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## “Sustainable Development” and CIDA’s China Program: A Saskatchewan Case Study

**Abstract** Through funding from the Canadian International Development Agency’s (CIDA) China Program, the University of Regina (UofR), Canada, implemented two major development projects with the Educational Institute of Jilin province (EIJP) from 1990 to 2001. This paper re-examines this historic cooperation. The paper argues that prevailing theories of sustainable development which had been percolating in education faculties of Canadian universities in the 1990s allowed the UofR/EIJP program to transcend a simple international aid paradigm and to focus on the mutual benefit of the partners. At the same time, we observe that despite the enormous goodwill and institutional learning achieved through the UofR/EIJP program the project failed to live up to its significant potential. The paper concludes with some practical measures that institutions might implement to ensure important cooperative projects can build robust international capacity sustainable for the long term.

**Keywords** sustainable development, international aid, higher education, Chinese education

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### Introduction

Of the thousands of Canadian university projects which have unfolded in China over the past 40 years, the Canadian International Development Agency’s

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(CIDA) China Program has yielded some particular gems. Yet in the context of burgeoning university collaborative projects and the ongoing internationalization of Canadian higher education, individual projects implemented through CIDA's China Program invite further exploration. This paper examines the University of Regina's (UofR) collaboration with the Educational Institute of Jilin Province (EIJP) which unfolded through the Canada-China University Linkages Program (CCULP; 1990–1995) and, and later, the Special University Linkages Consolidation Program (SULCP; 1996–2001).

We try to account for what turned out to be the UofR/EIJP projects' mixed successes. In the CCULP stage of the project, the Faculty of Education at the UofR and the EIJP created together a Management Training Centre in Changchun which had capacity to provide ongoing administrative in-service for educational leaders around Jilin province. Meanwhile, the UofR leveraged the program to develop enduring friendships between program participants, to support an ongoing twinning agreement between Saskatchewan and Jilin provinces, to establish a Centre for International Teacher Education at the UofR, and to found several successful exchange programs with public schools in the Regina area. However, seen from a larger institutional perspective, the UofR/EIJP program might have been linked in a more strategic way to other UofR projects in China, and the substantial connections the university had made through the CCULP and the SULCP could have been better leveraged by the provincial government.

This paper relies on insights from linkage program coordinators, program participants, research publications flowing from the projects, and archived documents at the UofR. We delineate some of the important features of the CCULP and SUCLP programs and identify some of the lasting educational infrastructure established in the wake of the cooperative agreements. The study goes on to grapple with several central questions: What current theories and principles in the academic and international development world allowed this joint program to transcend a simple international aid paradigm? What realities ultimately limited the long-term impact of the CCULP and SULCP programming successes? What important lessons can be learned from the CCULP/SULCP collaborations now that the tables have turned and Canadian universities are increasingly reaching out to Chinese universities for access to students, research expertise, and project-funding partnerships?

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## **The University of Regina/Educational Institute of Jilin Province CCULP and SULCP Projects**

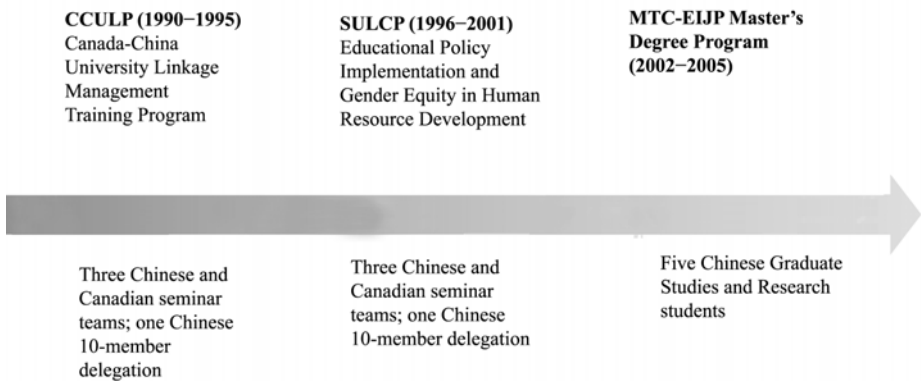
The involvement of the Faculty of Education at the UofR in the CIDA China Program involved a simple logic. The chief architects of the CIDA China Program, the CIDA and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC) understood China’s university system had to be reformed to include international law, trade, finance, engineering, and macroeconomics so as to better reflect the activities in which China was increasingly becoming engaged. However, to accomplish these reforms, China had first to increase the capacity of public education.

