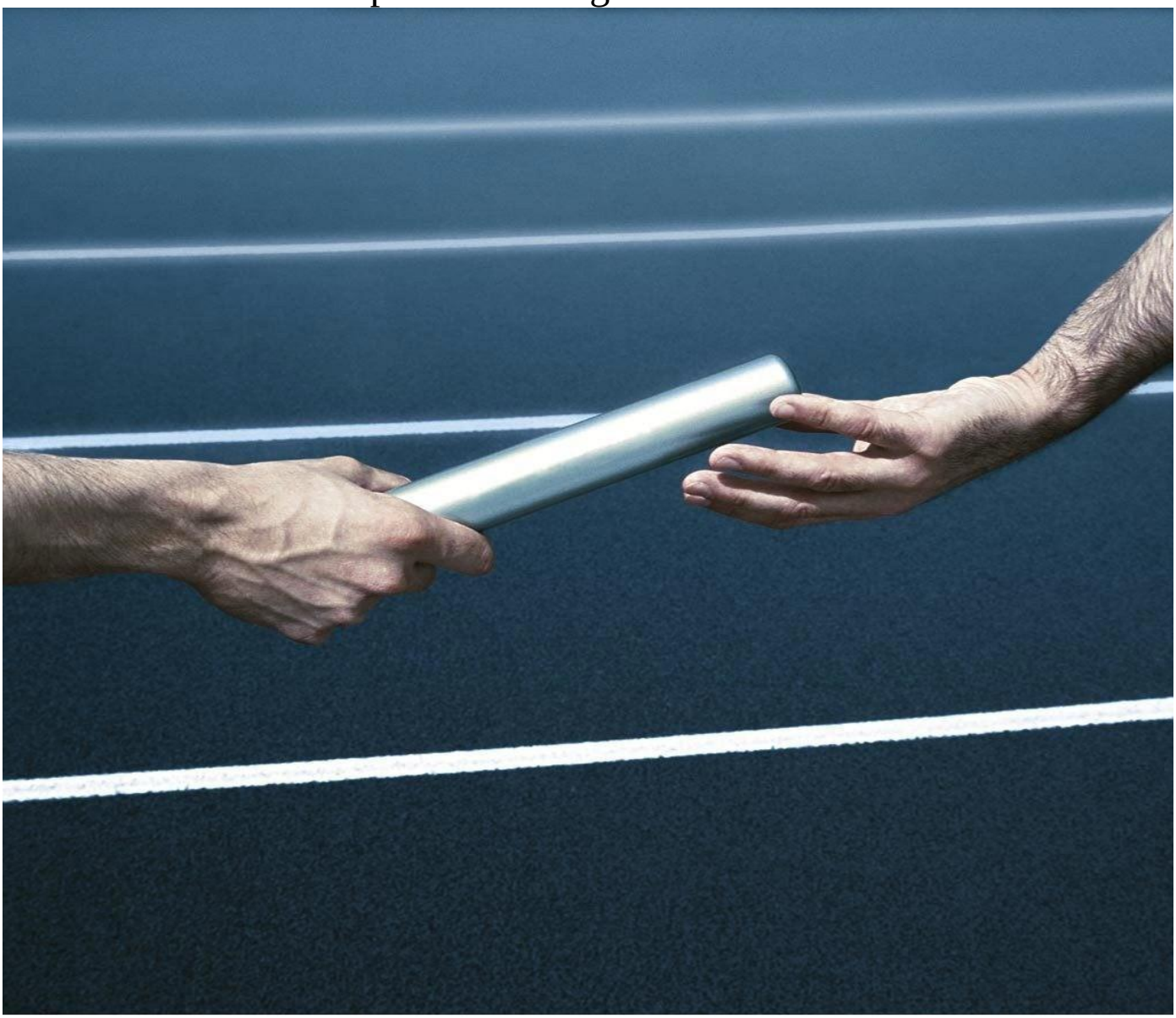
THE IMPACT OF CAREER IDENTITY ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A Cross-Cultural Comparison among Chinese and Dutch Teachers



Master's thesis: Human Resource Development,
Faculty of Behavioural Sciences
University of Twente
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Date: March 2009

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Abstract

This study examines the influences of career identity on career development in China and in the Netherlands. 95 Chinese teachers and 71 Dutch teachers were surveyed to explore the possible relationship between two types of career identity (work centrality and the desire for upward mobility) and two types of career development (content-oriented career development and process-related career development). The results show that work centrality leads to the content-oriented career development and the desire for upward mobility leads to the process-related career development. Moreover, the link between the desire for upward mobility and the process-related career development is found different across two nations. The positively relationship between the desire for upward mobility and the process-related career development is reinforced in the Dutch context, but not in the Chinese context. I further discuss the results in terms of the impact of national culture on career development from institutional differences.

Acknowledgements

When this project is coming to the end, I have to say goodbye to this country. Three years ago, I made a decision to come here, but I had no idea how far I could go. It has been a memorable experience indeed. During these years, I have earned a lot of knowledge and met lots of people who influenced my study and my life. I have met different problems and difficulties during my master study. As an oversea student, I had to face different types of educational system, from language to learning method. Besides, I had to handle all the emotions and problems in my daily life by myself. Fortunately, supports from this faculty and my friends released me. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to those who gave me the possibility to complete this thesis.

First and foremost I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Huadong Yang. I cannot imagine where I am without his supervision. His stimulating suggestions pressed me to go further and further. His bright insights and critical comments were always extremely helpful and make me feel interested in behavior science. I would like to thank him for his guidance and persistent help. My gratitude also goes to my second supervisor Piety Runhaar for her patience and suggestions.

