 2 (being 1.95 or more) and the Q-statistics is also insignificant at 5 % level of significance (as corresponding p-value is much more than 0.05), indicating absence of any significant autocorrelation of the residual series.

Now, we proceed to check the robustness of the results obtained from correlation analysis. For this purpose, R_t series is regressed on constant and past values of spread. Different fitted equations and associated estimates of R^2 , D-W statistics and Q-statistics for weekly data are given in Table 4. Similar results for monthly data are presented in Table 5. In case of weekly data, as can be seen from Table 4, SP_{B_t} has relatively stronger relationship with future return than that associated with SP_{C_t} . Empirical results indicate higher R^2 and better D-W statistics when R_t is regressed on constant and past values of SP_{B_t} instead of regressing R_t on constant and past values of SP_{C_t} . The Q-statistics in later case is also worse than that in former case. As a matter of fact, Q-statistics in case of SP_{C_t} is statistically significant at 5 % level of significance (as corresponding p-value does not exceed 0.05), indicating presence of residual autocorrelation. In case of monthly data, the empirical results (Table 5) are almost same qualitatively as that of weekly data, though R^2 , D-W statistics and Q-statistics are better for monthly data. Interestingly, Q-statistics in case of SP_{C_t} for monthly data turns out to be statistically insignificant.

5.2 Results on Causality Tests

For exploring the possibility of causal influence of spread on return, we fitted a causal model like equation (2), where lag values of both dependent variable (i.e. R_t) and independent variable (i.e. SP_{B_t} or SP_{C_t}) are used as regressors. Different causal models are estimated by employing 'general-to-specific-type' strategy again. The estimated equations for weekly data and corresponding empirical results on causality tests are given in Table 6 and Table 7 respectively. Similar results for monthly data are presented in Table 8 and Table 9. It may be seen from Table 6 that the causal models for weekly data are generally better than the regression equations using only past values of return (as given in Table 3) or only past values of spread (given in Table 4) in terms of R^2 , D-W statistics and Q-statistics.

Empirical results on causality tests using weekly data reveal that the widely used F-statistics (Table 7) is significant at 5 per cent level (as corresponding p-values are lower than 0.05) for both SP_{B_t} and SP_{C_t} , indicating that weekly information on both SP_{B_t} and SP_{C_t} has causal influence on weekly return. For monthly data also, causal models are better (Table 8) than simple regression models (presented in Table 3 and Table 5). The causality tests also detected causal influence of spread on return (see Table 9), though the influence in case of SP_{C_t} is likely to be mild (as the corresponding F-statistics is insignificant at 5 % level, but significant at 6 % level).

5.3 Empirical Assessment of Forecast Performance

For assessing the forecast performance, out-of-sample forecasts of return series were generated for (i) last 20 observations in case of weekly data and (ii) last 14 observations for monthly data through rolling regression technique as discussed below. For weekly data, initially each regression/causal model (Table 4 and Table 6) was re-estimated using first 282 observations and out-of-sample forecast was generated for the return series at time point 283. Thereafter, the coefficients of the underlying models were re-estimated using first 283 observations and out-of-sample forecast was generated for time point 284. This way the forecasting exercise was repeated 20 times, each repetition generating a one-week ahead forecast of return series. Now comparing the forecasts of return with actual, three measure of forecast error, namely 'Mean Error (ME)', 'Mean Absolute Error (MAE)' and 'Root-Mean-Square Error (RMSE)' were calculated. Similar error measures were also derived for the random walk model. The relevant results are reported in Table 10. In case of monthly data, one-month ahead forecasts of return were generated for last 14 observations (i.e. from 59-th to 72-nd observations) similarly. Then, like in case of weekly data, different measures of forecast accuracy, viz., ME, MAE and RMSE, associated with different models (i.e. random walk and regression/causal models) were estimated and presented in Table 11.

From Table 10 and Table 11, it is seen that generally causal models (using spread) outperform both random walk model and regression models (using only past values of spread as regressors as given in equation 1), in generating out-of-sample forecast of stock market return.

6. Conclusion Remarks

This paper studies the usefulness of the E/P ratio as an indicator of future stock market conditions. The present study employed various statistical and econometric tools for rigorously assessing the usefulness of spread in explaining stock market return. The studies finds that spread seems to have reasonably strong causal influence on return and the causal model helps achieving forecasts better than the random walk model. On theoretical plane, whether the spread between E/P ratio and interest rate is helpful for predicting future return/movement of stock price index is a debatable issue. However, in practice, spread is frequently used by market practitioners. So far empirical evidence for the developed economies suggests that the information on spread could be useful. In case of emerging markets including India, the issue has not received adequate attention.

The empirical results presented here are tentative and further research is needed to address the issue. Particularly, there is a need to put concerted efforts to construct alternative measures of 'spread' based on different interest rates and compare their usefulness empirically in explaining and predicting future movement of stock market return in India. Some central banks' financial stability reports include measures of whether stock markets are overvalued by looking at E/P ratios. However, the results in this paper show that the ratios are not useful in assessing the extent to which there is an overvaluation in the Indian stock market in the short run. There is also scope to assess the direction of stock market index, taking into account the set of potential macroeconomic input variables such as interest rates, consumer price index, industrial production etc.

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Table 1. Estimated Cross Correlation (ρ_K) Using Weekly Data

(Time Period: Week Ending 5th Jan. 1997 to 31st Dec. 2007)

K (in weeks)	Estimated ρ_k Associated with *		K (in weeks)	Estimated ρ_k Associated with *	
	SP_B	SP_C		SP_B	SP_C
1.	0.0172	0.0127	11.	0.1121	0.0417
2.	0.0412	0.0210	12.	0.1259	0.0111
3.	0.0112	0.0161	13.	0.1322	0.0271
4.	0.0310	-0.0211	14.	0.1147	0.0312
5.	0.0512	-0.0172	15.	0.1227	0.0411
6.	0.0671	-0.0141	16.	0.1521	0.816
7.	0.1214	-0.0217	17.	0.1127	0.1072
8.	0.1011	-0.0307	18.	0.1090	0.0911
9.	0.1351	0.0211	19.	0.1071	0.1217
10.	0.1421	0.0341	20.	0.1122	0.0907

Note : * ρ_k Indicates correlation coefficient between SP_{t-k} and R_t where $SP_t = SP_{B_t}$ or SP_{C_t}

Table 2. Estimated Cross Correlation (ρ_k) Using Monthly Data

(Data Period: 5th Jan. 1997 to 31st Dec. 2007)

K (in months)	Estimated ρ_k Associated with *		K (in months)	Estimated ρ_k Associated with*	
	SP_B	SP_C		SP_B	SP_C
1.	0.0922	0.0317	8.	0.1327	0.1698
2.	0.0377	-0.0219	9.	0.2143	0.2513
3.	0.0691	-0.0524	10.	0.1127	0.1784
4.	0.1517	-0.0632	11.	0.1281	0.1217
5.	0.1789	-0.1129	12.	0.2291	0.1634
6.	0.1192	0.2427	13.	0.1389	0.1729
7.	0.1244	0.1572	14.	0.1472	0.2432

Note : * ρ_k Indicates correlation coefficient between SP_{t-k} and R_t where $SP_t = SP_{B_t}$ or SP_{C_t}

Table 3. Regression of R_t on Own Past Values

Dependent Variable	Explanatory Variable	Lags	Coefficients	t-ratio	R^2	D-W Statistics	Q-Statistics
Using Weekly Data							
R_t	Constant	0	-0.0001	0.09	.082	1.96	27.42
	R_t	1	0.1476	2.170			
		5	0.1654	2.72			
		9	-0.1651	2.21			p-value
		12	0.1469	-1.99			= 0.9571
		17	0.1387	2.49			
		20	0.1479	5.58			
Using Monthly Data							
R_t	Constant	0	0.0107	0.71	0.105	1.99	14.22
	R_t	1	0.2917	1.72			
		4	0.2712	2.43			p-value
		9	-0.3192	-1.97			= 0.9213

Table 4. Regression of R_t on Spread – Using Weekly Data

Dependent Variable	Explanatory Variable	Lags	Coefficients	t-ratio	R^2	D-W Statistics	Q-Statistics
Using SP_B as Proxy for Spread							
R_t	Constant	0	0.0049	1.39	0.05	1.82	49.2
	SP_{B_t}	1	-0.0031	-1.07			
		6	-0.0143	-1.42			
		10	0.0130	1.43			p-value
		14	0.0123	2.18			=0.1241
		17	-0.0086	2.25			
		20	0.0026	1.32			
Using SP_C as Proxy for Spread							
R_t	Constant	0	0.0041	0.90	0.03	1.71	55.7
	SP_{C_t}	11	0.0009	1.94			p-value
		20	0.0005	1.00			= 0.0297

Table 5. Regression of R_t on Spread – Using Monthly Data

Dependent Variable	Explanatory Variable	Lags	Coefficients	t-ratio	R^2	D-W Statistics	Q-Statistics	
Using SP_B as Proxy for Spread								
R_t	Constant	0	0.01792	1.10	0.14	1.87	15.79	
	SP_B _t	1	-0.0253	-2.44				
		4	0.0532	2.59				p-value = 0.8512
		7	-0.0345	-1.51				
Using SP_C as Proxy for Spread								
R_t	Constant	0	0.0217	1.06	0.09	1.69	18.27	
	SP_C _t	6	0.0019	2.07				p-value = 0.5317

Table 6. Estimated Causal Models – Using Weekly Data

Dependent Variable	Explanatory Variable	Lags	Coefficients	t-ratio	R^2	D-W Statistics	Q-Statistics	
Using SP_B as Proxy for Spread								
R_t	Constant	0	0.0061	1.52	0.13	2.03	34.92	
	R_t	1	0.1328	2.03				
		2	0.1376	2.06				
		5	-0.1076	-1.59				p-value 0.8972
		8	-0.1928	2.92				
		15	0.1741	2.42				
		20	0.1366	2.11				
		3	-0.0068	2.47				
		10	0.0071	2.98				
Using SP_C as Proxy for Spread								
R_t	Constant	0	0.0019	0.73	0.13	1.98	27.86	
	R_t	1	0.1278	2.00				
		2	0.1620	2.50				
		7	-0.1490	-2.32				
		13	0.1294	2.17				p-value 0.9817
		16	0.1789	2.58				
		20	0.1488	2.41				
		13	0.0010	2.07				
		20	0.5003	1.19				

Table 7. Results on Causality Tests – Using Weekly Data

Dependent Variable	Explanatory Variable	Lags *	Testing Hypothesis: Coefficients of SP_B/SP_C Care Collectively Zero	
			F-Statistics	P-Value
R_t	Constant		6.1927	0.0058
	R_t	1,2,5,12,17,20		
	SP_B _t	3, 10		
Using SP_C as proxy for spread				
R_t	Constant	0	5.2978	
	R_t	1,2,5,12,17,20		0.0417
	SP_C _t	11, 20		

Note: * Estimated Coefficient and Corresponding t-ratios for different lags are given in Table 6.

Table 8. Estimated Causal Models – Using Monthly Data

Dependent Variable	Explanatory Variable	Lags	Coefficients	t-ratio	- ₂ R	D-W Statistics	Q-Statistics
R_t	Constant	0	00.392	1.41	0.23	1.96	11.52
	R_t	3	-0.3818	-2.59			
		9	-0.3154	-1.60			
		10	0.0092	1.25			
	SP_B _t	1	-0.0245	-2.38			p-value
		4	0.0187	1.72			= 0.9247
10		0.0092	1.25				
Using SP_C as Proxy for Spread							
R_t	Constant	0	0.0247	1.42	0.15	1.98	13.79
	R_t	1	0.1730	1.31			
		4	-.4271	-2.34			p-value
		8	0.0057	1.97			= 0.8763
	SP_C _t	8	0.0057	1.97			

Table 9. Results on Causality Tests – Using Monthly Data

Dependent Variable	Explanatory Variable	Lags #	Testing Hypothesis: Coefficients of SP_B/SP_C are Collectively Zero	
			F-Statistics	P-Value
Using SP_B as proxy for spread				
R_t	Constant	0	4.9721	0.0312
	R_t	4, 8		
	SP_{B_t}	1, 4, 9		
Using SP-C as Proxy for Spread				
R_t	Constant	0	3.9243	0.0579
	R_t	2, 5		
	SP_{C_t}	8		

Note: ‘#’ Estimated Coefficients and corresponding t-ratio for different lags are given in Table 8.

Table 10. Out-of-Sample Forecast Errors - Using Weekly Data

Model	Measure of Forecast Error		
	ME	MAE	RMSE
Random Walk	-0.0089	0.0419	0.0472
Regression Model (As in Equation 1)			
Using SP_B as Proxy for Spread	-0.0079	0.0472	0.0449
Using SP_C as Proxy for Spread	-0.0031	0.0491	0.0417
Casual Model (As in Equation 2)			
Using SP_B as Proxy for Spread	-0.0047	0.0321	0.0279
Using SP_C as Proxy for Spread	0.0021	0.0312	0.0307

Table 11. Out-of-Sample Forecast Errors - Using Monthly Data

Model	Measure of Forecast Error		
	ME	MAE	RMSE
Random Walk	-0.0212	0.1121	0.1391
Regression Model (As in Equation 1)			
Using SP_B as Proxy for Spread	-0.0150	0.1017	0.1267
Using SP_C as Proxy for Spread	-0.0009	0.1082	0.1357
Casual Model (As in Equation 2)			
Using SP_B as Proxy for Spread	-0.0112	0.0815	0.0965
Using SP_C as Proxy for Spread	-0.0027	0.0917	0.0889



The Development Status and Problems of Current Digital Artistic Design

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Abstract

The entrance of digital technique into design field brings about tremendous changes, which are mainly shown in the view style of the mixture of objects and viewers. From this perspective, the formation of virtual images depends on computer calculation without any technique difficulties. The support of digital techniques pushes the development of online design mutual actions where culture holds its ground. Designers should shoulder their social responsibilities for loss of home land language design languages and its design context. We need to face all of the problems in the development process of digital artistic design need and to reflect on ourselves.

Keywords: Digital image technique, Design, Vision

Digital technique and digital image technique have been widely applied in the entire design field. Computers are replacing traditional pens and paper. The convenience of digital technique and the newness of digital image technique make every designer feel excited. However, the perplexity faced by digital artistic design also worries designers. Starting from this consideration, this paper makes deep analysis on the current status and problems in digital artistic design from the four aspects and tries to develop full discussion.

1. Virtual idol

Digital image technique could endless overthrow daily visual experience because digital graphics are not to materialize objects as we commonly mean. The formation of images depends on the permutation and combination in digital arithmetic and the desired images are shown instantly on the screen when you operate a keyboard and mouse. Digital technique could make images in two dimension plan generate multi-dimensional and constantly changing novel visual images and could also break down three dimension shapes into two dimension plane. Also, there are a lot of other similar surprising graphics view, which could not be realized with traditional painting experience. Such technique also provides forceful technique support for us to deviate from daily visual experience.

In the one hundred years history of modernism painting, although there have been various schools, all visual judgment of each art talent depends on overthrowing daily visual experience. Artistic images are no longer the imitation and under of normal world but are to part from the world and make the world strange. Daily reality and artistic representation are no longer of mirror-and-image relationship as of classic art. In these artistic works, we could not see real life and could only feel the joys and sorrows of life in the works full of imagination. Therefore, modernism paintings focus on the difference between real normality and artistic shapes so as to keep the distance of view and at the same time to inspire the visual intellect and imagination of viewing and the viewed.

The reason why digital image technique could deviate from daily visual experience is the great differences in view styles. In the virtual space where human beings and computers mutual act, the quality sense, quantity sense, light, and shadows of the imitation images created by computers are quite the same as reality. Therefore, the psychological driving at scene when the mutual actions take place gives people illusion of sense organs. The border between virtual scene and real scene disappear in the process of mutual action so that people could not keep the distance of view. Bernheim expounds the interposition of digital technique from the perspective of aesthetics and the view styles change accordingly. "The deep artistic meaning of computers lies in that it forces us to doubt the artistic view and reality view of classic art." (Bernheim, 2002) Through the platform where human beings and computers act mutually, computers "mix up the learners and the learning objects, mix up internal and external concepts, and deny the imagination that requires absolute objectivity. Human beings have realized that daily world is showing the sameness with artistic conditions." (Bernheim, 2002) Actually, the body and heart in the formation of virtual images are separate. Objects of different forms are combined together to form a picture. However, the body could not enter the virtual materialization circumstance to touch them and could only feel them with hearts. Hence, object-and-viewer mixing up of virtual imitation in digital technique is different from the real representation in classic realistic painting art and is different from

image alienation in modernism painting. Compared with the deviation of modernism painting from daily visual experience, the view styles are different. One keeps certain distance and the other mixes up objects and viewers and put viewers into the circumstances. Although in virtual pictures and scenes, viewers could not enter into the circumstances, the view distance has already disappeared. Compared with classic painting, the two are both realistic. However, one is the real representation of reality and the other is the virtual visual imagination. Because digital images are not free from the restriction of material objects, digital image technique could make normal graphics and could also create pictures beyond imagination. Through mutual means, the novel images generated instantly could constantly change and form new images. Those images could represent life reality and could also imagine future endlessly.