Meanwhile, Marcel Masse, who had taken over as president of CIDA in 1989, advocated a Human Resource Development (HRD) model which recognized that the CIDA China projects were necessarily going to involve people-to-people exchanges which would focus on institutional capacity-building. Seeming to follow this lead, the main Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) report documenting the CCULP also “recommended that CIDA programming put HRD for the university sector as a priority for CIDA’s new China program” (Winch, 1996, p. 8). Clearly, the UofR’s Faculty of Education, a trainer of teachers as well as administrators, could help develop educational administrators needed for China’s larger economic and social development.

On a more practical level, Regina was a regional centre on the periphery of Canada’s diplomatic centre of gravity in Ontario and Quebec; Changchun was situated in an agricultural region removed from China’s corridors of power in Beijing and Shanghai. The UofR, much like the EIJP, had its origins in teacher education. In any case, the province of Saskatchewan had already signed a Jilin Friendship Agreement in 1984; by 1985 the UofR had already been talking to their counterparts in the EIJP about possible joint training programs. It was easy for CIDA and its Chinese bilateral partner to match the two institutions through the CIDA China Program.

Under the auspices of the EIJP and the Educational Commission of Jilin province, the CCULP Management Training Program which ran from 1990 to 1995, successfully established a Management Training Centre in Changchun to sustain the planning and delivery of educational administrative in-service training. Based on the success of these CCULP projects, the Faculty of Education

at the UofR was chosen to receive continued CIDA funding through the later SULCP as one of the 11 SULCP participants of the original 31. Fig. 1 summarizes in graphic form the major partner exchanges undertaken through the CCULP and SULCP. This paper focuses most of its attention on the later SULCP phase of the cooperation since the second phase was essentially an elaboration of the first program, and one of the authors, Garth Pickard, acted as the Canadian Program Director on the Canadian portion of the project.



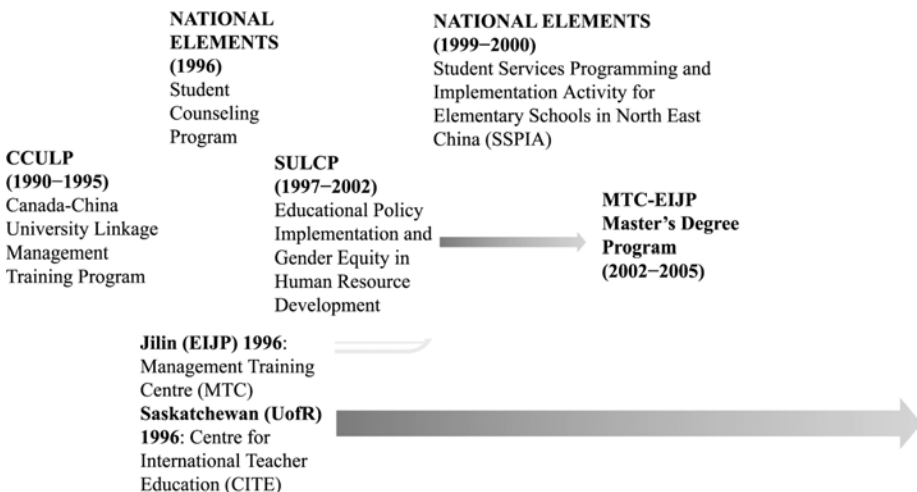
**Fig. 1** The University of Regina/Educational Institute of Jilin Province CIDA Projects