Next, I would like to thank peer student Emmy Soer for her data collection in the Netherlands. And to my good friend Xiaoqin Sheng, thanks for her back-translation of the questionnaire. Thanks also to all my other friends who supported me in this project and my study.

Last but not least, thanks go to my parents for helping me to collect data in my hometown. I express my sincere appreciation for their unconditional support during my study. Their encouragement and love motivate me to go forward in my past life and in the future.

Enschede, March 2009

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The Impact of Career Identity on Career Development:
A Cross-cultural Comparison among Chinese and Dutch Teachers

Introduction

Information and knowledge revolution has shifted individual learning from “front-end” education to lifelong learning (Faure et al., 1972; Lengrand 1989). Learning to an individual is not a behavior which takes place in compulsory education anymore, because everyone needs to pursue more knowledge and information after he/she leaves campus. In other words, everyone has to undertake the obligation to continue to develop themselves. With such a background, more and more people get involved in career development activities. Basically, career development is the process in which employees develop themselves during their career (Hall, 1976). Employees might have different preferences in terms of their career development. Take teachers for example, some teachers may pay attention to their teaching tasks; others focus on creating their own career paths. An interesting question therefore is raised: what are the motivations that lead employees to develop themselves in different ways?

Various factors like personalities or employees’ family experience has been identified to have a significant role in determining of employees’ preferences for career development (Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi & Glasscock, 2001). In this study, career identity is highlighted because it is considered as one of the most important factors in career development from individual perspective. Researchers have shown that the notion of identity has the potential of enhancing the understanding of career development theories, and thus guiding career development practices (Blustein, Devenis & Kidney, 1989; Meijers, 1998).

Apart from career identity, in this study I also examine the impact of national culture on employee’s career development. People from different cultures may have different understandings

of their careers (Huang & Van de Vliert, 2003). This difference can be reflected in the way how they develop themselves in their career paths. In this study I focus on a comparison across two national cultures: Dutch and Chinese. Specifically, I investigate the impact of national culture in combination with career identity on employee career development.

On the whole, this study makes three contributions to the field of career and cross-cultural research and practice. First, by connecting career identity and career development, it opens a window to view employee's career development from psychological aspect. Second, employers and employees might find out which career development activities are more suitable for employees in practice. Third, by forming a bi-cultural comparison: Chinese versus Dutch employees, the results contribute to our understanding about how national culture takes part in shaping individual career development.

In the following sections, first I develop my hypotheses on basis of literature review. Then I describe my research methods and findings. In the end I discuss the implications of the findings, and point out the limitations and practical implications of this study.

Hypotheses Development

Career Development

A career involves an individually perceived sequence of separate but related positions that a person occupies over time (Hall, 1976; Solomon et al., 1986). This definition views career from the aspect of individual internal focus. Besides internal perception, career also can be analyzed from an organizational or social viewpoint (Kanawaty, 1976). In line with these definitions, Schien (1978) identified two types of career: internal career and external career. The former refers to the set of steps or stages that make up the individual's own concept of his/her own progression within an occupation or a career path. Employees tend to achieve some personal interests and

goals in this type of career. For example, a person enjoys cooking, he/she chooses cook as career. The latter refers to the objective categories used by society and organizations to describe the profession of steps through a given occupation (Schien, 1974). It often relates to requirements, status, or physical achievements. A person who wants to be a cook has to meet some requirements, such as license or other standards.

From the psychological perspective, career development can be defined as "the formation of a work identity or progression of career decisions and/or events as influenced by life or work experience, education, on-the-job training, or other factors." (American Psychological Association, 1988). According to Patton and McMahon (2006), career development can be divided into two aspects: content and process. Similar to the internal career, the content-oriented career development refers to employee intrinsic motivation in improving their works, such as interests and values (Patton & McMahon, 2006). By contrast, the process-related career development is similar to the external career. The process-related career development refers to interaction and change of career over time, such as position and status (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Take career development of a cook for example: to improve his/her skills in cooking is the content-oriented career development. To get promotion to be a chef is in line with the process-related career development. The cook may achieve the same position in his/her career, but the motivations of development can be quite different.

The Impact of Career Identity on Career Development

Scholars have explored many motivational factors for career development. Among those factors, Blustein and Noumair (1996) have considered that self and identity as two of the most important influential factors for career development from intra-personal experience. Chartrand and Camp (1991) have reviewed the measurements of career constructs between 1970s and 1990s.

According to their study, career motivation has received considerable attention in the field of career research.

As the researcher who made the concept of “identity” widely known, Erikson (1970) regards identity as a principle of psychological organization. From Erikson’s (1970) point of view, identity is ultimately the ability to perceive oneself as wholeness. When the concept of identity is transferred to the field of career research, career identity refers to how central one’s career to one’s identity (London, 1983). London (1983) has proposed that career identity includes both work centrality and the desire for upward mobility. The former claims that employees hold their works in high regard in their lives (Ishikawa, 2007). The latter refers to personal needs for finance, promotion, recognition and dominance (London, 1983). Take teachers for example, some teachers view teaching as an important part in their lives, whereas others have high desires to be leaders.

When related these two types of career identity to career development theories, it seems that work centrality influences content-oriented career development. Employee with a strong work centrality has high identification with his/her works, which stimulates him/her to develop his/her internal career. Work centrality makes employees value their works highly in their lives. Work becomes an important part of their lives (Paullay et al., 1994). Dubin (1956) suggested that work centrality is the formulation of work as a central life interest. This kind of interest leads employees to get involved in the activities which improve their working skills. Furthermore, work centrality has been considered as sufficiency encompassing employee’s general commitment to work (Judge et al., 1995; Wallace, 1995, 1999). Those employees with high work centralities are willing to attend activities when those activities will enhance their working commitment.