The significant meaning of visual reform brought about by digital image technique lies in that it changes former view style and brings about together various artistic representation styles. Although it is difficult to forecast the final development status of constantly changing digital graphics technique, it is sure that digital image technique provides abundant possibilities for our artistic changes.

2. Tool for the masses

When digital image technique encountered visual design for the first time, they became close sweetie for the masses. Those who could not express their meanings with pictures and are in corners become extremely excited in human being and computer love world. Computers eliminate people's fear in the former hand painting skills. The digital image tools save common people from the imperfectness of painting skills.

In the past, there is such a saying in this field, "from the level of painting skills, 'technique is thoughts'. Only techniques of high level could perfectly express thoughts". For common people, the perfection of techniques and the free expression is the afflictive life of creation because technique requires long term and hard practice. If some one, without special gift and practices, could have similar technique with masters, then digital technique is the magic weapon. In digital era, there is no gap between the techniques of masters and chelas. What the chelas lack is the taste and vision.

Because of digital image technique, the master craft which was too high for others to achieve in the past becomes the technique seasoning for common people. If some one is interested in it, in the process of human being and computer mutual action, she or he could manage to apply the super techniques of various masters. Hence, the pass for entering technique palace disappears. Therefore, we could see such a scene. In the past, the artistic palace usually only has several artistic master-hands, while in the artistic world, there lacks people with super crafts and people are practicing. However, at present, due to the appearance of digital technique, countless heroes step onto the stages. With digital tools, people could achieve craft paradise. At present, digital technique gradually becomes the technique suitable for the masses. However, the feelings between human beings and computers could not eliminate the track of machines. In hand-painting era where people believe "technique is thoughts", because people advocate the experience in the hand-making process, all to be presented could be fully demonstrated in the process. However, in digital era, the images do not have the amorous feelings in hand-making era and computers replace the aesthetic experiences where hands operate.

In the book designs, all designs could not avoid the stark digital masks. The reasons are that they apply similar computer graphics, they put all together in format and they use sudden sense stimulation. The taste of culture could not be represented by the pictures formed by computers. Obviously, it is the result of simply applying digital techniques. The design for books where computers replace human brains make the expression and meanings more and more plane in the rational restraint of tools. If feelings could be calculated, be forecasted and be controlled in computer codes, the spirit happiness will degrade to Macdonald fast food. The Macdonald phenomenon of designs is the urgent issue to be resolved. The core of Macdonald mode is, within certain standard, to pursue the maximum efficiency. All individual and abnormal behaviors are excluded from being resolved. All need to pass the quantity standard. Therefore, all hamburgers of Macdonald in the world have the same taste, which means that culture is excluded. Designs without different cultures could not represent the richness of feelings. Although computer solves the difficulties in design technique, the technique of digital imitation could not show the deep insight of sensibility. Oliver Grau commented in his book *Virtual Art* that, "computers might become the best storage from-only if the operation system or storage media are not out of date-however, they could not record or copy the materialized art feelings. (Grau, 2007) Although the images from the screen could be materialized, the feeling expression of images created by computers is not so good as those created by hand.

In hand-painting era, craft is the print of soul. The style expression of craft could represent feelings and the craft operation process is the process for heart image and object image to combine, which maybe the connotations of "technique is thoughts". The digital imitation craft seems to be real, however, it is not the representation where heart and object matches and it is just the calculation of digital and saw tooth feelings. Although at present computers start to have the possibilities of random changes, its intellect is just the arithmetic under fixed programs and it just has intelligence quotient but has no affection quotient. Computer is just a type of tool. Therefore, the love between human beings and computers are still experiencing torment in the purgatory of love.

3. Mutual Share

Up to present, the broad band media with sound and vision and other feeling styles together promotes internet entire framework development. Real time mutual action network platform provides great convenience to home land design communication and also provides new ways and methods for the globalization cooperation of design field. Although there is spatial distance, online design could reach places thousands miles away in instance. In mutual action platform, mutual share and real time communication are completed at the same time. The two parties at the platform could together penetrate into the problems, and could inspire innovation in the debate of different concepts. Obviously, on line design international cooperation, with mutual actions of different cognition styles, could enlarge the possibilities of eliminating the design perplexities.

For online design, its convenient spatial change and active dialogue style impress all participants on line. Therefore, the on line cooperation of network platform has its special advantages. The first one is that on mutual action platform, through the mutual functions of external design experience and through borrowing others' view point to examine the current common design concepts, we could find home land design blind points with wider vision. The second is that in economic globalization era, through on line design to learn the consumption demand and cognition attitude under different cultural background, within professional information scale, there is no need to filter motley information so as to rapidly fix new design orientation, which is the basic premise for home land design to walk from region to the world.

When digital design master-hands are searching for the inspiration of creation on line, they are facing a problem: the two parties in network spaces have deviated from real life circumstances. Their mutual communication is culture experience and on the scene description. Even on line design is just the mutual actions of professional experience. On the network, there is no materialized experience in person and the comprehensive life feelings are replaced by language description. However, experience description could not completely and truly reflect the existence of objects. Therefore, facing the screen, the culture experiences of the two parties could not replace the deep insight felt in real life.

The current domestic design, who is trying to escape from the influence of western design languages, has not formed complete home land design language system while advocating Chinese design resources. In on line mutual design, under the circumstance where the communication is unilateral and the information is not symmetrical, there is no lasting and deep treatment and independent judgment. The home land design awareness, held originally, gradually disappear in the aggressive western design context through network mutual action. At this time, the part on the line where is a receiver unconsciously becomes the target audience of western design language. They are not parallel mutual participants. Ester Harjitai mentioned when he made analysis on the reasons for the generation of number gap, "the strength of the U.S. users exceeds the strength of any other culture. therefore, the rules and beliefs of the U.S. culture is quite popular on the internet. Therefore, with dazzling network design resources, instant mutual actions thousands of miles away, and the diversified design experience description, if on the line we do not hold on to home land design language, the western design languages will further invade the base of home land culture. Obviously, only through focusing on home land national design, accumulating design language resources and constructing self design language system could the mutual action on the network has its true design culture status.

4. Design context

In era where thoughts are emancipated, we did not stay for a long time and hurried to transfer scattered thoughts into eternal dribs and drabs. When the economy change era came, the consumption tide also came, which drives people to drift in the material desire river. To return to the spirit land and live there happily has become the hope of spirit watcher. Culture steps down from holy palace to common places and culture condition changes accordingly. Cultural context changes from traditional feeling expression to instance sense organ stimulation. From the perspective of design, design context is formed through the accumulation of design activities under practice. In these activities, the methods, ways and technique that are usually applied are the representation of design language. Therefore, design language is the composing element in design context. For current common designs, book design wonders between profit and fashion. The pursuit of commercial profit makes all become consumption, which forces book designs to search for new methods in order to occupy market.

To attract readers' attention within several seconds becomes an important index to judge whether the design is successful. Visual bomb is popular design fashion. "The direct reflecting image apperception is faster than language thinking in receiving time – imagination" (You, 2008). Based on the aforementioned, the emphasis on image functions is actually following the road of popular culture. it uses visual happiness and stimulating images to hide history and thought depth and eliminate the multi-thought apperception so as to force the cultural spirit function of design to loss its meaning and to change the inner spirit demand into external fashionable packing. The wide application of digital graphics technique provides great convenience to wide application of images. Hence, the images on the cover is not the extension and expression of contents in the book. Only if it simulates sense organs to convert it into visual sense of happiness, any visual elements could not be related to the contents in the book. Under such circumstances, the visual expression of all contents in design naturally becomes dialogues of cartoon. Actually, to stimulate sense organs to

acquire some happiness is not a bad thing. What is terrible is that digital image technique mixes up the border becomes real existence and digital images. Through various medias, it convinces people that the virtual illusive scene is daily life and transfers the view distance into experience in person. The uncontrollable desire and abreaction comes quietly. The beautiful girls on the magazine covers accidentally become the readers' lovers in dream. Even some people are addicted to the beautiful girls. Therefore, the visual happiness under contemporary cultural context should not be the only design language.

Actually, various value tropism in contemporary design context all start from the demands of human beings. However, it is for the designers to think what kind of design demands and design tropism of which level should be taken. With the involvement of digital graphics technique, the openness of design forms the basic tone of contemporary design context. The multi-tropism in design languages becomes common demand. However, design should shoulder the responsibility to promote social progress. In multi-tropism design languages, human beings' basic value judgment could not be lost. The humanism care in design works should be represented in the harmonious relationship between human beings and nature and in the full exhibition of human demands. However, such demand should be common public demand. The ways to resolve problems in current design context are to face the openness of digital technique and to fix home land national culture status so as to shoulder social responsibilities and to construct self language resources.

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Thoughts on Management Reform in China's State-Owned Enterprises

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Abstract

In order to improve the management level of China's state-owned enterprises, we should consider the management environment of state-owned enterprises and construct a suitable management mode, instead of copying the management experiences in western countries. Based on an in-depth analysis, this paper puts forward suggestions for the management reform in state-owned enterprises from three aspects. How to properly deal with the relationship between management reform and experience inheritance in state-owned enterprises, how to integrate China's local cultures, and how to reflect the theme of the times are the key points to construct the suitable management mode for state-owned enterprises.

Keywords: State-owned enterprises, Enterprise management, Sustainable development, Harmonious management

1. Introduction

Any effective enterprise management mode is a product combining management idea and management environment together. To copy the successful management experiences and methods in developed countries does not mean the success of management reform in China's state-owned enterprises. In order to improve the enterprise management level in China, we should grasp the chance of management reform in enterprises today, learning and consuming the advanced management theories in other countries, and making innovations based on conditions of China's state-owned enterprises. Only by considering the management environment of China's state-owned enterprises, can we create the proper, advanced, and special management mode for China's state-owned enterprises.

2. Three key points of management reform in state-owned enterprises

The management environment in China's state-owned enterprises, the management experiences of state-owned enterprises, and the requirements of Chinese culture and the times are the three important factors. How to properly deal with the relationship between management reform and experience inheritance in state-owned enterprises, how to integrate China's local cultures, and how to reflect the theme of the times are the key points to construct the suitable management mode for state-owned enterprises.

2.1 How to deal with the relationship between state-owned enterprise reform and experience inheritance

For the management reform in state-owned enterprises, how do we resolve the relationship between state-owned enterprise reform and experience inheritance? Firstly, we should have a clear and overall understanding to state-owned enterprises' former management situations.

China's state-owned enterprises have experienced decades of years, contributing a lot to national economic development. Although many management errors have emerged in management practices, some excellent management ideas and experiences have come into being. Firstly, in state-owned enterprises, workers are regarded as the owners, aiming at realizing the liberty and comprehensive development of human being. It reflects the human-oriented nature of state-owned enterprises and it is a transcendence of "humanistic management" thought in western management. Secondly, state-owned enterprises are good at cultivating the staffs' sense of belongingness. The work union plays an inevitable role in the process. Staffs' sense of belongingness is extremely important for enterprises' development. Whether the enterprise can inspire its staffs to generate a sense of belongingness or not is the key for the enterprise winning employee loyalty, enhancing its cohesion and competitiveness.

Along with changes of management environment, the competitive advantages of state-owned enterprises are declining gradually. The reason lies in the low management level of state-owned enterprises in general. To sum up, the management of state-owned enterprises has these problems as follow:

Firstly, emphasize on process and neglect results. State-owned enterprises pay more attention to process instead of results. Concerning enterprises' business strategy and goal, most state-owned enterprises merely deliver the goal

predetermined by higher authorities to different departments and then report the results from different departments to higher authorities. In this process, state-owned enterprises do not turn the goal into performance indexes or form a specific responsibility system that is responsible for enterprises' performance indexes.

Secondly, decision-making procedures are unscientific and most are managers' short-term behaviors. The chief managers in state-owned enterprises are mostly appointed by higher authorities directly. Enterprises' power is totally centered in the top management level. As a result, top managers are buried in endless affairs, ignoring enterprises' strategic and directive issues.

Thirdly, be lack of competitive mechanism and employees do not face any competition. Due to influences of planned economy and restraint of managers' authorities, state-owned enterprises do not possess the consciousness of competitiveness. In the personnel appointment aspect, state-owned enterprises follow a potential rule of "no degradation", without a "survival of the fittest" selection mechanism. In this environment, Chinese tends to stay in a present comfortable state and never think about reform.

Fourthly, the management organization is backward. State-owned enterprises have unilateral management organization. Most still adopt the "linear function" organizational form that was popular before the reform and opening. Managers are in charge of a wider span of management. They can not pay attention to corporate strategy. Besides, the linear guiding system overlaps with the functional reference system in enterprises, causing conflicts and unsuccessful information transfer. As a result, managers can not make right decisions timely. Responsibilities and obligations fail to be defined clearly.

Fifthly, the efficiency of staff training is low and the brain drain problem is serious. In state-owned enterprises, the lower staff training efficiency, lower staff satisfaction degree, and serious brain drain are chiefly caused by such a fact that there are lack of a perfect staff training system in state-owned enterprises. Enterprises do not possess a scientific training idea. The staff training is blinded. Enterprises do not design an effective training system based on enterprise development and employee needs. The training effect is low.

Based on an overall understanding to the management situations in state-owned enterprises, we find out the definite answers for how to solve the problem between state-owned enterprise reform and experience inheritance: inherit the excellent tradition of state-owned enterprises and reform the enterprise management.

2.2 How to explore the management method with Chinese features based on Chinese culture

In order to explore the management reform in state-owned enterprises, we should not only introduce foreign latest management theory but also stand on Chinese culture, developing the management theories and methods with Chinese features according to the main thinking ways and personalities of Chinese. Generally speaking, Chinese thinking mode is visual and comprehensive, emphasizing on mastering objectives from an overall aspect. In management, this thinking mode turns into the essence of contingency management thought and systematic management thought. Chinese culture emphasizes on harmony. Chinese emphasize on the harmonious interpersonal relationship. They cherish the harmony of people. Therefore, for Chinese, the humanistic management can exert the management effect better. Managers should pay attention to the relationship between employees, cultivating the staff's consciousness of collectiveness. In the aspect of reward system, manager should emphasize on both individual reward and collective reward. In executing the rational management, managers must be careful, emphasizing the harmony in enterprises.

2.3 How to embody the theme of the times

Enterprises are the most important components of the society. Enterprise development should keep the same space with the social development. At present, to pursue a sustainable development and construct a harmonious society have already become the theme of the times. As the important components of the society, state-owned enterprises must advocate the sustainable development and emphasize on harmonious development in order to drive the social development and harmony. Enterprises' sustainable development focuses on enterprises' long-term development, using systematic theory to explore the origin and specific methods for enterprises' development strategy from the whole to the part, from the long-term to the short-term, and from the qualitative changes to the quantitative changes. Integrate the sustainable development thought into the enterprises' ideas, which will be used to guide the constitution of enterprise strategy, realizing a combination of the macro and the micro, and the short-term goal and the long-term goal. Enterprises' harmonious management is to plan, organize, lead, and control enterprises' resources according to the "harmony" idea, which can help to reach the predetermined organizational goals. The harmonious management aims at realizing a great unity of the harmony of people and enterprises, the harmony of people and people, and the harmony of people themselves, obtaining the integrated effects that include economic effects and social effects.

3. Suggestions for the management reform in state-owned enterprises

To deal with the management reform and experience inheritance in state-owned enterprises properly, to integrate Chinese local cultures, and to embody the theme of the times serve as the base of constructing a suitable management

mode. Connecting with the exploration of management reform in state-owned enterprises, this paper advances suggestions for the management reform in state-owned enterprises from three angles.

3.1 Solve the relationship between state-owned enterprises' reform and experiences inheritance

Firstly, state-owned enterprises' reform should absorb the valuable experiences in decades of years, insisting on employees' owner position, and enhancing the cultivation of employees' sense of belongingness. (1) Inherit the "employees are owners" idea and execute the human-oriented strategy. Enterprises should put staff development and enterprise development at the same important position, what reflects the strategy of regarding employees as owners of enterprises. Meanwhile, by constructing the leaning organizations, enterprises can provide with a platform for employees' development, improving the capabilities of employees. By this way, enterprises will completely realize employees' comprehensive and free development and carry out the human-oriented strategy. (2) Emphasize on the construction of corporate culture. Positive corporate culture can help employees cultivate a sense of belongingness, collecting strengths for enterprise development. Besides, the positive corporate culture can inspire employees' work enthusiasm, helping them overcome the negative thoughts.

Secondly, considering some common problems in state-owned enterprises, this paper puts forward several schemes for improving the management in state-owned enterprises.