The Consolidation of the Management Training Project: Educational Policy Implementation and Gender Equity in Human Resource Development (abbreviated as the “Educational Policy and Gender Equity Program,” or “EPGEP”) was essentially a continuation of the projects already completed, but added a new focus on the academic success of school-aged girls. Three seminars ranging in length from eight to 14 days, along with three-day pre-impact and three-day post-impact components, were held in Changchun over a five-year period. In addition, a working group of principals, including the vice president of the EIJP, visited the UofR in 1999.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this training, the EPGEP developed in-service programming and curriculum development training for women educational administrators through the Management Training Centre; provided opportunities for women to learn to become trainers/consultants and to participate directly in school management-administration and curriculum planning; assisted senior provincial educational administrators implement policy

<sup>1</sup> Another working group of principals which included the president of the EIJP had visited UofR in 1993 through the CCULP programming.

that better included women in management-administration and curriculum planning; helped senior provincial educational administrators identify systemic problems causing the high dropout rate of school-aged girls; and worked with senior provincial educational administrators to ensure opportunities for school-aged girls to complete a middle school education.

Fig. 2 summarizes the main projects undertaken through the CCULP and SULCP. Two ancillary projects were developed through National Elements programming, a Student Counseling Program in 1996 and a Student Services Programming and Implementation Activity for Elementary Schools in Northeast China in 2000 (SSPIA; the 2000 student services project will be discussed in some detail later in the paper). The SULCP program also trained two women and three men from Jilin’s Management Training Centre through a collateral Master’s Degree Program approved as an extension of the SULCP. By 2001, the candidates completed all graduate course work, gained UofR research ethics approval, and had completed their research and thesis requirements.



**Fig. 2** The University of Regina/Educational Institute of Jilin Province Cooperative Programming

This study does not set out to explore the complex web of activities undertaken by the UofR and EIJP over a five-year spate of activity related to the SULCP projects. Instead it examines two “snapshots” of the program which reveal the inner workings of the UofR/EIJP cooperation. First, we examine in Table 1 the third seminar held in Changchun near the end of the program.

**Table 1** Curriculum for Seminar Three (May 1999)

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9
	<b>Morning</b>								
Topics	Opening ceremonies; Photographic session; Introduction to Canadian team members	Introduction to curriculum theory	Learning theory and practice	Concept of "Active Learning"	Learning environments	"Post-impact Phase": Developing action plans	Teacher evaluation	Educational planning	Review
Discussion/Activities		Goals of Saskatchewan Education Instructional strategies	Overview of learning styles; Successful students	Role of prior experience and knowledge; Implications for instruction	Linking theory with practice "Pre-impact Phase" data sheet	Field data processing; Writing workshop	Supervision of teachers; Teacher mentoring; Administrator supervision roles; Professional development	Gender equity considerations; Curriculum and instruction	Seminar closure
Academic Theory		Concept of "Webbing"; Interdisciplinarity	Student-centred Instruction; Independent Learning	Experiential Theory; Constructivism; Learning; Cooperative Learning					

*(To be continued)*

(Continued)

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9
				<b>Afternoon</b>					
Topics	Overview of Seminar	Curriculum examples; Curriculum improvement	Learning theory and practice	Active learning in action	“Impact Phase”: field trip to park and museum	Evaluation and assessment	Administrat or evaluation planning	Educational planning	
Discussion/ Activities	Curriculum development; Active learning; Evaluation	Social studies; Career guidance; Administrative roles; Needs of students	Saskatchewan education goals; Active engagement; Independent learning	Teacher in-service; Career guidance; “Fish Bowl” demonstration; “Active learning” demonstration	Gathering field information in groups of five including rubbings, photos, field notes	Student evaluation; Criterion-referenced evaluation; Rubrics; Portfolios; Student-centred conferencing	Professional training; Selection; Expanding duties; Assessment School evaluation	Gender equity considerations; Curriculum and instruction	Closing ceremony
Academic Theory	Systems Theory; Change Theory; Motivational Theory; Deming’s Principles of Management; Fullan Schools as Organizations		Student-centred Learning; Community-engaged Learning						

By the time the third seminar was conducted in China, the Canadian participants were quite comfortable with the China environment, having had successfully conducted two seminars in Changchun in the previous years. Meanwhile, the Chinese side had slowly accustomed themselves to the Canadian pedagogical style and gained a rudimentary understanding of some of the profound differences between the Canadian and Chinese school systems.