On the other hand, the desire of upward mobility leads employees to engaging in activities that stimulate the process-related development. The desire for upward mobility refers to the

motivation of getting higher status, recognition or financial rewards (Ellemers, 1993). Employees who have strong desire of upward mobility value an external career and are willing to get higher stages via his career. On the one hand, the process-related development activities enhance employees' abilities to move up. On the other hand, the process-related development activities provide promotion opportunities to employees. Combining above arguments, I assume:

Hypothesis 1a: Work centrality has a positive impact on the content-oriented career development.

Hypothesis 1b: The desire for upward mobility has a positive impact on the process-related career development.

The Moderating Role of National Culture

The GLOBE research programme (House et al., 1999) defined culture as shared motives, values, beliefs, identities and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives, and are transmitted across age generation. Noordin, Williams and Zimmer (2002) presented that national culture provides a basic framework for social interaction and represents a cohesive element among the individual members of a society. Scholars have demonstrated that national culture influences employees' career attitudes and behaviors (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995; Noordin, Williams & Zimmer, 2002). In this sense, national culture is assumed to have a close connection with individual careers.

Collectivism and individualism have been considered one of the most important cultural dimensions between the The East and The West (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Veenhoven, 1999; Triandis, 2000; Hofstede, 2001;

Allik & Realo, 2004). The Western cultures can be seen as individualistic culture, and the Eastern cultures can be seen as collectivistic culture. In the individualistic culture, people view themselves to be independent from others and the uniqueness and wholeness of each person are important. In contrast, people in the collectivistic culture view themselves to be interdependent and closely connect with social context, and they are motivated to fit with the environment they were involved in (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Lots of research has confirmed that Chinese culture is collectivism whereas Dutch culture is individualism (e.g., Allik & Realo, 2004; Hofstede, 2001).

I assume that Dutch culture may stimulate the relationship between work centrality and content-oriented career development. Hofstede (2001) argued that self-interest of work is important for employees in the individualistic culture. Those employees in the individualistic culture (such as the Netherlands) are expected to act according to their own interests. This point of view is consistent with the content-oriented career development. On the other hand, I expected that the collectivistic Chinese culture may stimulate the relationship between the desire for upward mobility and process-related career development. This assumption can be argued from two aspects: first, tight family ties in China may view individuals' career as a collective social event. China has been characterized as a familistic society in which relationships with family or ingroups are primary important (Fukuyama, 1995; Triandis, 1995). Family issue always influences career development, such as parents' expectation and marriage lead to different career choices and advancements (Beauregard, 2007). Chinese employees work not only for themselves, but also for their families. In order to satisfy their ingroup members and enhance the honor and social status of the whole family, Chinese employees are motivated to look upwards. Second, social face may also contribute to the relationship between the desire for upward mobility and process-related career development. Mianzi (Chinese concept of social face) is defined as the recognition by

others of an individual's social standing and position (Lockett, 1988). Mianzi is fundamentally important in Chinese culture and plays important role in Chinese people's daily life. In Chinese culture, mianzi is a characteristic of a person that reflects his or her standing in social hierarchy, such as position, status, role and so on (Earley, 1997). For example, director of one hospital has more mianzi than doctors in the same hospital. With the desire for mianzi, Chinese employees have higher desire for upward mobility and the process-related career development than Dutch employees as well. Thus, I propose:

Hypothesis 2a: In the Netherlands, the impact of work centrality on content-oriented career development is stronger than in China.

H2b: In the Netherlands, the impact of the desire for upward mobility on process-related career development is weaker than in China.

Method

Participants

The data was collected by using questionnaire survey. Participants were sampled from primary and middle school teachers and their supervisors in China and in the Netherlands. The final sample including 166 teachers (China = 95 from 4 different schools and the Netherlands = 71from 10 different schools) was obtained. Of the 95 Chinese participants, 70 (74%) were women. The average age and working experience were around 33 years (ranging from 21 to 52) and 13 years (ranging from 0 to 35) respectively. 94% of respondents had completed college or university education (4 high school, 41 college and 48 university).

For the 71 Dutch participants, 56 were women. The average age and working experience were around 40 years (ranging from 23 to 61) and 16 (ranging from 0 to 40) years respectively. 87% of respondents had received higher education level than MBO (7 MBO, 54 HBO, 8 university and 2 others).

Procedure

From the Chinese sub-sample, I initially contacted five head masters of schools in Ji'an city, Jiangxi Province (middle of China), China. Head masters from two primary schools and two middle schools were willing to participate in this project. Both teachers and their team leaders were invited to participant in the questionnaire survey in order to collect the valid data. Teachers were asked to fill-in the questionnaire measuring career identity and cultural orientation, and the team leaders filled in the questionnaire measuring teachers' engagement in career development activity in their daily works.

With the permission of head masters, I gave each teacher a code. Teachers were then asked to fill in the questionnaire with their codes instead of their names. Teachers' questionnaire contained their personal information, career identity scale and individualistic-collectivistic cultural orientation. Career development information was collected from the team leaders. Each team leader judged around 10 teachers' preference in terms of their engagement in activities about career development. Finally, teachers' questionnaire and their team leaders' questionnaire were matched by using the code list developed in the first step. In this way, the participants' privacy was protected and the impact of social desirability was avoided. For the Dutch sub-sample, I used second-hand data gathered by a peer student (for more information, see Soer, 2009). The questionnaire and data collection followed the same procedure.

The original questionnaire was developed in English, and then translated into both Chinese and Dutch. The Chinese and Dutch versions were then back-translated into English by an independent translator. Finally, the developers of this questionnaire compared the original version with back-translation versions to ensure the equivalence of the linguistic meaning.