(1) Build up a performance management system and emphasize on the business results in state-owned enterprises. Use the performance indexes database to discompose the enterprise strategic points and goals and apply them to the management level and different departments, forming an effective goal- responsibility system, and making different responsibility subjects' performance behaviors consistent with the enterprise strategy.

(2) Emphasize on strategic management and long-term development. Make a set of scientific strategic decision-making process. With the base of understanding and mastering the external environment and self conditions, use all kinds of advanced analysis tools to make strategic analysis, directing the whole enterprise to organize effectively and make best use of enterprise's internal resources, and realizing an overall plan of enterprise's business goal. The enterprise can develop its advantages and avoid disadvantages by strategic study, meeting the changes of market environment, pursuing the long-term survival and development, and establishing its basic directions, goals, and fundamental measures.

(3) Execute the competitive employment mechanism and inspire employees' initiative. In order to overcome people's certain negative nature we should construct an employment mechanism that supports the enterprise-and-employee bilateral selection and internal competitive employment. This mechanism provides with an equal employment platform for excellent people, which can effectively enhance the staff's work initiative. By this mechanism, the staff can share the enterprise's pressure in competition by improving self quality.

(4) Construct process organizations. Make innovation for organizational form. Get rid of the narrow thought for certain operation or department and analyze the organization from the process angle. By executing the business process management and centering on the business process, break up the pyramid organizational structure and realize an effective communication and all employees' participation management, making the enterprise catch up with the high efficiency and fast rhythm of the information society and possess stronger emergency capability and flexibility.

(5) Emphasize on the improvement of employees' competence. To improve employees' competence should not merely rely on the designed staff training. It is necessary to construct a brand-new platform. Build up an incentive mechanism that serves as an internal motive for improving employees' competence. Aiming at the professional career plan, use the competence-quality model to evaluate employees' current competence, based on which develop an overall employees' competence construction by the staff training and the competitive employment mechanism, improving employee's qualities effectively in general.

3.2 Integrate Chinese culture

Considering Chinese thinking habits, state-owned enterprises should construct a management system from a systematic and dynamic angle. Corporate strategy is to determine the enterprise's general goal and regulate its general action based on the enterprise's conditions. In the general business management, the enterprise takes corporate strategy as the goal and pays attention to the whole situations. Based on the strategic goal, use the strategic capability evaluation model to identify the distance between corporate capability and corporate vision at different strategic stage, which provides with proper evidence for capability construction.

Considering the characteristics of Chinese personalities, state-owned enterprise management should take the harmony as the key factor of management. Aiming at the construction of harmonious enterprise, using the harmonious culture to guide the enterprise's harmonious development, making the harmonious idea permeate into the corporate creed, system, and employees' behaviors, and executing an overall harmonious management can realize the harmonious development of the enterprise.

3.3 Embody the theme of the times

Firstly, advocate the sustainable development of enterprise. (1) State-owned enterprises should refine the corporate culture that supports enterprise's sustainable development. The enterprise should follow the human-oriented rule, taking all stakeholders' interests into consideration, and pursuing the harmony of the enterprise and even the society. (2) Construct an organizational ability structure that supports the enterprise's sustainable development by organizational ability construction. Build up the learning organization and guarantee the source of organizational progress. (3) State-owned enterprise should cultivate an excellent staff by employees' competence construction, which serves as an objective condition for sustainable development.

Secondly, emphasize on corporate harmonious management. The harmony of enterprise should include the harmony of corporate ideas, the harmony of systems, and the harmony of behaviors. In the aspect of ideas, the harmony is the directive thought and the rule of management. In the aspect of systems, the harmony is the mainstream of enterprise system construction and the incentive mechanism of enterprise. In the aspect of behaviors, the harmony is the work way and the interpersonal association rule of employees. Therefore, in the management reform process, state-owned enterprises should execute enterprises' harmonious management from the three aspects mentioned above.

4. Conclusion

Western advanced management thoughts and ideas come into being continuously. China's state-owned enterprise reform makes progresses during the process of introducing western management thoughts and the exploration. Many domestic experts and scholars devote themselves into the study of this issue and many latest management theories appear one after another. However, few studies concern an integrated research on the factors that should be emphasized in realizing the management innovation in China's state-owned enterprises. This paper suggests that the management reform in China's state-owned enterprises should take three issues into consideration. It develops an in-depth analysis and puts forward suggestions for state-owned enterprises' management reform, which has a practical and directive meaning for China's state-owned enterprise reform.

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From Customer Satisfaction to Citizen Satisfaction: Rethinking Local Government Service Delivery in Malaysia

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Abstract

The Producer-Customer Paradigm within which much of the service improvement efforts have been undertaken is a highly circumscribed and problematic paradigm for local government services. It views citizens as customers of local government services and seeks to be more efficient in its delivery through process improvements. While the Producer-Customer Paradigm has spotlighted the service delivery side of the local government, it leaves the policy making and political side of local government, so central to the nature and role of government largely beyond its scope. This artificial but politically convenient truncation or limitation has been soundly criticized in the west for distorting the role of the local citizen and the local government. Citizen satisfaction and not merely customer satisfaction is the key indicator of local government quality. An expanded service quality paradigm i.e. Government-Citizen Model is needed to place service quality within a framework of political and social values. The ultimate test of local government quality is a population which is satisfied as a user (personal satisfaction) and citizen (social satisfaction).

Keywords: Local government, Customer satisfaction, Citizen Satisfaction, Public service quality

1. Introduction

Within the national governance systems, the federal government is the centre of most discussion, followed by the 13 state governments and the 144 local authorities that make the local government. Fifty percent of the Gross Domestic Product is generated from areas under the charge of local authorities. Some 14.57 million (62% of total population) million people lived urban areas in 2005 and this figure is forecasted to reach 16.85 million (63.8% of total population) by 2010 (Ninth Malaysian Plan (NMP), 2006:360). Most, if not all, urban citizens live in local authority administered areas. As the population becomes urbanized, local government grows in direct importance to the welfare and the quality of life experienced by a majority of the citizens of this country. Local land use planning and control, hawking and business premise licensing, basic disposal services, environmental control, and social and recreational facilities are within the purview of local authorities. The local government has been since independence plagued by a multitude of problems arising from its financial, personnel and administrative shortcomings. The almost four decades old Dato Athi Nahappan Report (1970) catalogued the crises and administrative difficulties of local authorities in West Malaysia in the post-independence period. Although the local authorities in Malaysia have grown in numbers and stature since the Dato Athi Nahappan Report and the subsequent restructuring in 1974 (Hazman, 1992), they are the weakest link in national governance system. There are now 144 local authorities (LA) in the country. LAs play two key roles at the local level that impact the lives of the local citizen. The first role relates to provision of basic services aimed at the upkeep of the local community including businesses to be found within the administrative purview. The second role is to regulate land use and business activity within the administrative area.

As an unelected level of government, LAs avail itself the powers of government without direct accountability to the local population. Run by seconded federal administrative officers and co-managed by state officers, public participation and influence remains marginal but rising occasionally coinciding with serious outcries over important policies and decisions i.e. location of dump sites or raising of taxes. The larger authorities also play a significant role in development of the local community. Over the years, the local authorities have been soundly criticized for poor services. Due to the

importance of the local services that the LAs provide, they are subjected to daily barrage of questions and complaints directly in the press and through higher ups at the state and federal levels. LAs are allegedly bureaucratic, inefficient, wasteful, unresponsive and not citizen-friendly. A federal Deputy Minister of Local Government and Housing perhaps over dramatized his comments when he maintained that local authorities act as triads and have contributed mainly to the country's low ranking on the Corruption Index. Due either to lack of financial and human resources and often times, due to poor management and incompetence and not to mention sheer arrogance, services are fraught with problems (Lee, 2006a, 2006b; Ambrin, 2006). But LAs have traveled a long way since in improving the services. To be fair, many LAs due to normative pressure from state and federal administrations and in some cases, through enlightened leadership, have improved their service delivery. Through the efforts of the federal government and also the respective state governments, the LAs have taken a variety of measures to improve local services. Total Quality Management, Business Process Re-engineering, Service Recovery System, ISO 9000, privatization, Client Charters, online services etc. have had significant impact on the quality of services provided to the local citizen. There are exemplary local authorities that have won numerous accolades and awards for remarkable changes in the service. Some have made significant strides in realizing some of the objectives of Local Agenda 21.

2. The Paradigmatic Trap

The Market Paradigm advanced through a range of reform initiatives loosely strung together under the rubric of New Public Management (NPM) has even been recognized as promoting a new view of government and citizen. This paradigm has been subjected to critical evaluations in the land of its origin – US and Europe and has undergone substantial revisions, adjustments and in some cases, outright rejection (Vigoda, 2003; Aberbach & Christen, 2005). Are we as clear about the paradigm as we are about the practices? It is often argued that agencies must think outside the 'box' i.e. their paradigm, to achieve quantum leaps in effectiveness. As we break free of one box (Bureaucratic Paradigm) we must also beware of the new paradigm (Producer-Customer Paradigm) we are adopting sub-consciously. Every paradigm has its own values and assumptions and it is imperative that relevance and centrality of these attributes be examined and adopted or rejected. This paradigm must be tested against the notions of society, government and citizen as reflected in the basic statements of destiny – Vision 2020.

In the world of practice and implementation in the public sphere including the local authorities, it is often fashionable to jump onto the "bandwagon" and adopt the latest management fashions and fads. While the technical benefits are often explicit, the underlying assumptions and values are quite often not visible. As the normative values are abstract, invisible and mental devices, the practicality is not immediately observable. But besides delivering instrumental benefits, the NPM practices also individually and collectively promote new paradigms of government and governance which may or may not be desirable.

It is in the light of the foregoing argument and belief that the following discussions becomes important and insightful.

3. The Producer-Customer Paradigm

Malaysia, like all other Asian nations, has not been spared the pain and profit of globalisation on the governmental front (Cheung, 2005:258). As the conservative political ideology and its attendant market philosophy took root in Britain, Europe and in the US through the forces of normative (defining the standards of new (and progressive) public management approaches and practice), mimetic (copying) and coercive (conditionalities attached to aid and other support mechanisms) isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), a collection of practices and approaches that bemoaned the dysfunctions of the Weberian bureaucracy and extolled the superior features of the market were embraced in the public sector. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) through their influential 'Reinventing the Government' theme pushed forth the adoption of a wide range of private sector tools to reinvent public sector work and agencies. Central to their philosophy and underpinning much of the reform energy is the need to serve the customer just like the private sector. In contrast to William Sayre's Dictum that the public and private sectors were fundamentally alike in all unimportant respects (Allison, 1983:453), the NPM proponents ruled that government and private organisations were fundamentally the same. This call resonated well with the reformists within and also critics without the public sector who have long campaigned to have the public sector become more sensitive to the needs of the user. The bureaucratic management overplayed the need for control, accountability and probity and relegated the need for speedy decisions, flexible delivery and customer satisfaction as a key metric of performance. The pendulum swinging all the way in the opposite direction of market discipline also overplayed the role and relevance of the market reifying the customer and negating the citizen.

The public sector reforms in Malaysia since 1990's (see Figure 1) have been influenced by these aforesaid developments in the American and European public services (Cheung, 2005; Hazman, 2003). Total Quality Management, Malaysia Inc., Service Recovery Systems, Client Charters, ISO 9000 Quality Management Standard, Public-Private Partnership, Privatization, Outsourcing, and Online Public Services are some examples of the various practices and approaches introduced at all levels of government to re-engineer the public sector. Undoubtedly and in all honesty, these policies, strategies and practices have resulted in significant to huge improvements in public services.

Through strong political pressure and commitment the public services are more 'customer-oriented'. Although many of these change initiatives were launched and aggressively followed through at the federal level, these practices have the usual cascading effect from the federal, state and local. In the true spirit of providing high quality services to the local population, the many large and urban LAs have become more customer-oriented. They pay more attention to the users of the services than before. There is an attempt to obtain and use feedback from the public. There is also greater readiness to address local concerns. The Prime Minister Dato Abdullah A. Badawi set the tone when he expressed the need for rapid improvements in the quality of public services when took office and he has since continued to vigorously pursue the issue at every juncture.

Despite the variety of changes and the interest and commitment of the political masters at the federal, state and local levels, these changes have resulted a slight shift in the fulcrum balancing the agency interest vis-à-vis those of the users-cum-customers. Arguably, the changes have been a symbolic, tactical and mechanical embracement of the practices. For example, the Client Charters are in place but there is no public report of performance of the agency (public accountability, only internal reporting - Hazman, 2003), there is still no active consultation with users in designing processes especially if they are a diffused and non-vocal lot. There is no significant attempt to enable tracking of transactions including online arrangements, the laws that enable limited disclosure co-habits with practices that symbolize accountability and transparency, focus on productivity rather productive outcomes etc. Despite many important changes and improvements, the spirit and value of serving the public is still to become a significant part of the value system.

The whole repertoire of changes and initiatives ushered in the name of modernization and improvement of the public services are reflective of an important, though not always articulated paradigm - Producer-Customer Paradigm or also called the Market paradigm. The problem and hence the challenges are conceived as one that requires the services delivered by the LA to be fast, accurate, fair, professional and polite. The focus of the reform and improvement effort is on the delivery side of the service. In traditional public administration language, it is the implementation of policies that the present approach dwells on. The policy and policy making dimensions are not very in focus. Cheung (2003) opined that the agenda of change and reform in government has settled on an important but secondary issue of service efficiency of the authorities and pushed to the backseat the importance of policy making. The policy making was deemed to be unproblematic and the primary challenge was and still is the implementation and delivery of the services so determined by the relevant governments through its various policies. This paradigm was given intellectual muscle by the NPM proponents who proposed and argued for the private sector style approaches and practices including especially the treatment of the citizens as customers. From the public standpoint, the plethora of changes aimed at improving the quality of services was welcomed as service delivery was and still continues to be a major source of public dissatisfaction with governments including local governments. One only needs to look at the local dailies to obtain get a taste of the persistent and ubiquitous service failures.

In true NPM spirit, this paradigm has culminated in the development of public satisfaction index like US Customer Satisfaction Index to locate and tract the effect of the stream of changes introduced. Many LAs have developed or are in the process of developing similar local satisfaction index. The Ministry of Local Government and Housing has indicated many times the need for and the interest in developing one for the local government. As important as these indicators and the improvements in the services are to the local population, the nature of local government, the political and constitutional relationship between the public and LA and democratic ideology demands that the Producer-Customer Paradigm be transformed and expanded into a Government-Citizen Paradigm. The Government-Citizen Paradigm encapsulates the essence of the Producer-Customer Paradigm but offers more opportunities and scope for the improvement process. It focuses on the services as well as the policies, on the instrumental values as well as social and political values and it serves the customer but also highlights their role as citizens.

In the following sections of the paper, I would articulate the limitations and perils of this Producer-Customer Paradigm in developing a politically vibrant and active local population consistent with the national vision of the future Malaysian society.

4. The Government-Citizen Paradigm

The conceptualisation (and relegation) of the citizen to a customer is often portrayed as beneficial development within the Producer-Customer Paradigm (Gore, 1993). The need to serve the sovereign customer coheres well with the democratic political ideology where the citizen is the ultimate repository of power (Self, 2000). Customer satisfaction is the main mantra of this paradigm. It defines the role and challenge of the producer i.e. agencies or authorities as seeking to satisfy their customers (Pierre, 1998). This paradigm redefines the role of the authorities to one of production and that of the local citizens as one of consumption. Producer's i.e. LA's primary challenge is to improve delivery of services so as to make the consumption satisfactory or pleasurable. The objective of the customer is to seek greater satiation of his/her needs. It promotes a consumerist and individualist value and mindset on the part of the citizens (Aberbach & Christensen, 2005:226).

What is worrisome about this picture? The conceptualisation of the role of local government as a producer akin to a private entity is simplistic, naïve and manifestly, inaccurate. The private sector does not seek to regulate but supply and satisfy. Governments including LAs do not always seek to produce, supply and provide but also seek to prevent, limit or shape consumption (Alford & Speed, 2006). A large part of the LA functions involve the regulation of local affairs. In the case of the regulatory services, the citizens at large are the ‘consumers’ not the regulatees as the simple Producer-Customer Paradigm would have it. The local public must be satisfied with the ‘quality’ of regulatory service delivery. Unlike the non-regulatory services, the quality of delivery is mainly affected by the ‘quality’ of public influence in the making of these regulations. Participation, consultation and information about the regulations are as important aspects of the satisfaction with regulatory services as are the enforcement of the regulations.