Despite the mutual understanding achieved by the program participants, there was ample opportunity for cross-cultural learning. The Chinese participants who had been exposed to a strongly moralistic “normal school” training struggled to understand how pure academic theory such as systems theory, change theory, motivational theory, management theory, and other academic theories which North American faculties of education were embracing in the 1990s, could be applied to the classroom. While the traditional Chinese school system required students to stay at their desks, the Canadian participants vowed to get the participants moving around, sometimes outside the seminar venue. The Canadian teachers were also sharing with their Chinese colleagues about “student-centred learning,” and challenging an educational tradition which had had the teacher at the centre of the learning process for several thousand years. Moreover, the Chinese participants were equal participants (at least in theory) with their Canadian teachers in the seminar which unfolded over the nine days. The “head translator” system envisioned by the Chinese side at least partly broken down as the participants in the seminars gained the confidence to communicate with rudimentary English, sign language, and facial expressions. Most importantly, the seminar talked frankly about school administrators in precisely the same terms it talked about school-age children: Like the younger students, would-be administrators needed training, evaluation, support, and encouragement.

A survey of projects associated with the CIDA China Program would be incomplete without a discussion of money. Managing CIDA’s financial formula for the program was often fraught with tension. For example, at the UofR, 50% of the CIDA overhead funding for each program went to the Faculty of Education which was administering the programs; the other 50% of the overhead funding went to the university. Further complicating matters, the program overheads were only 54% of the projected cost to the university. The direct result was that the university placed limits on the kinds of in-kind contributions that could be offered, a shortfall which often left the Faculty of Education, the UofR’s



Research Services Department, and the Project Director with competing priorities.

When the management of money was so difficult in one’s own institution, it was close to impossible to understand every aspect of expenditure in the partner institution. Negotiations persisted over the Chinese per diem amounts depending upon the individual’s position within the EIJP causing, on occasion, strain amongst the Chinese team members. Moving money between the two institutions was equally challenging: In one instance an important cheque had been sent by FedEx to the EIJP, but had gone missing in the guard office at the gate of the institution.

In a bureaucratic world full of “overhead,” “allowances,” “forecasts,” and “variances,” we might ask a further question: What did the program actually cost, and on what did CIDA money actually get spent? Table 2 shows the actual cost of the “Consolidation of the Management Training Project: Educational Policy Implementation and Gender Equity in Human Resource Development” which was rolled out over a period of five years.

We can make a couple of very rudimentary observations about the program. The AUCC had articulated overhead for all projects, so overhead expenditures were at the discretion of AUCC and CIDA. However, the significant budget for the program was managed by the director. If the director got consolidator fares for flights, thereby reducing travel costs, then he might, for example, add another person to work on the project. The enormous geographic distance between the partners meant that they were spending large amounts on plane tickets. Travel costs, at CA\$ 148,614.94, were the largest expense apart from personnel costs. Living expenses were also substantial, at CA\$ 119,410.31. Considerable resources were put into “output”; the program spent CA\$ 44,278.40 on publishing.

We conclude this section by observing the UofR/EIJP CIDA programs were successes on a number of fronts. First of all, the Management Training Program and the Educational Policy and Gender Equity Program offered through the CCULP and SULCP CIDA funding were an administrative triumph. Until the end of the 1980s, international projects developed on an uncoordinated, ad hoc basis in Canadian universities, and, at least in the eyes of some, higher education remained stubbornly Euro-centric (Walmsley as cited in Shute, 1999, p. 24). Little protocol was in place to handle international relationships at either the