Measures

Individualistic-collectivistic cultural orientation. To check whether the two sub-samples were representative samples of their national cultures, I measured the cultural orientation of individualism/collectivism among the respondents by using a 5-point Likert scale (*1 = strongly disagree* to *5 = strongly agree*). In total 17 items were selected from several published works (e.g., Singelis, 1994; Triandis, 1995). Individualistic cultural orientation was measured by 7 items (e.g., I perceive myself as an independent individual rather than being a part of interpersonal relationships; $\alpha_{CHN} = .56$ and $\alpha_{NL} = .65$). Collectivistic cultural orientation was measured by 10 items (e.g., Having harmonious relationships with colleagues is my path to success; $\alpha_{CHN} = .66$ and $\alpha_{NL} = .62$). Although alpha coefficients were below .70, in cross-cultural research, they were considered acceptable due to the difficulties of making cultural equivalence scales (.60 is usually set as the criteria for acceptance).

Career identity. Career identity was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (*1=strongly disagree* to *5=strongly agree*). The original scale including 16 questions was developed based on London's (1983) work about career identity. After the reliability test, 10 items were remained (5 items for work centrality, 5 items for the desire for upward mobility). An example of work centrality is "My work as a teacher is an important part of my life" ($\alpha_{CHN} = .73$ and $\alpha_{NL} = .68$), and an example of the desire for upward mobility is "I want to be in a leadership position" ($\alpha_{CHN} = .61$ and $\alpha_{NL} = .65$).

Career development. A teacher professional development scale was especially developed for this research. More information about this scale can be found in Soer's (2009) work. Teachers' engagements in career development activities were assessed by their supervisors in this research. A 5 Likert-scale (*1 = never involved* to *5 = totally involved*) with 13 statements was used for supervisors to evaluate teachers' engagement in career development activities. After the reliability test, 6 items were remained for measuring the content-oriented career development (e.g., to what extent this teacher engaging himself/herself in activities to improve his/her teaching skills; α_{CHN} = .85 and α_{NL} = .87) and 4 items for process-related career development (e.g., to what extent this teacher using every opportunity to become a team leader; α_{CHN} = .83 and α_{NL} = .84).

Personal information. Personal information was included in the questionnaire as well. Participants' gender was coded: 1 = male, 2 = female. In terms of participants' age: 1 = 21-30 years old, 2 = 31-40 years old, 3 = 41-50 years old, 4 = 51-60 years old, 5 = 61-70 years old. In terms of participants' teaching years: 1 = 0-5 years, 2 = 6-10 years, 3 = 11-15 years, 4 = 16-20 years, 5 = 21-25 years, 6 = 26-30 years, 7 = 31-35 years, 8 = 36-40 years. In terms of highest education participants had: 1 = high school in China and MBO in the Netherlands, 2 = college in China and HBO in the Netherlands, 3 = university, 4 = others.

Results

Checks for Cultural Orientation

Chinese culture is collectivistic-oriented and Dutch culture is individualistic-oriented (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Veenhoven, 1999; Triandis, 2000; Hofstede, 2001; Allik and Realo, 2004). To check whether the two sub-samples were representative of culture, I used the cultural orientations of individualistic/collectivistic dimensions as check. The Chinese teachers (M_{CHN} = 3.71, SD_{CHN} = .39) showed higher scores in

the collectivistic orientation than the Dutch teachers (M_{NL} = 2. 99, SD_{NL} = .38; t = 11.81, p < .001). But for individualistic dimension, the mean score of the Chinese teachers (M_{CHN} = 3.53, SD_{CHN} = .49) was higher than the Dutch teacher as well (M_{NL} = 2.98, SD_{NL} = .52; t = 6.94, p<.001). Test results confirmed that the Chinese participants were more collectivistic oriented than the Dutch participants, but disapproved that the Dutch participants were more individualistic oriented than the Chinese respondents. Overall, this sample has some bias in terms of cultural characteristics that they present.

Factor Analysis

To examine the structures of career identity and career development, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis on Chinese and Dutch data separately. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Factor Loadings of Career Identity Scale and Career Development Scale

Career Identity Items	Chinese		Dutch	
	Work Centrality	Upward Mobility	Work Centrality	Upward Mobility
Item1	**.565**	-.035	**.690**	.026
Item2	**.800**	.150	**.694**	.275
Item3	**.803**	.112	**.745**	-.196
Item6	**.665**	.111	**.575**	-.007
Item15	**-.491**	-.070	**-.583**	.170
Item5	-.662	**.285**	-.005	**.847**
Item10	-.515	**.247**	-.286	**.729**
Item11	.099	**.812**	-.353	**.176**
Item12	.065	**.848**	.106	**.603**
Item14	-.083	**.659**	-.141	**.695**
Career Development Items	Chinese		Dutch	
	Content-Oriented Development	Process-Related Development	Content-Oriented Development	Process-Related Development
Item4	**.764**	.097	**.676**	.425
Item5	**.768**	.114	**.822**	.086
Item7	**.820**	.129	**.783**	-.085
Item10	**.680**	.033	**.778**	.302
Item11	**.734**	-.051	**.829**	-.249
Item12	**.773**	-.014	**.776**	-.111
Item1	-.115	**.797**	-.232	**.721**
Item2	-.016	**.883**	-.027	**.930**
Item8	.329	**.746**	.290	**.658**
Item13	.139	**.798**	.027	**.922**

Note. The items are presented by their item numbers.

For career identity, some unexpected loading differences were found across Chinese and Dutch sub-samples. In the Chinese sub-sample, item 5 (A job with higher social status than teaching is my wish.) and item 10 (If I can find a position that offers me more salary and a higher status than teaching, I will take this position.) were intended to measure the dimension of work centrality, but were positively loaded on the dimension of the desire for upward mobility. This might be caused by social reputation of teacher as a profession in the Chinese culture. In China,

teacher is not only a profession, but also is regarded as a moral model. Teachers are expected to be a good example for their students. This social norm keeps teachers from explicitly addressing their desire for money and status. Besides, item 5 and item 10 also have a sense of job-shifting. In China, teachers' educational system is different from other professional fields. It is difficult for Chinese primary school teachers to get a chance to change their jobs. This means that teachers may have strong desire for changing their career, in reality it is rarely the case.