Even where LAs provide services, the pure Producer-Customer Model is inappropriate. The government is very unlike a business entity. In a democratic setting such as in Malaysia, the LAs theoretically serve the interest and welfare of the local community. In the Government-citizen model, the citizens have an obligation to provide inputs into the policy making i.e. determining what, how, what level, and who is entitled to receive benefits. There is a clear reciprocal relationship marked by mutual obligations. The role of the citizens is not just to consume and provide feedback on their satisfaction. They are to participate and determine, in a collective manner, what will be produced, how and for whom. This mutuality of obligation is absent in the private parallel. It is not the satisfaction of the consumer *per se* that marks the quality of governmental service but the satisfaction of the community at large. The circumscription of the role of the citizen to a consumer hinders healthy development of an active, civic conscious and democratic society – all key values enshrined in Malaysia’s Vision 2020

In the Government-Citizen Model, the values of accountability, transparency and public consultation participation or democracy are just as important as service quality. Within this paradigm, the indicators are the degree of transparency displayed by the LAs in the conduct of their affairs. This can be assessed through the features of the processes, players in decision making, the basis of decision making and the extent to which the LAs are accountable to the ratepayers and populations for their performance and conduct.

5. Observation of Current Development

There is increasing evidence that the new generation raised in an economically munificent environment with limited participation in civic and political affairs especially at the local level, is all too happy with and, at times, consumed with modern technology and self, and is disconnected with the government (Putnam, 2000). If this trend continues, local government will be deprived of its representative quality. Without continuous and massive citizen engagement with government, administrative state is likely to rise to the fore. Salaried professional officers will become, by default, policy makers removing policy from the realm of politics to administrative experts. This form of governance is unhealthy, ineffective and dangerous as has been observed in the recent reforms in corporate governance – leaving the business to the managers. The primary stakeholders i.e. the local citizens must have the driver’s seat to ensure collective welfare is democratically determined through and with their active participation.

Although in the interim, and from an administrative standpoint, the treatment of the citizens as customer is useful, it will in the long run cause the LAs to be less of a government and more of a service provider. Administrators will be unfairly called to make policies rather than mainly focused on the issues of implementation. This overextension of roles will be detrimental to the kind of society Malaysia envisions by 2020. Already there are signs that this dilettantish view is taking hold. For example, the national e-government plans speak of how ICT can and should be used to improve the delivery of services to the public. Deployment of ICT in the back room for internal efficiency and more flexible and faster services online to the customers are the stated aims. The use of ICT for purposes of improving public feedback on services is emphasized over participation in local affairs i.e. local democracy is unmentioned. The continued restriction of access to information about LA operations and decisions ostensibly permitted by the relevant laws appears to evidence the Producer-Customer Paradigm. Customers can demand high quality services but not right to make decisions or access to the inner sanctum of the authority. Ironically and simultaneously, many larger LAs are espousing support for and operationalisation of Agenda 21. The local version of the Agenda 21 calls for a community-based approach to sustainable development. It calls for greater and not less public participation on the sustainability question. It is assumed that sustainable development values must be anchored in the politics and policies of the people for it to be ever sustainable. The model of developing and institutionalizing a citizen-based programme for sustainable environment requires active citizen involvement and agreement to limit and alter consumption. Collective and sustainable satisfaction should be given greater premium than immediate and individual satisfaction. The market-based model promotes a contrarian view and value system.

In the wake of the Asian financial crisis, the governance model (Polidano & Hulme, 2001) was promoted by many international bodies (Asian Development Bank, World Bank, International Monetary Fund) as necessary for both corporations and governments. The improvement in accountability, transparency and democratic participation of the people was suggested as antidotes for future market and political instability. This reform theme is in many ways

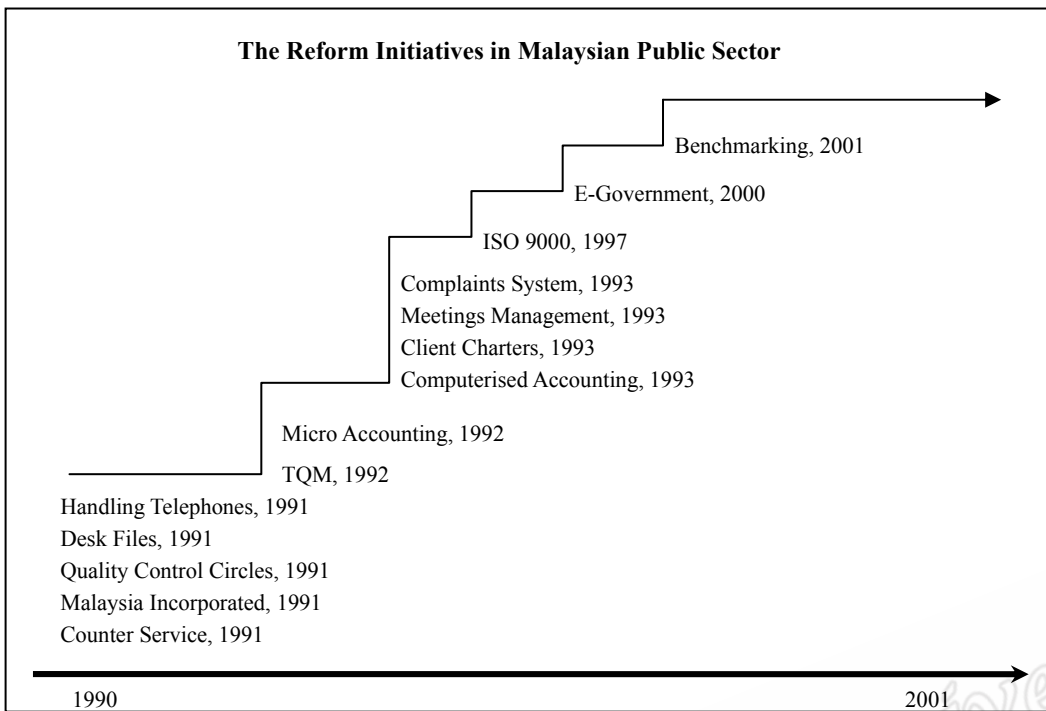
consistent with the Government-Citizen Paradigm. It focuses on political dimensions of the government and citizen. It highlights the need to complement the service quality of governments (marked by improvements in service delivery) with democratic quality i.e. improvements in accountability, transparency, rule of law and citizen participation. But empirically, the Producer-Customer Model and Government-Citizen Model may not be complementary (Andrews, 2003). The ethics, ethos and values of a customer-oriented government may actually undermine the democratic values (Fountain, 2001; Aberbach & Christenson, 2005)

6. Conclusion

In summary, while the plethora of efforts and practices undertaken by LAs is laudable and should be supported, the larger context of these changes must be reflected on. The measure of an effective or successful LA is not merely the level of satisfaction of the customers, but the level of satisfaction with quality of government regulating their lives. Political or democratic quality is just as important as service quality. At present, there is tremendous interest in measuring the LAs as producers or service providers but not as a governmental authority. The Malaysian national aspirations and vision will not be well served within the present paradigm of service quality. The government-citizen paradigm should benefit from the producer-customer paradigm, and not be supplanted. The relegation of the government-citizen paradigm to the market-customer paradigm is perilous to the development of a democratic Malaysian society.

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Source: Modernisation and Manpower Planning Unit, [www.mampu.gov.my]

Figure 1. The Service Improvement Initiatives

Dimensions	Producer-Customer	Government-Citizen
Role	Producer/ Provider	Government/ Protector
Challenge	Production/ Management	Welfare & Safety/ Consultation/Balance
Values	Consumerist/ Individualistic	Conservationist/ Collectivistic
Relationship	Economic	Political/social
Indicators	Productivity/ Satisfaction	Support/ Participation
Public	Consumer/ Recipient/ Buyer	Decider/ Participant/ Tax Payer

Figure 2. Features of the Two Paradigms



Study on College English Teaching Strategy

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This research is one part of a key human social science project named "Investigation on College English Teaching and Study on STSR English Teaching Strategy" in Qingdao University of Science and Technology in 2006.

Abstract

Using investigation and interview as the main research methods, the project team presents an experimental study on STSR (Note 1). In the investigation research, the project team chooses 66 college English teachers and nearly 600 non-English majors from Qingdao University of Science and Technology and makes an investigation of their teaching and learning processes respectively by attending lectures, issuing questionnaires, discussing and sample analyzing, etc. In the experimental study, the project team chooses 100 students as the one-year-STSR study sample and divides them into 2 groups (experimental group and control group) based on statistic principle. Data collected in the experiment and used in this paper are dealt with under the help of SPSS Software. The results show several problems in college English teaching in the university. In addition, influence of STSR on students' English learning is revealed. Several reformation suggestions and demonstration functions of STSR on college English teaching are thereby put forward.

Keywords: College English teaching, STSR teaching strategy, English teaching investigation, English learning investigation, Teaching reform

1. Introduction

Some problems were revealed in the results of an investigation (**announced on April 2nd, 2004**) on college English teaching and learning in 357 universities throughout China conducted by the Ministry of Education, which are as follows:

(1) Laggard teaching ideas, mainly reflected in the failure in coping with unity and diversity, insufficient **stress** on the comprehensive mastery of foreign languages **but** excessive emphasis on vocabulary teaching. (2) One-fold and out-of-date teaching **patterns and methods**. With most classes in large groups, a totally traditional one-way teaching is actually conducted in which teachers keep talking while students keep listening passively. According to investigations, only 37% of classes have less than 40 students and even 20 universities have over-80-student classes, which, of course, fails to encourage students' enthusiasm for English learning or to develop their comprehensive mastery of English. (3) Imperfect staff construction. Firstly, with their heavy loads of work, most teachers have no time or energy for teaching research or training; secondly, seen from the aspect of titles (only 27.1% of them with senior titles and as many as 33.1% are assistants, 72% with bachelor's degree and only 22% with master's degree or the above), the whole staff need improving; thirdly, due to some reasons in treatment and title assessment, some teachers are less responsible for their teaching, influencing college English teaching to some extent. (4) Exam-oriented teaching pattern is still in existence. Due to some teachers' poor knowledge of Band 4 and Band 6 examinations, excessive emphasis has been put on passing exams. Such an exam-oriented teaching will, of course, fail to improve students' practical abilities in English or to help students to enjoy the great interest in English learning.

It is shown in the above investigations that some factors have influenced China's college English teaching, especially caused students' poor English capacities. It should be realized that college English, above all, is an organic part of higher education. Education, just as its name suggests, involves "to develop" as well as "to teach". Just as Professor Lu Gusun once said, plentiful exercises tactics and skill training which are over mechanical and only take the specific requirements relevant to future vacation instead of all-round development as the ultimate goal have narrowed some students' thoughts and neglected their cultivation. In addition, according to Einstein, professional knowledge input tends to turn students into useful machines, not persons able to develop harmoniously (Zhang, 1999, p 119). A college English learner is expected to learn how to learn English independently, to have high comprehensive cultural quality as well as a proficient command of English. As far as EFL learners are concerned, an effective learning method suitable for themselves is particularly important (Wu, 2005). According to widely accepted Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, the structure of the language people habitually use influence the ways they think and behave (Dai & He, 2002, p.130). Consequently, English teaching involves not only language itself, but the culture in which it originates, even the thoughts and behaviors embodied in the culture. In addition, with no stereotyped method for English teaching, specific methods should be explored for different students.

In Qingdao University of Science and Technology in which the project team is located, all classes have over 50 students. In the aspect of staff, in spite of **the fact that** nearly 65% of teachers **have** master's degree, only 52.7% teachers have taught over 6 years in universities, only 18.5% have taught over 10 years, only 14.5% of them are associate professors or above and only 1 teacher is a professor. As is shown in the above statistics, the structure of college English teachers in this university is not so reasonable. In China's new reform of college English, teachers' teaching methods and their practical utility of these methods are particularly critical. Therefore, although our university is not among the 180 demonstration universities listed by the Education Ministry in 2004, the project team has conducted research on the college English teaching strategies in our university in order to improve our college English teaching, convert teachers' ideas and to optimize class teaching, in which we have been devoted to investigating college English teachers' teaching methods and means, exploring methods suitable for our practical situation, providing empirical support for the theoretical research on our college English teaching strategy, analyzing STSR (Special Teaching Strategy and Research) and putting it into teaching practice.

2. Research Method and Sample Selection

2.1 Preparatory Research Result

It is shown in the preparatory investigation that a universal teaching method is used for students majoring in arts, science as well as **engineering**, hence lacking in practicability and individuality. Actually, teaching strategy is more or less related to the operation of teaching institutions, social and cultural background, teachers' teaching ideas and their personality, teachers' learning as well as teaching experience. In addition, not only the form of Band 4 and Band 6 Test but some factors related to learners (size of class, cognitive style, motivation, emotion, current language ability, leaning ideas, etc.) play an important role in teaching methods and teachers' roles. In a word, a variety of teaching factors interact with each other, influencing teaching strategy directly or indirectly. In our opinion, an effective teaching method should be based on different characteristics of different majors and the diversity of learners at different levels.

2.2 Methods and Sample Selection of STSR Teaching Strategy Research

2.2.1 Questionnaire Investigation, Interview and Sample Selection

From March 2006 to March 2008, the project team conducted an investigation on 66 college English teachers and 600 learners selected randomly from Grade 2005 and Grade 2006 (Note 2) by attending lectures, holding discussion sessions, issuing questionnaires and analyzing samples. In order to ensure the validity of the investigation, we have selected male and female learners in nearly the same proportion as that between male and female students in the whole university and nearly the same number of students from Grade 2005 and 2006 respectively. Altogether 66 questionnaires were delivered to teachers, 55 of which were valid (validity rate: 90%) and 600 questionnaires were given to students, 593 of which were valid (validity rate: 98.8%). When designing our questionnaires, we referred to the questionnaire pattern in *A Research on English Talent Cultivation Pattern Featuring the Coordination from Primary School to University* (Mei, 2004, Appendix) and a thesis collection named *The Key to English Learning* (Wen, 2003, Appendix) and adopted "7-Grade Difference" as the core of question design. Besides, SPSS software was used to process relevant data.

2.2.2 Comparative Method and Sample Selection

Table 1. The difference in English capacity between experimental class and control class ($X \pm S$)

Class	N	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Comprehensive
Experimental class	50	11.20±4.37	13.76±5.67	17.16±5.97	14.22±6.53	56.29±21.98
Control class	50	11.79±4.71	14.74±5.54	16.52±6.26	13.66±6.25	56.57±22.09
T		-0.55	-0.74	0.47	0.38	-0.07
p		>0.05	>0.05	>0.05	>0.05	>0.05

In our questionnaire investigation, 100 students from Grade 2005 were selected randomly as comparative research samples. They were divided into two classes according to their pre-experiment English level and the proportion between male and female students, one of which was trained in English with STSR teaching strategy (experimental class) while the other was taught with the universal teaching method (control class) for an academic year. In order to prove whether there is obvious difference in English capacity between the two classes, the project team conducted pre-experiment tests in listening, speaking, reading, writing and comprehensive abilities, the result of which is shown in Table 1. According to this table, there is no obvious difference between the two groups before our experiment.

The parallel method was adopted in the whole comparative research, as is shown in Table 2. Then T test was conducted to analyze the result of our experiment.

Table 2. The pattern of parallel experimental design

Group	Experimental process		
Experimental group	Pre-experiment assessment	STSR teaching	After-experiment assessment
Control group	Pre-experiment assessment	Common college English teaching	After-experiment assessment

After the experiment, the two classes were tested at the same difficulty level and the students from the experimental class were surveyed about their psychological reactions to STSR teaching method in the form of questionnaires, hence drawing the conclusion about the influence STSR teaching method has on college English teaching.

3. Result and Analysis

3.1 Investigation Statistics and Analysis

It is shown in our investigation that an insufficient number of teachers are burdened with excessive workload, there is a severely unreasonable staff structure in terms of age, gender, title and knowledge and too little time has been spent on research.

3.1.1 Insufficient Teachers and Heavy Workload

In spite of the great efforts in introducing excellent teachers in Qingdao University of Science and Technology, there is still a severe shortage in college English teachers. 66 teachers have to take up English classes for 9000 undergraduates and over 1000 postgraduates. Accordingly, they have over 10 periods every week on average and nearly 60% of them have over 12 periods. All classes have a large size, over 50 students.