**Table 2** The Educational Policy and Gender Equity Program in Monetary Terms (CAS)

	1996/1997	1997/1998	1998/1999	1999/2000	2000/2001	Total
<b>Direct Costs</b>						
<b>Travel</b>						
A. International Travel	18,252.00	19,322.00	26,787.88	13,707.03	48,155.54	126,224.45
B. Local Travel in Canada	601.67	230.20	1,133.52	1,384.23	54.67	3,404.29
C. Local Travel in China	1,625.00	1,898.75			14,011.55	17,535.30
D. Visa/Medical	414.24	1,011.66	25.00			1,450.90
<i>Travel Total</i>	20,892.91	22,462.61	27,946.40	15,091.26	62,221.76	148,614.94
<b>Living Expenses</b>						
A. Canadians in Canada	189.49	40.48	166.66		57.48	454.11
B. Canadians in China	2,660.92	10,193.58	7,921.32	14,066.99		34,842.81
C. Chinese in Canada	9,908.22	16,651.52	10,439.57	29,444.49	17,669.59	84,113.39
<i>Living Expenses Total</i>	12,758.63	26,885.58	18,527.55	43,511.48	17,727.07	119,410.31
<b>Supplies</b>						
A. Communications	1,076.52	789.42	347.71	5,882.64	252.90	8,349.19
B. Photocopying	136.59	101.04	726.27	11,207.52	10,329.59	22,501.01
C. Consumables/Teaching Material	484.70	1,335.18	1,543.20	3,976.02	14,363.29	21,702.39
D. Seminar Materials			1,099.25	4,000.00		5,099.25
E. Room/Equipment Rent-Canada					152.93	152.93

*(To be continued)*

(Continued)

Direct Costs	1996/1997	1997/1998	1998/1999	1999/2000	2000/2001	Total
G. Capital		36,986.96	11,250.00	22,000.00		70,236.96
<i>Supplies Total</i>	1,697.81	39,212.60	14,966.43	47,066.18	25,098.71	128,041.73
Publications						
A. Seminar Textbook	3,000.00	2,990.75	9,750.00			15,740.75
B. Symposium Programs				6,000.00	12,037.65	18,037.65
C. Symposium Proceedings				6,000.00	4,500.00	10,500.00
<i>Publications Total</i>	3,000.00	2,990.75	9,750.00	12,000.00	16,537.65	44,278.40
Training						
A. Tuition Fees/Allowance			2,578.80	12,629.20	17,769.50	32,977.50
<i>Training Total</i>			2,578.80	12,629.20	17,769.50	32,977.50
General						
A. Consulting Fees		1,320.36	927.97	400.00	733.28	3,381.61
B. Research	200.00			4,000.00		4,200.00
C. Overweight				884.84		884.84
<i>General Total</i>	200.00	1,320.36	927.97	5,284.84	733.28	8,466.45
<i>Sub-Total</i>	38,549.35	92,871.90	74,697.15	135,582.96	140,087.97	481,789.33
Personnel Costs (Overhead)	23,922.19	57,949.02	56,857.35	41,249.44	3,728.69	183,706.69
<i>Project Total</i>	62,471.54	150,820.92	131,554.50	176,832.40	143,816.66	665,496.02
Contingency						
<i>Grand Total</i>						665,496.02

UofR or the EIJP. Yet program participants on both sides developed robust organizational infrastructure to support accounting, communications, visa applications, and per diem arrangements. Protocols were put in place to deal with banking anomalies as situations arose. Once on the ground in the partner university residence, arrangements were made for routine and emergency doctor visits for participants and their families. Without being too intrusive, host institutions had to put in place realistic measures to ensure the security of participants and their belongings.

Meanwhile both universities overcame significant bureaucratic inertia in their home institutions. In an environment which discouraged radical accommodations for special projects, participants spent and acquired political capital to get new initiatives started. More crucially, the two sides had achieved a remarkably close cooperation, whether through frank discussion about problem teenagers in the Student Counselling Program, or through the mentorship relationship which developed in the National Elements master's program. The two institutions managed to create lasting friendship between two provinces, institutions, and people, at least as long as the program participants were in positions of influence in the education fields in the two provinces.

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## **International Development and the Sustainability Paradigm**

What kind of educational values and theoretical principles underpinned the rich collaboration achieved between the UofR and the EIJP?

Profound changes in thinking about the nature of development were underway at the end of the 1980s. Thinking had shifted on two important fronts. First, development specialists, practitioners, and academics alike agreed that economic development that occurred without lifting participants out of poverty and improving the societies in which participants lived was not real development. Second, economic development which was achieved at the expense of the natural environment, the environment which supported the very economic activities in which participant societies engaged, was similarly not real development.