Second, the loadings of item 11 (To satisfy my team leader will lead to more opportunities within my career.) across the Chinese and the Dutch sub-samples were not consistent. It was negatively loaded on work centrality among the Dutch teachers, but positively loaded on the desire for upward mobility among the Chinese teachers. This might be due to the different promotion procedures across these two countries. Promotion in China is given priority to seniority and political fidelity rather than acquired expertise and motivation (Warner, 1995). Chinese teachers may consider that interpersonal relationship with supervisors is important. But promotions in the Netherlands are more performance-based (Verburg, Drenth, Koopman, Muijen & Wang, 1999). Dutch teachers may feel that their opportunities are based on their performance rather than satisfactory of supervisor.

Descriptive Statistics

The overall descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2. Comparing career identity and career development across the Chinese and Dutch teachers, the results showed that Chinese teachers reported significant higher scores on the process-related career development preference ($t = 2.88$, $p < .01$), on the desire for upward mobility ($t = 7.68$, $p < .001$) but lower scores on the work centrality ($t = -8.21$, $p < .001$). For content-oriented career development, there was no significant difference across Chinese teachers and Dutch teachers ($t = .15$, *ns*).

Table 2

Means, SDs, t-values and Correlations among Measured Variables

		CHN			NL											
	Variable	M	SD	t	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Gender	1.74	.44	-.91	1.80	.40		-.29*	-.23†	-.24*	.13	-.09	.08	-.05	-.01	-.04
2.	Age	1.71	.68	-5.01***	2.52	1.21	-.04		.80***	-.07	01	-.20	-.36**	.03	-.04	-.10
3.	Experience	2.97	1.27	-2.39*	3.69	2.62	.04	.84***		.00	.05	-.03	-.25*	-.09*	-.03	.00
4.	Highest education	2.47	.58	3.72***	2.10	.68	-.22*	-.44***	-.48***		.03	.10	.07	.14	-.01	-.04
5.	Work centrality	3.54	.69	-8.21***	4.26	.43	.06	.10	-.09	.07		-.22†	-.22†	.25*	.31**	-.02
6.	Desire for upward mobility	3.04	.59	7.68***	2.32	.62	-.17	.12	-.13	.05	-.18†		.32**	-.00	-.12	.45***
7.	Individualistic	3.53	.49	6.94***	2.98	.52	.12	.25*	-.03	.10	.09	.07		-.01	-.19	.09
8.	Collectivistic	3.71	.39	11.81***	3.00	.38	-.16	.09	-.03	.21*	.24*	-.14	.02		.07	-.01
9.	Content-oriented career development	4.25	.71	.15	4.23	.59	.15	. .09	-.00	.00	.24*	-.23*	.19†	-.01		.13
10.	Process-related career development	2.73	1.16	2.88**	2.24	.96	-.17†	-.14	-.18	.27**	.10	.12	.25*	.09	.16	

Note. Correlations below the diagonal are China (n= 95) and above the diagonal are the Netherlands (n = 71).

$^{\dagger}p < .10$, $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p<.001$

In terms of the correlation results: first, the work centrality and the content-oriented career development was significantly correlated with each other both in the Netherlands ($r = .31$, $p < .01$) and in China ($r = .24$, $p < .05$). Second, both the Chinese teachers ($r = -.18$, $p < .10$) and the Dutch teachers ($r = -.22$, $p < .10$) reported negative relationship between the desire for upward mobility and the content-oriented career development. Third, there was a positive relationship between the desire for upward mobility and the process-related career development in the Netherlands ($r = .45$, $p < .001$), but not in China ($r = .12$, *ns*).

Regarding the impact of demographic variables: gender showed a negative impact on the process-related career development in China ($r = -.17$, $p < .10$), but not in the Netherlands ($r = -.04$, *ns*). In addition, educational levels had a positively correlations with the process-related career development ($r = .27$, $p < .01$) in China, but not in the Netherlands ($r = -.04$, *ns*).

Test Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested by using moderated regression analysis. Following the suggestions by Aiken and West (1991), I took three steps to transform the data. First, I converted the work centrality and the desire for upward mobility to z-scores. Then, I multiplied these z-scores by nationality (a dummy variable), and used the new variables as the interaction term. Finally, I controlled for the respondents' gender, age, experience and highest education.

The variables were entered into the regression equation in a hierarchical order: the control variables in step 1, career identity and nationality in step 2, and the interaction term in step 3. The results of this regression analysis are presented in Table 3. The upward side is for content-oriented career development, the downward side is for process-related career development.

Table 3

The Effect of Career Identity and Culture on Career Development

Step and variable	β	B	R^2	F
DV: Content-oriented career development				
Step 1			.02	.77
Gender	.11	.17	.	
Age	-.14	-.09		
Experience	.11	.04		
Highest education	.01	.01		
Step 2			.07	$2.03^{\dagger}$
Work centrality (WC)	$.27^{**}$	$.18^{**}$		
Nationality (N)	-.13	-.17		
Step 3			.08	$1.88^{\dagger}$
WC*N	.11	.14		
DV: Process-related career development				
Step 1			.08	3.13^{*}
Gender	$-.15^{\dagger}$	$-.38^{\dagger}$	.	
Age	$-.24^{\dagger}$	$-.26^{\dagger}$		
Experience	.07	.04		
Highest education	.09	.16		
Step 2			.14	4.05^{**}
Upward mobility (UM)	$.26^{**}$	$.29^{**}$		
Nationality (N)	-.04	-.10		
Step 3			.16	4.13^{***}
UM*N	$.23^{*}$	$.41^{*}$		

Note. $^{\dagger}p < .10$, $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p<.001$

Hypothesis 1a suggests that the work centrality leads to the content-oriented career development. The results showed that work centrality had a positive impact on content-oriented career development (b = .18, p< .01). Hypothesis 1b states that the desire for upward mobility leads to the process-related career development. The results showed that the desire for upward mobility had a positive impact on the process-related career development as well (b = .29, p < .01).