3.1.2 Unreasonable Staff Structure in Age, Gender, Title and Knowledge (shown in Table 3)

Table 3. The Survey of college English teachers' background in Qingdao University of Science and Technology

Items	Statistical results				
Gender	Male			Female	
	10, 18.2%			45, 81.8%	
Major	English teaching	Linguistics	Literature	Translation	Others
	10	13	16	8	8
Age	≤25	25-35	35-45	≥45	
	2, 3.6%	42, 76.4%	9, 16.4%	2, 3.6%	
Where to come from	Urban area		Town	Countryside	
	31, 56.4%		14, 25.4%	10, 18.2%	
Education background	Bachelor	Master's degree candidate	Master	Doctor's degree candidate	Doctor
	11, 20.0%	9, 16.4%	34, 61.8%	1, 1.8%	0, 0.0%
Length of teaching	≤2	2-5	6-10	11-20	≥20
	10, 18.2%	14, 25.4%	21, 38.2%	5, 9.1%	5, 9.1%
Title	Assistant		Lecturer	Associate professor	Professor
	20, 36.4%		27, 49.1%	7, 12.7%	1, 1.8%

According to an investigation conducted by Xia Jimei in 2000 and 2001, English teachers with master's degree only accounted for 22.9% of the total (Xia, 2002, p.35). As is shown in Mei Deming's questionnaire survey based on 44 universities and 447 valid questionnaires in 2004, 62.25% of the examinees had taught less than 5 years, 60.88% of them were assistants and 65% of them were graduates (Mei, 2004, p.72). As is revealed in Table 3, among all the college English teachers in Qingdao Universities of Science and Technology, 63.6% of them have master's degree; the ratio between male and female teachers is 1:4.5; about 80% of them are below 35 years old; 43.6% of them have taught less than 5 years and 81.8% less than 10 years; 36.4% are assistants, 49.1% are lecturers, only 14.5% are associate

professors and only 1 is a professor. Obviously, due to a great number of teachers introduced in the recent years, the education background of the college English teachers in our university is far better than the average national level several years ago. However, some problems are still hindering the sound development of our college English teaching, such as an excessively large proportion of young teachers, especially young women teachers as well as assistants, insufficient education background compared with the teachers in other majors (none with doctor's degree) and the severely imbalanced gender ratio. Besides, in the aspect of theory, only a few teachers have learned theories on language teaching and less than 40% of them are equipped with theories on second language acquisition and English teaching.

3.1.3 Little Time on Research and Research Activities with Mere Formality

Due to their heavy workload, most teachers have no enough energy for both teaching and research. In this case, even those young teachers specialized in English teaching will not be devoted to the research on course books and teaching methods and still turn to the traditional methods to teach, even only following the fixed rules. Just as is shown in the questionnaires, this method has hardly achieved favorable effects.

Table 4. Students' evaluation on their college English teachers

Items	1. Totally satisfied	2. Satisfied	3. Basically satisfied	4. Mild satisfied	5. Basically dissatisfied	6. Dissatisfied	7. Totally dissatisfied
Number of students	9	17	86	180	209	56	36
Percentage	1.53%	2.87%	14.50%	30.35%	35.24%	9.44%	6.07%

Furthermore, we have found in our investigation that the current situation of college English teachers' research achievements gives some cause for anxiety. 58.18% teachers have no experience in compiling course books or have no idea about that; over 54.55% of them haven't participated in any teaching research projects, not to mention hosting any, or have no idea about how to apply for it and how to write a project argument; 41.82% of them haven't done any mathematical statistics or don't know how to do that; and only 16.36% of them have experience in quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Among all the theses published by the teachers, only 27.27% of them have some original ideas or are based on careful study and only a few have been published on widely acknowledged core journals. Besides, as many as 87.27% of the teachers haven't been abroad for advanced course; 90.91% of them haven't attended any foreign language teaching seminars held abroad, which is much higher than the statistics of 84% and 84% respectively given by Xia Jimei in her investigation. With college teachers' important role in not only cultivating high-quality talents but also promoting scientific research, this current situation really calls for our attention. In order to improve students' English level, college English teachers' quality should be improved first.

3.2 The Result of Comparative Experiment and Analysis

3.2.1 The Influence of STSR on Students' Overall English Capacities

Table 5. The comparison between the two classes' English capacities ($X \pm S$)

English capacity	Class	N	Pre-experiment assessment	After-experiment assessment	r	t	p
Listening	Experimental class	50	11.20±4.37	12.96±3.28	0.93	5.02**	<0.01
	Control class	50	11.78±4.71	12.29±5.22	0.91	1.08	>0.05
	T		-0.54	1.37			
	P		>0.05	>0.05			
Speaking	Experimental class	50	13.76±5.67	15.65±4.65	0.94	4.08	<0.05
	Control class	50	14.74±5.54	15.01±5.49	0.91	0.56	>0.05
	T		-0.74	1.28			
	P		>0.05	>0.05			

Reading	Experimental class	50	17.16±5.97	20.59±4.76	0.93	11.19**	<0.01
	Control class	50	16.53±6.26	16.54±6.56	0.85	0.04	>0.05
	T		0.46	2.81**			
	P		>0.05	<0.01			
Writing	Experimental class	50	14.22±6.53	19.32±5.54	0.97	16.43**	<0.01
	Control class	50	13.67±6.25	13.71±7.22	0.95	0.32	>0.05
	T		0.39	2.97**			
	P		>0.05	<0.01			
Comprehensive	Experimental class	50	56.29±21.98	68.61±17.29	0.97	11.82**	<0.01
	Control class	50	56.58±22.09	57.39±22.80	0.95	0.78	>0.05
	T		-0.08	2.26*			
	P		>0.05	<0.05			

The comparative result between the experimental and control class throughout the whole experiment is shown in Table 5, in which the vertical columns display the comparison between the two classes' English capacities while the horizontal ones display the comparison between their pre-experimental English capacities and after-experimental ones.

According to Table 5, students in the experimental class have made rapid progress in their English capacities after one-year STSR training ($P < 0.01$ except for speaking in which $P < 0.05$), while those in the control class haven't improved their English greatly ($P > 0.05$). In addition, there is obvious difference between the two classes' comprehensive English capacities ($t = 2.26^*$, $P < 0.05$) especially in reading and writing ($t = 2.81^*$, 2.97^* , $p < 0.01$). However, there is no obvious difference in their listening and speaking capacities. That is to say, in spite of STSR's function in improving students' English reading, writing and comprehensive English capacities, it is not so effective in speaking and listening.

3.2.2 The Influence of STSR on Different Students' English Capacities

In order to further study STSR's influence on students' English capacities, the project team also made a comparative research on students at different levels (three levels including excellent, intermediate and poor students). The result is displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. The comparison among different students' English capacities

Group Item	Excellent students		Intermediate students		Poor students	
	Pre-experiment assessment	After-experiment assessment	Pre-experiment assessment	After-experiment assessment	Pre-experiment assessment	After-experiment assessment
Listening	16.17±1.52 $t = 0.75$	16.55±2.14 $p > 0.05$	11.54±2.31 $t = 0.81$	12.02±1.84 $p > 0.05$	6.25±2.47 $t = 5.96^{**}$	10.21±2.90 $p < 0.01$
Speaking	20.21±1.61 $t = 0.44$	20.41±1.80 $p > 0.05$	14.25±2.91 $t = 2.86^{**}$	16.76±3.60 $p < 0.01$	6.98±1.89 $t = 6.01^{**}$	11.24±2.52 $p < 0.01$
Reading	25.12±1.44 $t = 6.12^{**}$	26.50±1.92 $p < 0.01$	17.02±2.34 $t = 8.26^{**}$	20.01±2.02 $p < 0.01$	10.94±1.87 $t = 15.22^{**}$	15.95±1.57 $p < 0.01$
Writing	21.94±2.31 $t = 5.62^{**}$	23.15±0.95 $p < 0.01$	14.25±2.78 $t = 11.12^{**}$	19.27±2.24 $p < 0.01$	6.05±2.84 $t = 22.13^{**}$	12.14±2.34 $p < 0.01$
Comprehensive	84.05±5.34 $t = 8.95^{**}$	89.92±5.27 $p < 0.01$	57.12±9.78 $t = 11.03^{**}$	71.45±8.23 $p < 0.01$	31.05±7.31 $t = 18.57^{**}$	47.97±6.34 $p < 0.01$

According to Table 6, intermediate, poor as well as excellent students have achieved great progress during the experiment (excellent: $t = 8.95^{**}$, $P < 0.01$; intermediate: $t = 11.03^{**}$, $p < 0.01$; poor: $t = 18.57^{**}$, $p < 0.01$), which proves STSR's great influence on students at different levels, especially excellent and intermediate students due to their greater

concern about teachers' teaching styles, some information related to their majors and their prospect. In reading and writing, STSR takes great effects ($P < 0.01$), especially for intermediate and poor students; as for listening and speaking, STSR has different influences on different students (no obvious influence on excellent students' listening as well as speaking: $P > 0.05$; no obvious influence on intermediate students' listening while important for their speaking; important for poor students' listening and speaking: $P < 0.05$). The above result shows its great importance in intermediate and poor students' listening and speaking.

3.2.3 Summary of Comparative Experiment

The following findings have been made in our comparative experiment: 1) if used reasonably, STSR can help students to develop their English potentials and therefore to develop their English capacities in examinations and communication. Besides, comparatively, STSR has greater influence on excellent and intermediate students than on poor ones due to their less attention to teachers' summary than the basic knowledge in their course books caused by their low English level. 2) when students at different levels are compared, STSR mainly takes effects in their reading and writing abilities instead of speaking and listening ones. After all, students' interest in English will influence their enthusiasm for English learning, hence causing different effort they make when learning a language. As for STSR, it mainly focuses on students' written capacities instead of oral ones (quite similar to the traditional teaching method in this aspect). 3) due to great importance on knowledge extension in STSR, intermediate and poor students will be helped a lot in their reading capacities.

4. Conclusion

According to the above investigation, statistics and comparative experiment, the following points should be attached importance to in order to improve teachers' English teaching as well as students' English learning.

4.1 Lessening College English Teachers' Workload

Only with less workload will college English teachers have time and energy to study students and teaching methods carefully, hence constantly updating their own knowledge structure, providing students with what they really need to improve their English capacities.

4.2 Taking Measures to Give Teachers Opportunity in Advanced Studies

Teachers' teaching process is accompanied by learning activities. Both new and old teachers are expected to update their knowledge structure from time to time. During this course, experienced teachers should give guidance on new teachers' teaching ideas, teaching methods, teaching theories and research methods. Meanwhile, new teachers should attach importance to psychology, philosophy, morality and other courses related to their professional quality. Besides, more opportunity should be created for teachers to go abroad for further study, during which they will have access to foreign culture, hence more capable of cultivating high-quality students.

4.3 Carrying out Teaching Research Activities

Only in teaching research activities, teachers have chance to discuss with each other to overcome their shortcomings by learning from others' strengths, to equip themselves with perfect teaching methods and means and to teach students in a scientific and effective way.

4.4 STSR's Demonstrative Effect on College English Teaching

The three aspects including language skills, knowledge and quality should be emphasized in college English teaching. No matter in class-based reading and writing courses or computer/network-based audiovisual courses, both students' basic knowledge and their practical abilities especially those in listening, speaking and writing should be focused on. Meanwhile, they should be taught about the art of public speaking, argumentation, communication as well as their expressive abilities and wide knowledge. In short, emphasis should be shifted from imitation to independent thinking and profound cognition, in which students begin with collecting useful information, then proceed to acquire knowledge they need, summarize their experience and finally embody it into their intelligence.

Certainly, STSR teaching strategy is only a microcosm of all, hence not able to replace others. However, it is found that this strategy really has done a lot in improving students' English capacities. During their teaching course, teachers are expected to expand their mind, improve their teaching standard, explore more scientific and effective methods in order to stimulate students' enthusiasm and passion for English learning and improve their English capacities consequently. We hope that our investigation will be followed by greater achievements in this field.

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Notes

Note 1. STSR is the abbreviation for Special Teaching Strategy and Research, which means different strategies should be used for different majors.

Note 2. The project team conducted investigations on college English teachers and non-English students respectively. The former covers teachers' teaching background, teaching interest, emotion and ideas, their preference for different teaching methods or means while the latter mainly includes students' learning background, size of class, current language level, motivation, learning ideas, emotional factors, evaluation of teachers' teaching methods, learning habits and styles and so on. All the data in this article come from our investigation.

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Leisure Life of Elderly Residents in China: A Case Study of Difference between Rural and Urban Area

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Abstract

This paper examined the current situation of leisure life of aging population in urban and rural area from an angle of history, policy, culture, and economy, revealing the differences in the leisure life between rural and urban elderly residents. While the Chinese government is proud of the achievement in making its people's life longer, it has to tackle the challenge of how to make the leisure life of aging population as an important part of their later year's life not just for the aged urban residents but especially for the aged rural residents. The underlying social and economic reasons that may account for such differences are discussed extensively. It is hoped the paper will be somewhat conducive to this area of study.

Keywords: Leisure life, Family planning policy, Domicile registration system

Introduction

China has seen an unprecedented economic growth for recent ten years with its GDP at an increasing rate of 7-8 % annually. With the fast development of China's economy, Chinese people's living standard has advanced greatly. Meanwhile, China is undergoing a rapid growth both in the proportion of the total population and in sheer numbers of elderly people. Population aging is becoming one of the most significant demographic changes in China with the elderly share projected to reach 27 percent in 2050. Such a demographic shift combined with the other two social economic changes, namely, increased living standard as the result of 1980s economic reform in general and an extended period of post-work life for older adults living in cities because of the institutionalization of retirement in particular, have made aged persons' lives, especially their leisure life an increasingly important topic of social conversations in China.

1. Aging Population

In past 50 years the population more than doubled with a net increase of 14,349,000 per year (see Table 1). As early as in 70s of last century, Chinese government, realizing the serious consequences of population increase, launched the family planning campaign, encouraging one family with only one child. The rapid population increase was, thereafter, brought under control with less of 300 millions of birth being achieved since then. However, due to its huge population base number, China still sees a net increase of 14,349,000 population annually. Such a growth pattern will continue a long period of time as UN predicted and, therefore, constitutes a heavy burden on China's socio-economic development. What matters is it will cause a potential hindrance in the government effort to improve the leisure life for aging population, especially the aging population in rural area. With a 132 millions of population older than 60, the fifth national census predicted that in 50 years from now on there would be an annual increase of 3.2% of aging population. The census experts pointed out that there could be a 400 millions of population older than 60 in 2040 year. That is to say China will have a 1/4 of population older than 60 in 2040. It is a big challenge for the Chinese government to take in dealing with aging population problem. As table 1 shows, since the fourth nationwide population census in 1990, the absolute number of rural population has begun to decrease. That means the moving of rural population towards urban area has speeded up, and the capacity of the urban area to absorb rural population has improved a great deal. Beginning in 2000 China started the reform of domicile registration system in some cities and many medium and small-size county-based towns, which relax the control of rural domicile registration changing into urban domicile registration and, as a result, lead to the speeding of urbanization process to a great extent.

2. Rural-Urban Differences

The issue of Chinese aged people's leisure life will be deceptively simple if we speak of it without taking a closer look at the country's demographic changes in relation to the changing social-economic realities. The two aspects intrinsically intertwine with each other and together complicate the topic of aged people's leisure life to a great extent. China has seen a dramatic economic growth over the past ten years with its GDP increasing at a rate of 7-8 % annually. However, many challenges have emerged along with the fast economic development. Amidst the rural-urban tension is becoming

increasingly pronounced as various on-going demographic and social-economic changes, such as mass migration of young populations from rural areas to cities and enlarging social and economic inequalities, converge. The rural-urban gap in China has long existed as a result of the country's dichotomous societal structure since the establishment of the People's Republic, which had been imposed and enhanced by the well-developed system of household registration. Specifically, the household registration system (HRS) was meant to strictly control the movement of population, especially between rural and urban areas, in support of government's planned economy practice prior to early 1980s, including restrictive labor policies and tying distribution of food to official residence (Suyala, 2003). Except for effectively binding people to the locality in which they hold official household registration, the system also creates huge differences in the lives of rural and urban residents, with the urban dwellers entitled to more social services such as favorable social security assistance, more and better education resources, lower income taxes (relative to miscellaneous tolls on farmers), and many other privileges. The rural-urban differences, among other increasingly visible occupational, gender, ethnic, and educational differences, have become even more apparent since the massive economic reforms of the early 1980s, as China started to adopt aspects of a market economy and shifted the goal of the state from socioeconomic equality to economic development and growth (Riley, 2004). According to the World Bank, despite the great advancement in Chinese people's living standard over the past 20 years, 11.5% of China's rural population still lived below the poverty line in 1998 (Riley). Moreover, the urban/rural income ratio increased from 1.37:1 in 1985 to 2.05:1 in 2000 (Liu & Wen, 2004).