Sustainable development was initially seen as something occurring simultaneously on three fronts: economic development, social equity, and environmental protection. One of the more cogent articulations of this three-part approach came with Barbier's (1987) conception of sustainable development as

three overlapping spheres corresponding to “biological system goals,” “economic system goals,” and “social system goals.” Through an “adaptive process of trade-offs” sustainable development could be achieved even though the goals clearly competed with each other (p. 104).

The development world enthusiastically embraced the term “sustainable development.” Published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (also known as the *Brundtland Report*) envisioned a “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987, Chapter 2). The United Nations General Assembly endorsed the report, paving the way for an articulation of principles of sustainable development at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 (see High Level Panel on Global Sustainability, United Nations, 2010). More importantly, by the early 1990s, sustainable development philosophy had begun to colonize the Western academic world. Academic journals began widely disseminating sustainable development research, some of it preoccupied with China. The inaugural 1993 issue of *Sustainable Development*, coincidentally, featured a profile of China entitled *China: Big Country, Small Land* (see Editor, 1993).

The term “sustainable development” had begun to be embraced by CIDA by 1991. Marcel Masse oversaw the creation of a discussion paper, “Sustainable Development,” published in June 1991 by CIDA’s Policy Branch (Pratt, 1998, p. 3). “Canada in the World,” a foreign policy statement released in February 1995, stated “[t]he purpose of Canada’s ODA is to support sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world.” The report went on to observe “Poverty reduction means a *sustained decrease* in the number of poor and the extent of their deprivation. This requires that the root causes and structural factors of poverty be addressed.... Poverty reduction must focus on improving the *social, economic* and *environmental* conditions of the poor and their access to decision making” [emphasis added] (CIDA, 1996, January).

Yet for all the rosy associations implicit in “sustainable development,” tensions remained in the implementation of the new framework. Barbier’s vision of “trade-offs” pointed to powerful tensions between irreconcilable ideals. Meanwhile, the “economic system goals” were tangible and quantifiable, while

the “biological systems goals” and “social systems goals” were nebulous, less immediately useful, and ultimately easy to ignore.

There were signs that CIDA along with its executing body, the AUCC, never really conceived of the “Educational Policy Context” of the China Program outside of the framework of economic development. Consider, for example, the framing of the CCULP role in terms of economic development goals in the AUCC’s final report on the Canada-China University Linkage Program. In the 1990s, as part of a larger trend toward devolution, China’s central government increasingly handed over decision-making power for educational institutions to regional governments; sophisticated, educated administrators were needed in regional institutions, the report asserted. The report also noted China also had to deal with dramatically increased enrolments in higher education; the university student population was to increase from 1.9 million in 1990 to 2.9 million in 1995 (Winch, 1996, p. 4). A new labour market had developed with the weakening of the state job allocation system, and graduates with strong technical and business skills of both genders were in high demand. “[S]izeable changes will still be required before China’s educational institutions will be able to respond adequately to demand for admissions and to the changing needs of the economy and Chinese society” the report noted (p. 14).

Moreover, it is unclear how fundamentally serious CIDA was about a “sustainable” model of development. “For Whose Benefit?” the 1987 report produced by the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade (SCEAIT), advocated for a CIDA mandate “to help the poorest people and countries in the world to help themselves” and stated “[t]he aid program is not for the benefit of Canadian business. It is not an instrument for the promotion of Canadian trade objectives” (Pratt, 1998, p. 2). Yet four years later when CIDA proposed to the Department of External Affairs (DEA) a “sustainable development” framework for CIDA which would move the department one step away from the economic development priorities of the DEA, Barbara McDougall, then Minister of External Affairs countered with a framework of four thematic funds. That the “economic cooperation fund” received CA\$ 328 million, while the “human rights, democratic and governance fund” and the “environment fund” received CA\$ 110 million each (Pratt, 1998, p. 4) clearly showed CIDA never envisioned a symmetrical balance between the “economic,” “environment,” and “social” components of sustainable development.

## **Education, Sustainable Development, and the UofR/EIJP Projects**

The ambivalence of the world’s advanced economies and their development agencies toward the larger sustainable development agenda was mitigated in a significant way by a push forward on a new front: education.