Hypotheses 2a and 2b propose an interaction effect between nationality and two types of career identity on two types of career development. Results showed that the interaction term of

nationality and the work centrality did not have a significant impact on the content-oriented career development (b = .14, *ns*), which is against Hypothesis 2a. However, for the process-related career development, the interaction between nationality and the desire for upward mobility showed a significant impact (b = .41, p <.05). This interaction is further depicted in Figure 1.

The visual depiction results showed that the desire for upward mobility has a negative impact on the process-related career development in China (b = .09, *ns*), but a positive impact on the process-related career development among Dutch teachers (b = .56, p < .001). The outcome did not support hypothesis 2b either.

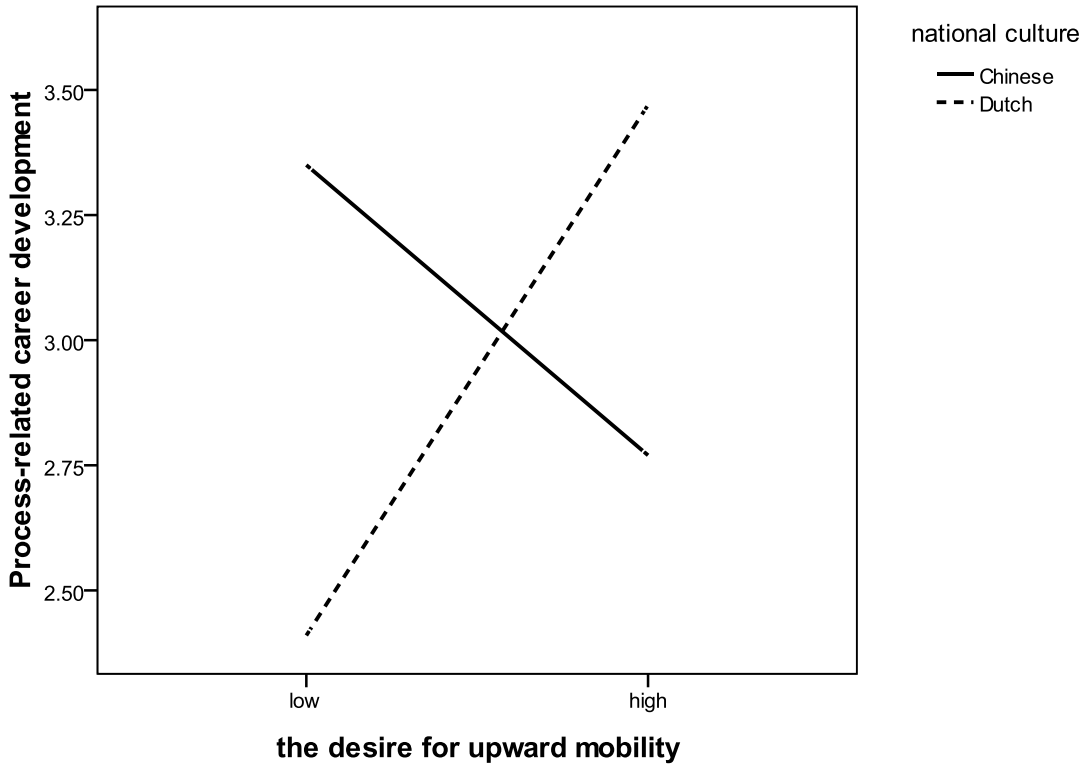

Figure 1. Impact of desire for upward mobility and national culture on process-related career development

Additional analysis

Though the hypothesis 2a and 2b were not supported by the results, the career identity and the career development showed some differences among two nations. I further explored whether these differences can be interpreted by individualistic/collectivistic cultural dimensions. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

The Effect of Nationality, Career Identity, Individualism/Collectivism on Career Development

Step and variable	β	B	R^2	F
DV: Content-oriented career development				
Step 1			.02	.61
Gender	.10	.17	.	
Age	-.14	-.09		
Experience	.11	.04		
Highest education	.01	.01		
Nationality	.02	.02		
Step 2			.08	1.75
Work centrality (WC)	.28**	.18**		
Individualism (IN)	.03	.02		
Step 3			.08	1.67
WC*IN	-.09	-.06		
DV: Process-related career development				
Step 1			.09	3.13*
Gender	-.13	-.35	.	
Age	-.13	-.15		
Experience	.01	.01		
Highest education	.08	.13		
Nationality	-.15†	-.35†		
Step 2			.14	3.49**
Upward mobility (UM)	.26**	.29**		
Collectivism (CO)	.04	.04		
Step 3			.15	3.29**
UM*CO	-.11	-.14		

Note. †$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p<.001$

The results showed that the interaction terms between individualistic/collectivistic cultural orientations and career identity had no impact whatsoever on the career development (for the content-oriented career development: b = -.06, *ns*; for the process-related career development: b = -.14, *ns*). These results suggest that the individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations cannot explain national differences in the relationship between career identity and career development.