3. Urban Residents' Leisure Life

Facing the challenging situation of aging population, the Chinese government is planning to develop a so-called 'silver industry', a special industry dedicated to the production of service products to meet the aging population's needs for leisure life. Of course, the 'silver industry' is mainly designed for the aged urban residents who are mostly retirees of government workers, teachers, state-owned enterprise employees, professionals, scientific and technical workers, military officers, etc. and, therefore, qualified to get the guaranteed government pension every month after retiring. The word silver here means aging population whose hair look like silver color. The 'Silver Industry' is focused on such areas as rest home (somewhat like nursing home for the aged in America), scheduled tourism, specially designed dresses and household ware, health care service, and bank service. The aging population, as a special consuming group, is influencing the market in terms of consuming behavior and consuming conception. The experts in this area predict that the 'silver industry' will become one of the fastest growing industry in 21st century with a huge commercial opportunity in leisure market. Of the five areas of 'silver industry' the rest home is certainly a fastest growing area. The rest home has got prevalent in recent years due to its flexible operation and a variety of types based on the great demand by aging population in market. There are mainly three types of rest home. The first type is invested and operated by private companies for the profit-making purpose. The local government encourages private company to invest in rest home by freeing them business taxes for first few years. The second is subsidized partly by local level of government and operated by neighborhood community committee. The neighborhood community committee is the smallest administrative body of local government and whose members are elected by the residents and approved by a higher level of local government. In addition of these two types of rest homes, there is the third type of one called family-based rest home for the aged who have special needs or reasons such as loving to be alone, being particular about foods, disliking to leave old house, physical health problem, lower family income or lower government pension, etc. They choose to stay at family-based rest home because of different personal disposition, culture and education background as well as personal economic condition. The family-based rest home is the most popular type of rest home for the aged, and therefore, is encouraged and supported by local governments for several reasons; first of all, it satisfies the demand of most of aged population at a lower monthly cost of 300-500 RMB for single and 600-800 RMB for couple. Second, it makes them feel really at home with the care or service delivered and done at their own home. Third, its care delivery system is very flexible for different needs at different period of time, which can be fulfilled with just a phone call at home. Every day, if they like, they will be taken to amuse themselves for dancing, singing, chess or poker playing, reading, tea gathering party, TV watching, spots exercising and so on. The reason for its popularity is that it is financially supported and subsidized by local government, and is very efficient with less cost for better solution to the population aging problem. The family-based rest home is just one part of service network system for the aged residents at the neighborhood community level. Usually, each neighborhood community is required to establish residential service center, medical station, health archive room, recreational activity center, special senior school, sports playing ground, tea and chess playing room, reading room, and so on. All these leisure facilities along with rest homes constitute a service network for the aged residents, who reside under the jurisdiction of their neighborhood community committees. The tourism specially arranged for the aging population has been well received in recent years, especially at the off season for some benefits such as lower cost of hotel accommodation, flight fare, admission tickets, more choices of tourism products, easier reservation of desired hotel, avoiding the crowding of peak season. In recent years the majority of EU countries have lifted the ban on travel in these countries by ordinary Chinese tourists. Many of aged urban residents, most of whom are retirees of government workers, teachers, and professionals, showed their great

enthusiasm to join the tour group to these EU countries. Many of Asian countries have become outbound tourist destination for Chinese tourists before with a noticeable proportion of tourists older than 60. The tourism market for aging population has become a particular targeted market both in world and at home.

4. Difference of Leisure Life between Rural-Urban Aged Residents

In order to have a better understanding of the difference between rural-urban aged residents in terms of leisure life and living quality, a sample survey was taken using mailing questionnaires. The questionnaires are mainly composed of 5 big categories of questions regarding leisure life and leisure participation by rural and urban aged residents. 500 hundred questionnaires were sent out respectively to a neighborhood community of Hangzhou city and a suburban village-based town. We got back 469 questionnaires from the neighborhood community and 452 from the town, of which 456 questionnaires and 435 questionnaires are respectively valid. For the sake of comparison of relevant data collected from these questionnaires, the following table 2 was made omitting the parts of gender, age, marriage status, number of family members, education background, Personal incomes or earnings.

The table 2 shows a huge difference or imbalance between urban-rural aged residents in terms of leisure activities, leisure conception as well the spending on leisure. 81.7% urban aged residents have at least one chance to travel, while only 25.2 % of rural aged residents have such chance, which is 69.15 % of travel less than urban aged residents. As for the daily doings, 49.1 % of the urban aged residents love to do reading, fishing, sports, arts, film and TV watching, radio listening, chess playing, and other types of leisure activities with another 21.8 % of them attending special senior school for fun. Whereas, 60% of rural aged residents love to do household chores and help look after grandchildren with only 14.6 % of them like to engage in the same leisure as the urban aged do. In regard to expending on tourism, it is obvious that urban aged residents have much stronger financial ability than rural aged to enjoy tourism. The reason for it is the majority of urban aged residents are guaranteed to get government pensions which make them have their own disposable income for tourism or other kinds of leisure activities. On the question of how often you travel out per year, there are 74.8 % of rural aged residents who travel out zero compared with only 18.3% of urban aged residents choosing the same question. For the question of what favorite thing you like to do most, 29.3 % of rural aged residents love to enjoy the time of playing with grandchildren, while 32.1 % of urban aged residents love to travel for good time, which shows their different leisure culture and life outlook. The Table 2 also indicates leisure facilities are scarce to be available for the rural aged residents with 63.6 % of them zero access to leisure facilities. There truly exists a huge gap or imbalance between rural-urban aged residents in relation to leisure life and leisure conception.

5. Discussion

Compared with the leisure life of urban aged residents, the rural aged residents are not so lucky. Here rural residents are those who were registered as so-called agricultural domicile as opposed to urban residents who are registered as non-agricultural domicile. The domicile registration system, based on each household as a basic unit, was first established in 1949 when Chinese Communist Party founded People's Republic of China. Those who resided in countryside or county-based towns were naturally registered as rural residents, namely peasants, while those who lived in urban area registered as urban residents. It is this kind of domicile registration system that makes the lives of rural-urban residents as different as sky from soil in many respects. First of all, it keeps the rural residents from residing in urban area. Second, it keeps them from finding a job in state-owned enterprise or government institutions. Third, it keeps them from enjoying the same health care and pension as those enjoyed by urban residents. The last one, the domicile registration system keeps their children from going to study in urban area for better education unless their children can successfully pass a nationwide university admission test, only then can they change their status from agricultural domicile to non-agricultural domicile and enjoy all the same government benefits as enjoyed by urban residents. That is why the nationwide university admission test once a year is regarded by them as a test jumping from earth to paradise, which decides their destiny whole lifetime.

Now let us analyze the background of why the domicile registration system was set up in 1949 by Chinese government from an angle of history, politics, and economy. As we know that the 50s of last century is what is called 'cold war' age with former Stalin Russia and America as two big opposing groups, socialist and capitalist. As a member of Russian socialist group, China followed almost every things practiced by Russia at that time, especially its policy of state planning economy as opposed to the market economy. Under such a political and economic background, it is natural for Chinese government to establish domicile registration system, as it makes state planning economy possible and easy to be implemented. Actually, state planning economy is rationing economy with almost everything in the market being rationed by government and consumed by ration card. The ration card was issued to the urban residents according to their domicile registration number. The state planning economy has made consuming goods and foods very scarce for shopping in market. But no matter how scarce they are, the urban residents are guaranteed to get them with ration card. However, the ration card is not issued to rural residents because of their status of agricultural domicile. The state planning economy seriously dampen people's initiative to make a good life, especially the peasants' initiative to grow what they think can produce better economic effects in field. They were asked to grow what the government planned to

grow in field. For instance, in order to meet a rice production target set by the government, the peasants had to cut down fruit trees and turn orchard into paddy field even though the orchard could produce much better economic effects than paddy field. Under the state planning economy, all the citizens were supposed to work for the state, and in return the state takes care of everything for them, especially for the urban residents. As peasants don't have the same health care and pension as urban residents have when they get old, they have to turn to the traditional solution by raising sons and daughters as life supporter for their later years. The children are required to take care of their old parents by relevant state laws. As a thousand-year traditional culture in China, the parents, especially the parents in rural area, must work very hard to raise children generation after generation so that the grown-up children would in return take care of them when they get old. An old Chinese saying goes that raising sons is for the preparation of old time. So it is no wonder the daily doings for 60 % of rural aged residents are to help look after grandchildren and do household chore, and 29.3 % of them enjoy the time of playing with grandchildren as their most favorite thing to do. The more sons you have, the happier you are supposed to be when you get old. Then who come to take care of those, rural or urban, who have no son or daughter to depend upon? The government provides what is called 'five guarantee provisions' for those who are 'three no', namely no life supporters, no income sources for life, and no labor ability to earn. The 'five guarantee provisions' guarantees to provide food, clothing, living place, medical treatment, and burial service free of charge as the lowest basic living standard. The system was established as a counterpart to the retirement pension and government-sponsored rest home care commonly provided for urban older people. However, the "Five Guarantees" system has been poorly maintained due to long-existing financial problems (Wu, 2003). According to a survey conducted in 10 counties/villages in Hunan province, over 7000 *three-nos* people were left unattended (Zou, 1999). Even people living upon the "Five Guarantees" support could hardly say their lives were truly guaranteed in that their needs for medical care were often ignored due to lack of funds. As a result, most rural residents turn to offspring (if they have any at all) for support and rely on family for care in later years. This is reflected in our findings about rural elderly persons' source of income (refer to Table 2). Nevertheless, the lack of access to state support has caused an extreme sense of insecurity toward life among rural aged people.

On the whole, most rural residents are not covered by the social security system, which has provided urban dwellers with public support in every aspect of life from housing, health care, and education, to retirement pension or endowment insurance (Xu, 2003). Accordingly, most state investments in infrastructure, communications, schools, and other institutions were made in urban areas. On the other hand, rural residents received discriminative treatment such as very basic health care and "Five Guarantees" support for those who could not support themselves (Zhou, 2004). However, even these basic services have been considerably cut off by government since the country started to shift toward a market-oriented economy in the early 1980s. For instance, public health subsidies were considerably reduced when the Chinese government started to privatize many of its functions including health care, the access to which was guaranteed to all people prior to the 1980s. The withdrawal of state support in health care has resulted in an estimated 90% of rural residents lacking medical coverage. While the relatively better-off urban residents can turn to private fee-for-service medical care, most rural residents are unable to afford these increasingly expensive health services, if they are available at all.

However, we need to point out that the state-supported rest home system in urban areas is also facing many challenges. Currently, only a very small portion of Chinese urban older adults lives in nursing homes. According to a survey conducted in Shanghai, only 5.7% of people aged 50 and older are willing to move into nursing homes (Chen & Zhang, 1999). Such a low willingness for using public rest home services among the urban aged population may be largely because most urban elderly persons have a steady income (in forms of pension), which renders them able to afford a better life at home as opposed to living in a rest home. However, now and in the future, public support is to be in great need as the impacts of changing family structure take shape in China. The country's birth planning policy has resulted in increasing numbers of families of inverted pyramid shape, which means in each family fewer children will be available to care for elderly members. It is almost inevitable that a large number of older people in China will have to rely on public services for support in the future. Thus, the government needs to invest more heavily in developing a comprehensive supporting system for both rural and urban older adults.

6. Conclusion

The state planning economy has created domicile registration system, and domicile registration system has given rise to the huge gap between rural-urban aged residents in term of leisure life and leisure conception. More than ten years ago, China abandoned state planning economy for most part of it and turned to market economy with Chinese character, which allows private-owned businesses to compete with state-owned enterprises in market, and encourages peasants to grow whatever they think can produce better economic benefits in field. What is more, the 2000 year saw the reform of domicile registration system in some cities and many medium and small-size county-based towns. The reform has relaxed the control of rural domicile registration changing into urban domicile registration, leading to the speeding of urbanization process to a great extent. A large number of peasants have given up their farmland in order to find a job in cities and, as a result, left many villages lived by only the aged people and kids. It is grandparents who have to take care

of grandchildren for their sons and daughters. Some of aged rural residents have to make a living by doing farming work in field themselves. The population researcher indicate there are 120 million of floating population in China, who were peasants moving from rural areas to urban areas. Most of them are surplus labor in rural area and come to work as unskilled labors in cities for very low earnings. The problem caused by the reform as a by-product is that it has speeded up a population aging in rural area and further widened the gap between rural and urban area. For recent ten years, Chinese economy has kept growing at an increasing rate of 7-8% GDP, with most of the capitals invested in the building of infrastructure and public service facilities in urban area. The job market of manual labor is brisk with a continuing moving of rural labors into cities. However, the government investment in rural area has been decreasing for these years. For a great part of rural population, the living standard has not kept abreast with the rapid economic growth and society progress. The average income of a rural family is about one-fifth of an urban family's. One of the biggest political and economic topic on the central government's agenda now is how to deal with a 'three farming' problem, namely agriculture production, peasants' living quality, and countryside construction. The government has owed too much to these three farming problems since the founding of People's Republic of China in 1949. The problems now have developed to such a serious extent that the all levels of governments are required to exert the utmost to increase the peasants' income level as a biggest political and economic challenge to take. The challenge ahead is terribly huge as we can expect. The good news for the peasants is the central government proclaimed to decrease the agricultural tax year by year until complete revocation of it this year. It can be concluded that unless the government takes efficient measures and policies to narrow down the gap between rural-urban aged residents as we see, the gap will become further widened with the China's continuing economic growth in 21st century.

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Table 1. Population and a Ratio of Urban Residents to Rural Residents from 1952 to 2003 (Ten Thousand)

Year	Total pop.	Urban resident	% of totals	Rural resident	% of totals
1952	57482	7163	12.46	50319	87.54
1957	64653	9949	15.39	54704	84.61
1962	67295	11659	17.33	55636	82.67
1965	72538	13045	17.98	59493	82.02
1970	82992	14424	17.38	68568	82.62
1975	92420	16030	17.34	76390	82.66
1980	98705	19140	19.39	79565	80.61
1985	105851	25094	23.71	80757	76.29
1990	114333	30195	26.41	84138	73.59
1995	121121	35174	29.04	85947	70.96
2000	126743	45906	36.22	80837	63.78
2003	129227	52376	40.53	76851	59.47

Notes to table 1: the data of population before 1982 was made based on the statistics of domicile registration survey; the data of population from 1982 through 1989 were made and adjusted respectively based on the statistics of 1982 and 1989 nationwide census; the data of population from 1990 through 2000 were made and adjusted based on the statistics of 2000 nationwide census. The data of population of 2003 was made according to the calculation of sample population survey. There are total 5 nationwide censuses since the founding of People's Republic of China in 1949, which are 1953, 1964, 1982, 1990, and 2000 respectively.

(Source: Chin Statistic yearbook of 1999, 2001, 2003 published by China Statistic Administration; the statistic bulletin of national economy and society development in 2003.)

Table 2. The Difference of Leisure Life between Rural-Urban Aged Residents

Questions	Item selected	Rural aged residents(%)	Urban aged residents(%)
What is your doings at daytime?	Taking care of and playing with grandchildren	19.6	6.2
	Household chore doing	40.4	15.1
	Attending senior school for fun	1.8	21.8
	Visiting friends at home	12	3.2
	Chess & poker playing, reading, chatting, TV, film, walking for fun, spots, radio, collecting, relaxing rest, dancing, fishing arts, thinking, singing, shopping	14.6	49.1
	Nothing special to do	11.6	4.5
How often do you travel out every year?	Zero	74.8	18.3
	Once	14.8	57.1
	Twice	7.8	18.9
	3 times up	2.6	5.7
What is your expending on tourism per year (RMB)? (¥100 RMB equal to \$780 US dollars)	Less than ¥500	63.4	12.6
	¥500 to ¥1000	19.2	29.4
	¥1000 to ¥2000	9.8	35.7
	¥2000 to ¥3000	5.2	11.7
	¥3000 to ¥4000	1.5	5.1
	¥4000 to ¥5000	0.6	3.4
Which one is your most favorite to do?	Traveling for good time	14.1	32.1
	Special hobbies or interests	12.2	16.7
	Community volunteer work	8.7	16.2
	Enjoying time of playing with grandchildren	29.3	10.7
	Chatting with old friend for fun	24.1	10.8
	Outdoor physical exercising	4.3	7.3
	Other else	7.3	6.2
How many leisure facilities can you enjoy nearby?	zero	63.6	13.4
	So-So	24.6	32.5
	Good	11.6	45.3
	Good enough	0.2	8.8



Perceptions of Indonesian Politics in the Run-up to the 2009 General Election

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Abstract

Indonesia has had ten years of constitutional democracy since the end of the Suharto era. In 2009 the country heads again to a national election. In the lead-up period the major parties have been pressing not only to reduce the number of parties eligible to stand, but to create conditions in which a future president can only come from a major party, which is not the situation at present. At the same time, there are almost weekly reports in the Indonesian media of corruption allegations and charges against both local and national politicians. This paper considers survey and interview data on the opinions of members of the general public in Central Java about the performance of political parties and the political elite in the run-up to the 2009 election. Selected newspaper coverage of political corruption cases is also considered.

Keywords: Indonesia, Politics, General public, Media, 2009 election.