The *Agenda 21* published at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 established a powerful new protagonist for the sustainable development movement. Section 36.3 of Chapter 36 of *Agenda 21* proposed as a “Basis for Action” the following:

Education, including formal education, public awareness and training should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. (United Nations, 1992, June 14)

“Education for Sustainability,” as it came to be known, pulled the conversation about “sustainable development” out of exclusive international development circles and vigorously engaged public schools, NGOs, and community leaders. In October 1994, the US “National Forum on Partnerships Supporting Education about the Environment” brought together representatives from business, government, universities, and schools. Rather than debating what role education should play in sustainable development, the conference instead broadened the concept of education to include sustainable development values. This consultation resulted in “Education for Sustainability: An Agenda for Action,” a document which asked a compelling question: “Have educational efforts produced an informed citizenry, an environmentally and scientifically literate citizenry, and a cadre of technical-policy-managerial professionals proficient in guiding our nation’s industries, communities, and governments?” (McNerney & Davis, 1996, p. 2).

By the early 2000s when the UofR’s cooperation with Jilin was about to formally end, educators had begun to question the old economic-environment-social triumvirate. By being more specific about what they meant by the non-economic features of international development, development theorists argued, they could more vigorously advocate for those

features which had been neglected. Influential reports such as *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning* (see Hawkes, 2001) and *Resetting the Compass: Australia's Journey Towards Sustainability* (see Yencken & Wilkinson, 2000) came to see development as being supported by four pillars evenly positioned and all equally supporting the development endeavor. Table 3 succinctly summarizes the four pillars of and each of their unique functions.

**Table 3** Four Pillars of Sustainability

Pillars	Manifestation
Cultural vitality	Wellbeing, creativity, diversity and innovation
Social equity	Justice, engagement, cohesion and welfare
Environmental responsibility	Ecological balance
Economic viability	Material prosperity

Source: J. Hawkes (2001, p.25).

To claim that sustainable development theory acted as a framework upon which the early UofR/EIJP partnership developed would be an exaggeration. Yet sustainable development theory was already explicitly mentioned in the proceedings from the “Educational Change in the 21st Century International Symposium,” a conference jointly held by the UofR and the EIJP. Looking a little deeper, we can see the “sustainable” values articulated in non-economic components of *The Fourth Pillar* and *Resetting the Compass* permeated the two phases of the UofR CIDA projects.

Environmental responsibility was a conspicuous part of the Jilin curriculum. The UofR Faculty of Education embraced a unique methodology in Jilin which accepted the natural environment as an important “classroom” for the teaching curriculum. The outdoor education tradition had had a profound influence on Canadian faculties of education in the 1970s and 1980s. Drawing on the philosophical thinking of the likes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Henry David Thoreau, and John Dewey, and integrating boy scout practice from the early 20th century, outdoor education preoccupied itself with the mutual influence of human beings and the outdoor environment. Environmental education had been formally articulated in the inaugural edition of the *Journal of Environmental Education* by William Stapp in 1969 (see Stapp, 1969), eventually being solidified in the



UNESCO Tbilisi Declaration of 1977. “Environmental education is the result of the reorientation and dovetailing of different disciplines and educational experiences which facilitate an integrated perception of the problems of the environment, enabling more rational actions capable of meeting social needs to be taken,” the document stated (UNESCO, n.d., Tbilisi).

Environmental education along with outdoor education had deeply imbued educational offerings at the UofR’s Faculty of Education. When the CIDA China projects got underway at the UofR, undergraduate teacher education programs included Off Campus Residential Experiences (OCRE) for all its students. These OCRE experiences embraced a five-pronged pedagogical philosophy which promoted: 1) interdisciplinarity, 2) experiential education, 3) place-based learning, 4) multi-sensory input, and 5) personal/community-centeredness. Conceived as “theory-into-practice” learning opportunities which came before the internship year, OCRE completely immersed participants into an unknown outdoor environment and invited them to reflect on their own learning (Forsberg, 1995).