Discussion

In this study, by using school teachers as respondents, I investigate the relationship between career identity and career development across two cultures: the Chinese versus the Dutch cultures. As expected, the findings indicate that the work centrality has a positive impact on the content-oriented career development and the desire for upward mobility has a positive impact on the process-related career development. However, contrary to what I expected, the results show no difference between the Chinese and the Dutch teachers regarding the relationship between the work centrality and the content-oriented career development. Regarding the relationship between the desire for upward mobility and the process-related career development, the Dutch teachers showed stronger positive link than the Chinese teachers. Related these findings, I would like to further discuss the following two points.

First, this study suggests that the relationships between career identity and career development can be developed in the two directions. Although scholars have addressed the importance of career identity to career development (e.g., Blustein, Devenis & Kidney, 1989; Meijers, 1998), none of the previous work, as far as I know, has differentiated the functions of the two types of career identity for career development. This study has proved that employees who view their work as an important part in their lives (in other words, identify their career in terms of work centrality) are interested in developing themselves in working-related skills. By contrast, employees who see career a climbing ladder or moving up to the top (the desire for upward mobility) pay more attention to get promoted and gain career status.

Besides, this study also explores national differences regarding to the function of career identity and for career development. Surprisingly, national culture does not play an important role as expected. In order to explain the national differences deeply, I have also explored the impact of national culture in terms of individualistic/collectivistic cultural orientations. But

the outcomes show neither of them takes part in shaping the relationship between career identity and career development. These disappointing results on the other hand hint that the influence of nation regarding to career development may have more to do with social and institutional divergence than with cultural differences across the two countries. Some explanations in line with this type of reasoning are indeed provided in literature. Nationality has no influence in adjusting the relationship between work centrality and the content-oriented career development. This may be caused by the fact that the content-oriented career development is closely related to employees' interests and values on their careers (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Contextual factors no matter which is institutional- or cultural-related do not reinforce or weaken their interests or values. The employees who are willing to engage in content-oriented career development are motivated by intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation. External regulation and other factors cannot influence their intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

However, for the relationship between the desire for upward mobility and the process-related career development, nationality showed a function, but that is contrary to what I expected: A stronger positive relationship among two concepts if found among Dutch employees than among Chinese employees. Moreover, cultural dimensions, at least individualistic/collectivistic dimension, do not function as a moderator to adjust the above-mentioned relationships. Overall, the findings show that nationality function has impact on the relationship between the desire for upward mobility and the process-related career development, but irrelevant to cultural dimensions. I then suspect that the differences may due to the institutional divergence between two countries.

For example, Chinese and Dutch organizations use different selection and promotion procedures, which may affect the process-related career development. The Netherlands are now gradually moving to a more flexible system of labor relations based on the competencies

of employees (Thierry et al., 2007). The concept of labor flexibility, which is defined as the ability to adapt, can be achieved through different forms, such as short-term contracts, part-time job, and so on (Atkinson, 1984). From 1998, a new law named ‘flexibility and security’ was brought in the Netherlands. With the regulations of this law, Dutch employees have more freedom to choose their jobs than before. By contrast, Chinese employees may hardly match their personal needs with organizational needs with absence of formal selection procedure. Verburg, Drenth, Koopman, Muijen and Wang (1999) compared human resource development in industrial enterprises between China and the Netherlands. They found out that more formal procedures are used in personnel selection in the Netherlands than in China. They state that assessments such as psychological and personality tests are common in the selection of employees in the Netherlands. However, formal tests are seldom used during selection procedures in China (Ding, Lan & Warner, 2001). Without the formal selection procedures, both employees and employers might ignore employees’ needs on career development.

Promotion procedure may also be one of the institutional differences across the Dutch and the Chinese organizations in terms of employees career development. In China, government still has direct or indirect authority over organizations (Walder, 1995). The promotion procedure in China is partly controlled by state’s interventions. Promotion still takes political and organizational loyalty into account in some Chinese organizations (Zhao & Zhou, 2004). These interventions may divert the interests of Chinese employees with a high desire for upward mobility to other activities rather than the process-related career development activities. In the Netherlands, promotion is based on merit (Anderson, Haverland & Nölke, 2006), and has nothing to do with political preference. This may explain why the relationship between the desire for upward mobility and the process-related career development is significant among Dutch employees.

Limitations

Despite the interesting findings, this study has several limitations. First, the topic of this study addresses the issue of career development, but I tested the theoretical assumptions only among school teachers. So the single sample of profession may reduce the representative of the population (all kinds of employees). The limited scope diminishes the generalibility of conclusions.

Second, there is some bias in the bicultural data on cultural orientation. Individualistic/collectivistic was selected to test whether two sub-samples were representative of their national cultures. The Chinese teachers showed higher individualistic- and collectivistic-orientation than the Dutch teachers. This outcome conflicts with previous studies (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Veenhoven, 1999; Triandis, 2000; Hofstede, 2001; Allik & Realo, 2004). The biased samples may have a systematical impact on the research findings.

Third, although institutional context in national differences was concerned, no measurement of institutional context was used in this research. Parboteeah and Cullen (2003) explored how social institutions influence individuals' work. They have noticed that most cross-cultural researches ignore the institutional effects in individual-level outcomes related to work. But previous researches have shown that institutions and culture have independent effects on general cultural values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Regarding to Parboteeah and Cullen's (2003) research, lots of norms can be considered in cross-national research of career. Nevertheless, this limitation points out the direction for further cross-cultural research on career development.

Forth, two sub-samples are not equivalent in terms of age. The Dutch respondents are older than the Chinese respondents. Age in the regression analysis showed a negative impact

on the process-related career development. The un-match age may be considered a limitation for this research.

Practical Implication

This research gives some practical implications to both employees and employers. From the employers' perspective, they should encourage employees' engagement in career development activities based on employee career identities: in order to enhance employees' career motivation, employers can provide the content-oriented working tasks to employees with a high work centrality, and increase promotion opportunities to employees with a high desire for upward mobility. By doing this, employee career identities should be carefully examined during their work. Career identity measurement can be a useful tool.