1. The current political climate in Indonesia

1.1 The state of play

According to the General Electoral Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum - KPU*), as of July 2008, 34 political parties are registered and will contest the 2009 Indonesian parliamentary and presidential elections. 16 of these parties are well-established and gained a significant proportion of votes in the 2004 elections. They will undoubtedly be major players in the 2009 general election for seats in the DPR (House of Representatives). The eight most important are: secular-nationalist *PDI-P* (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle); Suharto's secular party *Golkar* (now enjoying

new popularity); traditional Muslim party *PKB* (National Awakening Party); moderate Muslim party *PPP* (United Development Party); modernist Muslim party *PAN* (National Mandate Party); puritan Islamic party *PKS* (Prosperous Justice Party); ultra-modernist Islamic party *PBB* (Moon and Crescent Party); and current president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's *PD* (Democratic Party). Of these eight – two facts should be noted. Firstly, the presence of five Muslim parties in the top eight has the effect of 'splitting' the pro-Muslim vote across the country, especially since there are a number of smaller Muslim parties among the total of 34 parties registered. Secondly, the real power struggle is between *PDI-P* (popularly symbolised in the figure of Megawati Soekarnoputri), *Golkar* (currently symbolised by popular Vice-President Jusuf Kalla), and *PKB* (popularly symbolised in the figure of Abdurrahman Wahid known as Gus Dur). These three figures (and current president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) are regularly satirised and savaged on Indonesian television in programs like *Republik Mimpi*:

Indonesian political parties are the target of fierce criticism by observers, civil society leaders and the general public. Opinion surveys show that Indonesians view the parties as corrupt, unresponsive, self-absorbed and ineffective. Newspaper columns regularly launch stinging attacks on party leaders, and NGOs have focused many of their programs on scrutinising party activities - or the lack thereof (Mietzner, 2008).

However as Mietzner points out, most media criticism comes from a populist perspective and fails to address analytically the problem of party activism. For example, Indonesia's dysfunctional system of party financing leads directly to the option of raising funds from wealthy patrons and power brokers.

1.2 The strengthening of political hegemony

During 2007-2008, Golkar and PDI-P have been attempting to strengthen their hegemony. 'Hegemony' comes from the Greek root *egemon* - leader or ruler. In Gramsci's work, hegemony refers to cultural leadership through which the dominated come to consent to their own domination by an elite. Gramsci's use of hegemony cannot be understood apart from his ideas about the state and civil society (Gramsci, 1971, p. 446), and neither can political party hegemony in Indonesia be understood separately from the Indonesian state. Gramsci considers Marxian superstructure at two levels – 'civil society' (including families, churches, trade unions, schools) and 'political society' (the State). He demonstrates how civil society establishes and organises social interaction and consciousness in highly political ways so that domination by the state-supported political elite is achieved by consent (social hegemony). Gramsci brings 'social hegemony' and 'political government' together in the 'integral State' (p. 267), describing a complex web of practical and theoretical activities through which the elite not only justifies and maintains dominance, but wins the active consent of the subordinated.

In Indonesia, as Mietzner (2008) points out; 'most Indonesian parties are still rooted in distinct social, religious or ideological milieus, and the majority of voters feel reluctant to move between those constituencies. These entrenched divisions in Indonesian society have obstructed the internal modernisation of the mainstream parties, but have also been responsible for their survival', since people continue to loyally vote for the parties they have traditionally supported even though they may not believe the promises of party politicians nor endorse their actions. The relative success of PDI-P and Golkar candidates in local elections across the country in the past three years have given the two big parties confidence that they can build upon their existing dominance of the national parliament.

Not only have the two traditional rival parties seriously considered a coalition, which would ensure their absolute control of parliament, they have dominated parliamentary debates dealing with electoral regulation reform. For example, Golkar and PDI-P held joint meetings in Medan on 20 June 2007, and in Palembang on 24 July 2007, to discuss a package of draft political laws (*Paket RUU Politik*),

The proposed laws cover electoral thresholds; electoral districts and district size; party financing and campaign financing; and voting rights for armed forces personnel. The two large parties are arguing for an increase in the current electoral threshold for parties to run in the general election from 3% of seats in the DPR to at least 5% (Baswedan, 2007, p. 330).

A further proposed law is that for each pair of presidential and deputy presidential candidates, their party must have at least 30 per cent of DPR seats, or 30 per cent of the vote - on the grounds that a president needs strong parliamentary support (Baswedan, 2007, p. 331). Certainly President Yudhoyono has struggled at times because his party won only 8 per cent of the 2004 vote and controls only 10 per cent of DPR seats (Baswedan, 2007, p. 324). However, there is general suspicion of the new electoral regulations because they are felt to discriminate heavily against non-mainstream and small political parties in the fielding of candidates. That is, they threaten the spirit of democracy.

As indicated above, the two parties have poured not only energy but billions of rupiah into campaigning for regional and local elections, to the extent that there have been few independent or small party candidates running for office. Candidates must now be nominated by a single political party or a coalition of political parties. So Poppy Darsono - a former photographic model – was not allowed to run independently for governor in the 2008 election in Central Java Province. However, it should be noted that the trend against independent candidates is partly an outcome of the

constitution. Indonesian law forces political parties to establish themselves nationwide, even to the sub-district level. This broad and deep network operates to strengthen the authority of the major parties and offers significant obstacles for new parties to be viably created (Mietzner, 2008), or for independent candidates to gain endorsement.

1.3 Looking towards the 2009 election

It can be argued that recent attempts by the major parties to strengthen their hegemony will have a significant impact on the 2009 elections, both for the parliament and for the presidency. Currently, such attempts tend to reinforce the notion in the public mind that the main agenda of the major electoral players is not only winning on the day, but shoring up their respective power bases. We propose that these recent strategies of domination by major political parties have brought to the surface the dissatisfaction and lack of trust of ordinary Indonesian citizens in the democratic political process. Although the Indonesian people may show strong local loyalties in voting, in essence they do not trust party politics or the political elite, especially the political elite from parties well-established in the DPR (House of Representatives) or the DPRD (Provincial Legislative Council or City Council). In the eyes of ordinary citizens, political parties and members of political elites give the impression of working hard in pursuit of their own ambitions, rather than looking after the interests of their constituencies. Marbawi (2007, p. 17) argues that there is danger in the neglectful regimes of political parties because the threat of civil violence increases. The widespread belief that there is corruption in political circles further undermines the popularity of political parties and increases the likelihood of civil unrest. Mass public frustration, as Marbawi reminds us, can become a serious threat to democracy and to political parties themselves. Evidence of this trend in public response to political corruption and ineffectiveness is shown by frequent wide-ranging protest action and demonstrations about a number of economic and social issues.

2. Research questions and methodology

Given the current political climate as described above, it is productive to examine what ordinary Indonesians think about the actions by political parties and by members of the political elite in the run-up to the 2009 general election. An opinion poll by *Kompas* found that of 837 respondents, 79 per cent agreed that political party orientation was more towards power than towards people's interests. 71.3 per cent thought the political recruitment process was unsatisfactory, and 73.1 per cent thought political parties were marred by internal conflicts and splits among the elite (Sultani, 2007, p. 5). We seek to explore these ideas further in this paper.

2.1 Research questions

Our study posed three main questions:

What do members of the general public think about the performance of political parties and political elites in the run-up to the 2009 general election?

Do social-demographic factors such as level of education, family income, sex, and age affect the way people think about the performance of political parties and the performance of political elites?

How are the mass media, especially the print media, representing political parties and political elites during this period?

2.2 Methodology

The study employed a multi-method strategy consisting of a survey, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis of newspaper reports. The survey was conducted in 2008 in Solo, Central Java, with 180 adult respondents. The survey asked: (a) for social and demographic details of respondents; (b) what the respondents thought of the performance of political parties; and (c) what respondents thought of the performance of political elites. The survey data was subject to a descriptive analysis of frequencies. Correlations were tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient. 15 interviews were conducted with people from a variety of social backgrounds including: garbage collector (*pemulung*); street singers/beggars (*pengamen*); small-scale business-owners; and university students. Interviewees were asked about their views on the performance of political parties and political elites. Finally, political news reports in the following media sources were subject to a textual analysis: *Kompas*, *Jawa Pos* and *Republika* daily newspapers; and *Tempo* weekly news magazine.

3. Survey findings

3.1 Correlations

The survey data was first analysed using calculations of Pearson's coefficient to establish whether there was any correlation between social and demographic variables and responses. The following table summarises the results of this analysis (two-tailed).

Insert Table 1 here.

The two variables which show a significant correlation with both political party performance appraisal and political elite performance appraisal, are family income, and level of education. For the family income variable, there was a significant difference between respondents with a high family income and those with a low family income. Respondents

who reported a high family income tended to have a low opinion of both political party performance and the performance of the political elite. Similarly, respondents who reported a high level of education did not rank the performance of political parties and political elites highly.

3.2 Performance of political parties

Survey questions asked about the performance of political parties according to the following functions: (a) aggregating and articulating the aspirations of the people; (b) leadership recruitment; (c) formation of government; (d) political identity; (e) mass mobilization; (f) social integration.

Insert Table 2 here.

Table 2 shows that over half the respondents were dissatisfied with the performance of political parties in three key areas: aggregating and articulating the aspirations of the people (66.7%); leadership recruitment (51.1%); and social integration (56.1%). Respondents were less dissatisfied with political party performance in the areas of political identity and mass mobilization. Significantly, the highest level of dissatisfaction – two-thirds of respondents – was with the extent to which political parties took account of the wishes of their constituents and represented these in the public domain and the sites of government. We might infer from this that at present Indonesian political parties are not perceived as adequately fulfilling the demands of the citizenry to address their interests.

3.3 Performance of the political elite

To explore views about the performance of the political elite (senior elected decision-makers), respondents were asked about four aspects of their performance: (a) whether the political elite engaged closely with the people; (b) whether the political elite made a serious attempt to strive for what people wanted; (c) whether the political elite demonstrated dedication to serving the public interest; and (d) the orientation of the political elite to the use of power.

Insert Table 3 here.

In summary, less than a quarter of respondents were satisfied with the performance of the political elite. The highest scores for dissatisfaction were in respect to power orientation, and the issue of having a close relationship with the people.

4. Interview data findings

4.1 Performance of political parties

Data from the in-depth interviews tended to confirm public dissatisfaction with the performance of political parties, for example:

It seems to me that the performance of political parties is unsatisfactory. Many people suffer from malnutrition, they have very limited access to education and jobs. Who is in the wrong? They [political parties] do not represent the demands of the people (Tumin, male, 48, garbage collector).

Tumin added that he thought Indonesian political parties ignored *wong cilik* (Javanese: people of low social status). Many comments were made about price increases, for example,

Political parties do not perform in an optimal way to address what people want. Increases in the price of goods, especially fuels, have made people suffer a lot recently (Lusi, female, 44, teacher).

It was also often claimed that people were compelled to articulate their demands by organizing and/or joining protest movements, for example,

So far the performance of political parties has been much less than optimal and because of this people use protest movements to articulate their aspirations. Political parties make very few attempts to get close to their constituents. They only do it during the period of the election campaign (Anti, female, 22, university student).

4.2 Performances of political elites

Interview data confirmed the dissatisfaction of the general public with the performance of the political elite. This frustration was not just with the elected representatives of the two big secular parties, but with Muslim politicians also, for example,

It is very clear that they [political elites] are primarily oriented to power even though they may come from religious [Muslim] groups (Lusi, female, 44, teacher).

It was claimed that members of the political elite run for election to get power and to maintain power rather than dedicating themselves to striving for the demands of the people, for example:

They think only power, power, power. They work much more for their own interests than for the interests of the people. So it is meaningless what they have done so far, whether we are talking about political parties or the political elite. They simply perform badly and so they disappoint the public (Tumin, male, 48, garbage collector).

There were some inferences of nepotism, for instance:

It is far from satisfactory. The Indonesian political elite mostly works for personal interests, including the interests of family and allies, not for the interests of the people (Sardiyo, male, 36, policeman).

There were also some more analytical critical views expressed.

Yes. Politics means power. In Indonesia the political elites performed poorly for a long time, representing only a narrow range of perspectives and interests. So look what's happened now. The interests of the people and the nation are still marginalized by the interests of the political elite - personal interests as well as crony interests. Conflicts of interest therefore often escalate and involve those from many different disenfranchised groups (Sardi, male, 25, junior university lecturer).

Sardi indicates that even though politics is usually understood as an inevitable struggle for power, the Indonesian political elite of the New Order (the Suharto regime) manipulated power unfairly. He implies that even now, after democratic reform, the political elite still seems to care little either for the demands of the people or for dealing with the problems of the nation. He points to clashes of interest between the political elite and a range of lobby groups, which spills over into demonstrations and civil unrest.

It was claimed that the interests of the political party itself were inevitably defended over the interests of the people, for example:

Members of the political elite are put there by their political parties. However, members of the political elite that often criticize the system fall out of favour with the party leaders. So the demands of the people are subsequently marginalized. It is easier for members of the political elite to work for their own interests than to work for the interests of the people (Lusi, female, 27, teacher).

Lusi maintains that members of the political elite are implicitly encouraged to work primarily for the interest of the political parties they come from rather than for the interests of the people they represent. She makes a further useful point. It may be true that there is less provocation in politicians working for their own personal interests than in criticising the status quo, as far as party power-brokers intent on their own ambitions are concerned.

5. Media analysis findings

The third research question for this study asked how the performance of Indonesian political parties and the political elite is being represented by the mass media in the run-up to the 2009 election. To this end, national newspapers *Kompas* and *Republika*, and regional newspaper *Jawa Pos* were analysed, as well as *Tempo* – a national news magazine. Overall, our textual analysis indicates that political parties and the political elite were invariably represented in a negative way. The negative focus was usually on: (a) the dominant role of the major political parties in pushing for new regulations; (b) internal party dissent; and (c) allegations of corruption against specific political parties and/or members of the political elite.

5.1 Party domination and new regulations

Domination by the two major political parties – Golkar and PDI-P - was a key theme in news media articles pertaining to elections, whether local government elections or the forthcoming 2009 legislative and presidential election. For example, a news item in the *Jawa Pos* (14 November 2007, p. 2) titled *Ambisi Golkar-PDI-P Terus Dilawan* (ambitions of Golkar-PDI-P continue to be opposed) explained how a group of smaller parties in the DPR fought against the joint suggestion by Golkar and PDI-P to decrease DPR seat allocation in electoral districts from 3-12 seats to 3-6 seats – a move which would have increased seats for the major parties and decreased electoral opportunities for minor parties. The article quoted the head of the PBR (*Partai Bintang Reformasi* – a minor Muslim party) as saying that a decrease of DPR seat allocations for electoral districts would eliminate opportunities for small parties and newly established parties to get seats. He argued that this opportunity should be a guaranteed democratic right of formally recognised political parties. Most of the smaller parties expressed agreement with the PBR position.

In another example, on Friday 14 March 2008, a *Kompas* opinion piece (p. 5) proclaimed *Paket UU Politik Langkah Hegemoni Parpol Besar* (package of political laws: further steps towards major party hegemony). The leftist writer condemned attempts by the major parties to 'simplify' the party system because what they were really proposing were tactics to maintain parliamentary and local government domination. He argued that most of the arguments for 'simplification' of the electoral process returned to the idea that a strong parliament and a strong president in 2009 would need majority support in the DPR. However, such a move, he argued, would come at a cost to true democracy. Not only would smaller parties vanish, but large-scale party coalitions would be empowered to take even less notice of the demands of the people.

Republika newspaper belongs to the opposite political camp to *Kompas* and usually takes a right-wing view, yet it too has been reporting on the hegemonic practices of the major parties. In the 26 October 2007 issue (p. 3), a news item was headed *SBY Dicoba Diganjal dengan Syarat Dukungan Capres* (an attempt to block SBY [Susilo Bambang Yudoyono] through the proposed president's party support law). Golkar members of the DPR suggested a pre-requisite minimum

30-35 per cent legislative voter support for the party of any candidate to nominate to run for president. This law would in theory prevent incumbent president Susilo Bambang Yudoyono (SBY) from being nominated as a presidential candidate because his PD party gained fewer seats than this. Such a move can be interpreted as yet another example of attempts by the major parties to strengthen their hegemony.

5.2 Internal party conflicts

The 2007-2008 period was characterised by troubles between President SBY (from minority party PD) and Vice-President Jusuf Kalla (Golkar), and by internal party conflicts. The mass media paid much attention to these disputes, emphasising many other quarrels and scandals in parties such as PBR, PKB and PDI-P.

A notable example in *Kompas* was the extensively-reported conflict in the political elite of PKB in 2008. PKB is the party linked to *Nahdlatul Ulama* – the largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia with a vast support base in Java. Former Indonesian president and party founder Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) fell out with his nephew Muhaimin Iskandar (Cak Imin), the head of *Dewan Tanfidz* (the PKB Executive Council). At a stacked plenary meeting of PKB on 27 March, Muhaimin was asked to step down - *Muhaimin Iskandar Diminta Mundur* (*Kompas* 2008, 28 March, p. 15). The issue seems to have been one of disloyalty to Gus Dur himself. However, Muhaimin refused to step down, instead filing a lawsuit against Gus Dur and his faction of the PKB. The Indonesian Supreme Court ruled in July 2008 that Muhaimin should be party chairman while Gus Dur should remain as the party patron only. Gus Dur has publicly condemned the decision and the factional split has not been healed. While official PKB press releases put a positive spin on the outcome, it is widely acknowledged that this factional conflict threatens the electoral performance of the PKB in the 2009 general election. In early September 2008, it was reported that Gus Dur had instructed PKB supporters loyal to him to picket election commission offices across the country, a move he said would deter the KPU from recognizing Muhaimin's faction as the official representative of the PKB (The Jakarta Post, September 9, 2008). The fallout from this internal rivalry may result in a significant fall in support for PKB from the mass of Javanese traditionally loyal to *Nahdlatul Ulama*.

5.3 Allegations of corruption

The Indonesian press regularly reports allegations and findings of corruption against elected members of government - both local and national. It could be widely assumed that there are few if any members of the political elite who are not engaged in some form of corruption, because of the frequency with which such reports appear. Taking the month of April 2008, for example, every form of print media in the country reported that PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* – United Development Party) national politician Al Amin Nur Nasution had been arrested while bribing a Riau government official – Azirwan - at the Ritz Carlton in Jakarta. *Tempo* in July pointed out that Nasution stood to gain from the removal of protected forest status in Riau for urban development. He was also accused of sexual misconduct. Nasution was subsequently expelled from the PPP. On 10 April 2008, it was widely reported in the news media that former Bank Indonesia governor Burhanuddin Abdullah had been formally charged with bribing a number of politicians, involving the misappropriation of over 100 billion rupiah from bank deposits. Earlier, on the 4 April 2008, *Kompas* had reported that two local politicians in Jember had been charged with misappropriating 450 million rupiah from legal aid funds and 726 million rupiah from local parliament funds intended for civic works.

Since April 2008, charges against politicians of bribery, corruption and sexual misconduct have continued. Of recent note was the widely-reported July 2008 arrest of PBR politician Bulyan Royan - caught red-handed taking a bribe from businessman Dedi Suwarsono. In a lead article *Kompas* (2 July 2008, p. 5) reported that other DPR politicians were also implicated. The lawyer for Suwarsono stated that the billions of rupiah Royan handed over in a North Jakarta Hotel were for the procurement of ocean patrol boats by the Ministry of Transport. Royan stood to gain financially from the tender. The most recent reported corruption case involves President Yudhoyono himself. He stand accused of protecting one of his senior advisors - Heru Lelono – who was apparently behind a 'miraculous' hybrid rice crop scandal (Fitzpatrick 2008a).

These examples are only the tip of the iceberg. It was recently claimed in English-language newspaper *The Jakarta Post* on 30 August 2008 that 'data from Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) earlier revealed at least 35 lawmakers - 15 from PDI-P, eight from Golkar, eight from PPP, three from PD, three from PAN and one from PKS - who had allegedly been involved in corruption'. Meitzner reports that 'more than 1000 local legislators, almost ten per cent of the total number of parliamentarians across Indonesia, have been investigated for corruption since 2004' (2008). There are weeks in which Indonesian national newspapers, and radio and television news broadcasts are literally crammed with stories of political corruption. It seems obvious that this has an effect on the way members of the general public view political parties and politicians.

6. Discussion

6.1 Past practice

We detect two contradictory discourses in current general public attitudes to politics which may help illuminate the mystery of Indonesian voters' 'love-hate relationship with their political parties' (Mietzner, 2008). For despite their

frustration, Indonesians usually turn out to vote in large numbers,

In 1999 and 2004, participation in national elections ranged between 75 and 93 percent, a rate that even consolidated democracies would consider healthy. Even in direct elections for local government heads, where the role of the parties is weaker, an average of 69 percent of registered voters took part in the ballots (Mietzner, 2008).

Foreshadowing our identification of the two principle voter discourses that lie behind such apparent loyalty to the process of voting, Vickers (2007, p. 222) speaks of 'post-Suharto Indonesia's combination of optimistic reformism and cynical fatigue'.

6.2 Cynical fatigue vs 'bread and circuses'

The first voter discourse: - wary disbelief, enshrines a deep conviction that whatever formal political process may be about, it is almost never about representing the interests of the people. This corresponds to Vickers' term - 'cynical fatigue'. During the New Order period, citizens voted under pressure for one of only three tightly-controlled parties and there was never any doubt that *Golkar* would win. Studies by Hainsworth et al. (2007) and Hill (1996), for example, reveal how the New Order government literally bought loyalty and legitimation, bludgeoning any opposition or independent movement into an underground existence. Elections were manipulated. Votes were sometimes rewarded by local infrastructure improvements in education, health, and farming, but often not. The New Order government achieved domination with the support of military; through the hegemonic political party *Golkar*; and through oil export income.

Yet at the same time, during the New Order election campaigns (and even now), there was a great air of festivity during elections, involving colour, music, rallies, parades, fanfare and small gifts. The term 'bread and circuses' comes originally from the Romans. Commentators in ancient times were frustrated to find that rather than sticking to civic principles, voters followed whichever political leaders offered food and entertainment - 'bread and circuses' - during election campaigns. The 'bread and circuses' strategy appears to have flourished in Indonesian politics. For example, election campaigns used to rely (and still do to some extent) on popular *artis dangdut* (indigenous rock music singers/dancers) travelling to even the smallest villages on the campaign trail (Fitzpatrick, 2008b, p. 16). The musical theme of Indonesian election campaigns was taken further when (male) politicians started singing as part of their election campaigns in 1999, and this reached its height in the 2004 election with several candidates, including current president SBY, releasing albums. This history of general election festivity and entertainment is productive for understanding why Indonesian voters regularly turn out, despite their conviction that there will be little for them in the long run. Far from trivial, political party-sponsored festivities and entertainment during election campaigns illuminate the workings of political hegemony. As Gramsci's theories imply (see section 1.2 above) hegemony operates through the targeted organisation of the social interaction and consciousness of the people. Party-sponsored election festivities and entertainment - even singing politicians - constitute an effort to convince local people that the party in question can and will please them. Such apparently light-hearted events are attempts to win the active consent of the subordinated in Gramsci's terms.

Yet while local voters might be happy to be wooed by 'bread and circuses' on the party election campaign trail, that does not mean they really expect anything to change once politicians are voted in. As we saw in the interview data excerpts above, when unemployment, malnutrition and rising prices are mentioned, there is sense of fatalism in the way these are discussed. Although it might reasonably be expected that political parties should try resolve these problems, there seems to be a sense of weary certainty that they will not. As Sultani (2006, p. 4) states in his commentary on the performance of the DPR, 'low commitment to nation; giving in to pressure; decline of moral integrity - make the pace of change tedious in the eyes of public', even despite the recruitment of young, and better-educated DPR members over the past ten years.

The discourse of 'cynical fatigue' is fuelled by daily political reports in the mass media such as those we discuss above. If readers and viewers only hear about politicians in relation to scandal, corruption and in-fighting, and rarely about politicians trying to meet the needs of their constituencies, then it should not be surprising that of 837 respondents in the *Kompas* poll over 70 per cent were dissatisfied and disillusioned (Sultani, 2007, p. 5). It should be noted that *Kompas* readers tend to be middle-class and well-educated. *Kompas* offers a more sophisticated and detailed analysis of the current political landscape than the populist media, and this perhaps gives a clue as to why there was a correlation in our survey data indicating that the higher the income and education of respondents, the lower their opinions of political parties and the political elite.

6.3 Loyalty and hope

The second important voter discourse is one of entwined loyalty and hope. This discourse emerged strongly after 1998, although its roots probably lie in the revolutionary birth of the Indonesian nation. Despite the pattern of poor performance by political parties and politicians, Indonesian voters continue to be on the whole loyal and optimistic. Optimism was at its height during the 1999 election campaign when democracy flourished for the first time. 48 political

parties were able to contest seats and the military took a neutral role. However, not everyone was satisfied with the 1999 election outcome. For example, most voters did not grasp how the president was elected according to the constitution of the time, and while Megawati Soerkanoputri's PDI-P won the election, she did not become president. Disappointment led to widespread riots.

Subsequently, as democratic optimism in the post-reform era declined, Indonesian political parties lost focus, and lost the confidence of voters. By early 2006, Indonesian political parties had an even worse performance record. Internal dissent and corruption encouraged an exceptionally negative view of politicians and of party politics (Sultani, 2006, p. 5). Yet as Mietzner (2008) points out, people still turn up to vote in relatively high numbers, and in doing so demonstrate their loyalty to specific social, cultural, religious and/or ideological symbols and constituencies, articulating a strong sense of the continuity of family and communal voting practices over time. In yet another sense, voting signifies an act of hope. In the comments of interviewees above for example, there is an implied sense of outrage that their hopes and expectations have not been met, rather than a lack of hope.

The discourse of loyalty and hope is also fuelled by political reports in the media. As well as news items on political scandals and in-fighting, Indonesian newspapers and television broadcasters cover the campaign trail of local government candidates and party leaders as well. So, for example, when Vice-President and Golkar leader Jusuf Kalla visits his place of origin - Sulawesi – local media sources report his visit very positively, stressing Kalla's commitment to the people of Sulawesi. And of course, politicians talk up for reporters the importance of their own regions and ethnic/cultural constituencies when they are campaigning 'at home'. Megawati Soekarnoputri is expert at this, drawing heavily upon the sentimental legacy of her father – President Soekarno - when she campaigns in Central Java and Bali. The political courting of local loyalties signifies once again how hegemony operates through the targeted organisation of the social interaction and consciousness of the people, in this case the history and tradition of ethnic and geographical solidarity. The appeal of political parties to forms of local primordialism represents yet another example of attempts to secure the active consent of the subordinated.

6.3.1 Fear

Loyalty and hope are also fuelled by fear. Certainly a great deal has changed in Indonesian politics since 1998. Democratic reforms have resulted in a free media and free and open elections at every level, including local government. Regional autonomy legislation has seen much greater political control move to local constituencies. The president is now elected by the people. The press has much greater freedom to report on news, and there has been an extraordinary increase in the amount of news reported (Pawito, 2002). This relative freedom and expansion is often interpreted as proof of democracy. Yet the current processes of Indonesian democracy have long been falling well short of peoples' expectations, and the threat of local or mass political violence was constant in the post-Suharto years (Vickers, 2007, p. 213), at least until 2004.

At present, the Indonesian economy is growing strongly and the poverty rate is falling (The Jakarta Post, August 26, 2008). Yet these gains could be swiftly brushed aside if the country descended once again into civil unrest due to political anger and frustration. In their slogans and campaigns, all eight significant political parties, whether secular or Muslim, promise not only 'clean' government, but civil stability and continued economic growth. Politicians routinely make press statements to this effect which perhaps build a sense of hope for the public even while they might feel it is unwise to trust such promises. Perhaps many want to believe political promises of civil stability because they fear the alternative of increasing civil violence.

6.4 Media reports: A challenge to hegemony?

It should be noted that the active consent of the subordinated (the masses) to the political hegemony of dominant Indonesian political parties could be challenged by revelations of greed and corruption in the mass media. For example, ordinary citizens understandably experience disappointment and anxiety when they read about the apparently honest representatives of their chosen party becoming DPR members who go on to become corrupt intermediaries passing non-transparent budgets through parliament that benefit local government officers. It must have been particularly galling for loyal supporters of some parties to read that the politicians they helped elect have even gone so far as to appropriate funds intended for natural disaster prevention and relief.

The question we must ask however, is whether press revelations of political corruption do in themselves challenge the political hegemony of the major parties, or whether such media reports actually encourage apathy and cynicism, leading to widespread voter disaffection which implicitly strengthens the hegemony of the dominant political players.

6.5 Golput

Given the arguments presented in this paper we might well anticipate that if 'cynical fatigue' wins out over loyalty and hope for the voting public we will see a much higher rate of *golput* (lack of a formal vote: either no vote or a 'donkey' vote) in the 2009 general elections than in previous elections. Sujatmiko (2007) maintains that the development of a fully-functioning democracy in Indonesia is hampered by lack of political accountability and increasing distance between

political process and the citizenry. There is still a lack of transparency at all levels of the legislature. The general public has little opportunity to participate in debate over the formation of public policies, through a referendum for instance. When people feel deeply disappointed, or disconnected, they either do not vote, or they may disfigure the voting form. The rate of *golput* has been high in some recent local elections. For example, in the 2008 election for the Governor of Central Java 41.5 per cent of registered voters *golput* (*Kompas*, 10 April 2008, p. 1).

In *post-reformasi* Indonesian elections there are almost always protests and riots afterwards because supporters of defeated candidates are not satisfied, and accusations of misconduct fly. Sugiarto (2005, p. 6) maintains that one cause of ubiquitous post-election demonstrations in Indonesia is lack of public trust in the actual electoral process, especially the nomination and funding of party candidates, and the counting of votes. Local government election organizers are frequently regarded as unreliable, and there is lack of trust in local law enforcement. Disappointed and angry voters may choose not to vote again in any election, believing that there will be no integrity at all in the formal process of constitutional democracy. If this turns out to be the case for the 2009 general election, we can expect to see the rate of *golput* escalate.

7. Conclusion

From the data assembled in this paper we may safely assume that the Indonesian public in general does not hold political parties and political elites in high esteem. Table 1 indicates that according to our survey results dissatisfaction is more marked for those with a higher income and better education. The frequency tables indicate that three-quarters of 180 respondents were dissatisfied in various ways with the performance of political parties and the political elites. This finding was confirmed in the interviews. Realizing the aspirations of the people, social integration, and leader recruitment, were the areas in which political parties caused disappointment. On the performance of political elites respondents were most dissatisfied with their grabs for power (lobbying for self-serving electoral change, doing shady deals with opposition parties, graft, corruption and nepotism); and the distance between political elites and the people. In short, it seems to be widely understood that most politicians are inherently self-serving, greedy, ruthless and amoral.

We argued above in sections 5 and 6.2 above that the dissatisfaction of the general public is fuelled by the negative mass media representation of political parties and political elites, as our selected print media examples demonstrate. The major negative discourses of this media representation were found to be: (a) the tendency of major political parties to defend their power base at any cost; (b) internal conflicts of parties and factionalism; and (c) allegations and charges of corruption and scandal against politicians and party officials.

So what kind of picture emerges here in the run-up to the 2009 election? The data assembled in the paper indicate that a generally negative view of politicians and political parties is held by both the mass media and the general public. Although it appears that a more analytically critical and intellectual perspective is generated by the middle class, and by newspapers such as *Kompas* that inform the opinions of better-educated people, in Java ordinary people – *wong cilik* – also feel disillusioned and disappointed. In one direction this indicates increasing cynicism and apathy, which are likely to translate into a high rate of *golput* in the 2009 election. In the other direction, the disillusionment of the masses with the major parties and the political elite opens the way for minor political parties running a strong anti-corruption hard line, such as the Islamist PKS party, to gain widespread appeal. Perhaps the deepest and most serious outcome though, could be widespread mistrust of the political process of democracy itself. If the Indonesian public feel that their trust in constitutional democracy for the nation has been betrayed in the rush by the major parties for greater political hegemony, then they are likely to express that rage and frustration in protest actions and demonstrations that may escalate into mass civil unrest, threatening the economic and social gains of the past ten years.

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Table 1. Correlation between socio-demographic variables and responses N = 180

Variable	View of political party performance	View of political elite performance
Sex	-0.115 (0.124)	-0.067 (0.374)
Occupation	0.135 (0.071)	-0.042 (0.573)
Age	-0.046 (0.541)	0.075 (0.371)
Family income	-0.250 ** (0.001)	-0.187* (0.012)
Level of education	-0.271 ** (0.000)	-0.262 ** (0.000)

Note:

* Significant at 0.05

** Significant at 0.01

Table 2. Responses on the performance of political parties N=180

Political Function	Responses	Freq	%
1. Aggregating and articulating the aspirations of the people	Satisfied	20	11.1
	Neutral	40	22.2
	Dissatisfied	120	66.7
2. Leadership recruitment	Satisfied	23	12.8
	Neutral	65	36.1
	Dissatisfied	92	51.1
3. Formation of government	Satisfied	27	15
	Neutral	74	41.1
	Dissatisfied	79	43.9
4. Political identity	Satisfied	48	26.7
	Neutral	81	45
	Dissatisfied	51	28.3
5. Mass mobilization	Satisfied	51	28.3
	Neutral	79	43.9
	Dissatisfied	50	27.8
6. Social integration	Satisfied	35	19.4
	Neutral	44	24.4
	Dissatisfied	101	56.1

Table 3. Responses on the performance of the political elite N=180

Aspect of Performance	Responses	Freq	%
1. Has a close relationship with the people	Satisfied	19	10.6
	Neutral	71	39.4
	Dissatisfied	90	50
2. Strives to meet the demands of the people	Satisfied	22	12.3
	Neutral	98	54.4
	Dissatisfied	60	33.3
3. Demonstrates dedication to serving the public interest	Satisfied	35	19.4
	Neutral	97	53.9
	Dissatisfied	48	26.7
4. Orientation to the use of power	Satisfied	14	7.8
	Neutral	36	20
	Dissatisfied	130	72.2