From employees' perspective, they should consider their career development activities in combination with their career identities. Recognition of one's career identity can help an individual to find out those appropriate activities to develop themselves. Employee who view work as an important part in their lives should focus on career development activities which can improve their working abilities and skills. By contrast, employees who are willing to climb career ladder during their career should pay attention to career development activities which can provide promotion opportunities. When employees are willing to be aware of their development needs, they may ask themselves: Which is more important for me, my current work or upward mobility? Does this activity can improve my working skills or does this activity can let me be promoted?

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Appendix A

Questionnaire – for Teachers:

Please fill in the five questions below about your personal information

Gender:

- man
- woman

Age: …….year

Number of years teaching: ……. year

Highest education:

- MBO/High school
- HBO/College
- University
- Others, namely……

The following 16 statements are descriptions of how you can see your career. I would like to know whether you disagree or agree with each of the following statements.

If you strongly disagree, circle “1”; if you neither disagree nor agree, circle “3”; if you strongly agree, circle “5”. Overall, the extent to which you agree with a statement increases in the order from “1” to “5”

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

1. My work as a teacher is an important part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am satisfied with my job as a teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am proud of being a teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Earning a decent salary is an important reason for me to continue teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
5. A job with a higher social status than teaching is my wish.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Compared to other activities teaching offers me greater pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Improving my teaching skills is more important to me than improving my communication skills with my team leader.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The advantages of being a teacher (like a good salary and prolonged holidays, etc) are an added attraction to continue teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
9. To be an expert in my field ensures me to deliver a high-quality course.	1	2	3	4	5
10. If I can find a position that offers me more salary and a higher status than teaching, I will take this position.	1	2	3	4	5
11. To satisfy my team leader will lead to more opportunities within my career.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Earning a promotion is a strong motivation for me to work hard.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I want my colleagues to recognize my accomplishments, so that they can look up to me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I want to be in a leadership position.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Being a teacher is just a way for me to make a living.。	1	2	3	4	5
16. I want to spend more time (even if it means that I have to use free	1	2	3	4	5

time) on improving my teaching skills.					

The following 29 statements are descriptions of employee opinions of themselves, of their relationship with colleagues, and of their organisation. I would like to know whether you disagree or agree with each of the following statements. If you strongly disagree, circle “1”; if you neither disagree nor agree, circle “3”; if you strongly agree, circle “5”. Overall, the extent to which you agree with a statement increases in the order from “1” to “5”.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

1. I enjoy being unique.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I prefer to do my own things.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I perceive myself as an independent individual rather than being a part of interpersonal relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
4. In the long run, the only person I can count on is myself.	1	2	3	4	5
5. What happens to me is my own doing.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I should decide my future on my own.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The most important thing in my life is to make myself happy.	1	2	3	4	5
8. One should live one's life independent of others as much as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
9. One should give priority to one’s own interests.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My close interpersonal relationships reflect who I am.	1	2	3	4	5

11. I cannot think of myself without relating myself to close friends and family.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The happiness of those who are closely related to me is more important than my own happiness	1	2	3	4	5
13. I consult with co-workers on work-related matters.	1	2	3	4	5
14. It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I never rely on my friends and colleagues to help me out with difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Having harmonious relationships with colleagues is my path to success.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My work success depends more on networks and relationships than on my own abilities and efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Having a good relationship with friends and colleagues is the most important thing in my life	1	2	3	4	5
19. Disagreement should be avoided where possible to ensure harmonious relationships with others.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I view myself as a member of the team.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The reputation of my organisation has little to do with me.	1	2	3	4	5
22. What is good for my organisation is also good for me.	1	2	3	4	5
23. If I have done an excellent job, I attribute my success to a collective effort.	1	2	3	4	5
24. If the group is slowing me down, it is better to leave it and work alone.	1	2	3	4	5

25. As a team member, I have to respect decisions made by my team.	1	2	3	4	5
26. It is my duty to defend the reputation of my organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
27. One of the guiding principles in my life is to put group interests ahead of the interests of persons who are dear to me.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I stick with my group even through difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I remain in the groups of which I am a member if they need me, even though I am dissatisfied with them.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix B

Questionnaire - for Team Leaders:

The following 13 descriptions are about how teachers perceive their work and how they are involved in different activities. I would like to know to what extent each of your subordinates is involved in each of the following activities.

If this teacher is “never involved in this activity”, circle “1”; if this teacher is “totally involved in this activity”, circle “5”. Overall, the extent to which the teacher is involved in the activity increases in the order from “1” to “5”.

To what extent is …… (name teacher)

1	2	3	4	5
Never involved	Occasionally involved	Frequently involved	Regularly involved	Totally involved

1. using every opportunity to become a team leader	1	2	3	4	5
2. looking for career opportunities to move up	1	2	3	4	5
3. willing to work harder to get a better salary	1	2	3	4	5
4. engaging in activities to improve his/her teaching skills	1	2	3	4	5
5. committed to teaching as a career	1	2	3	4	5
6. investing more time and effort to be a professional expert rather than to be a member of the school board	1	2	3	4	5
7. looking for ways to get the best out of the students	1	2	3	4	5
8. taking opportunities to promote his/her status	1	2	3	4	5

9. searching for job assignments that matches his/her career goal	1	2	3	4	5
10. working extra (e.g., using free time) to deliver a high-quality course	1	2	3	4	5
11. interested in teaching	1	2	3	4	5
12. loyal to his/her profession as a teacher	1	2	3	4	5
13. interested in climbing up in the career ladder	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your cooperation!