The Faculty of Education’s pedagogical focus on an “inclusive interdisciplinary environment” naturally went on to shape the UofR/EIJP projects. The UofR encouraged their Jilin partners to venture from the lecture format to group work, and to risk a “discovery learning” approach over a “command approach” (Mosston, 1966). Throughout the delivery of the projects some portion of seminar instruction took place out of doors, or at least outside the “normal” classroom. Some learning activities explicitly involved nature: “One outing,” a project director recalled, “had the entire cohort of seminar participants outdoors examining trees” (G. Pickard, interview by P. Sinclair, July 22, 2014; see Table 1). If students were to write about a tree, the Canadian instructor challenged the students, they had to first touch it (G. Pickard, interview by P. Sinclair, July 22, 2014).

The “vital, dynamic nature of cultural interaction” prized by Hawkes (2001) became a similar important driver of the CCULP and SULCP programs. In a Canadian university culture which tended to give international guests their “own space,” Canadian program directors found themselves making regular trips to the store for the purchase of bedding, cooking utensils, foodstuffs, and daily goods. Canadian project directors occasionally found the noise in the EIJP dormitory environment distressing, while the Chinese sometimes found the quiet pace and

silence of the UofR residence on weekends difficult. Ongoing inclusion by both the Canadian and Chinese partners into family life meant the programs were essentially bi-cultural, and made it impossible for the program to privilege the prestigious English culture of the “donor” country.

Meanwhile, the programs were framed on the backdrop of foreign language. Canadian and Chinese team members spent long hours introducing team members, preparing seminar materials, and translating documents. Yet the translation of the CCULP/SULCP programming proved to be unexpectedly fruitful. Participants soon found out that concepts such as “Confucianism” or “student-centred learning” were laden with cultural values. Preparing quality materials through a translator was always an act of cultural negotiation, ultimately begging the question: Was what was learned and what was being taught? When Chinese project teams came to Canada to prepare a translated version of the textbook materials for one of the three seminars in the Educational Policy Implementation and Gender Equity Program (EDGEPE), the main translator for the team played a much less prominent role than expected. Participants got direct input from other Chinese team members who circulated throughout the lecture hall and Canadians who provided a “Canadian” perspective on the theory and content of the seminar materials.

However, it was “social equity” which became the touchstone of the entire program. While the CCULP/SULCP projects were conceived as having a “developed” and “developing” partner, the partnership was ultimately between equals. “I am not a guy in a suit coming here with a suitcase to tell you what to do,” CCULP program manager and then dean of the Faculty of Education pronounced to UofR’s partners at the Educational Institute of Jilin in an early meeting (G. Richert, interview by G. Pickard, August 21, 2013). Rather than delivering aid, he assured the Jilin side, the programs were designed to facilitate the sharing of values, and to mutually benefit both parties in the partnership.

Saskatchewan participants in the CIDA programs challenged the Chinese side to conceive of education as an active, collaborative endeavor, not as a passive, top-down affair. Meanwhile, rapidly increasing enrolments in Chinese universities in the 1980s meant large class sizes, and a reluctance on behalf of administration and teaching staff to depart from the comfortable old lecture format. Jilin participants suddenly found themselves “team leaders” and taking on some functions traditionally assigned to the teacher. When the first team from

Regina arrived in Jilin, the EIJP side had planned for the teachers to eat lunch separately from the program participants; the UofR teachers and facilitators suggested that everyone occasionally eat together. After each seminar, each of the ten Chinese seminar group leaders would meet with the Canadian team members to debrief the day’s work and together plan for the next day’s seminar focus. This “pre-impact/post-impact planning” assisted in developing openness and trust amongst the two partners.

On the surface, gender equity seemed to be an elusive goal, as administrative roles in the Chinese academic system were often assigned based on gender. Originally conceived as a project comprised of 50 percent female in-school administrators, there were initially only 10 women participating in the CCULP on the Jilin side. Meanwhile, the president of EIJP played a central role in selecting the women who participated in the projects, a process over which female candidates had little control. Over the CCULP/SULCP project duration, six women were selected to participate as writer/translators for seminar team members; seven women were selected as delegation members for place-based learning experiences in Canada; 71 women of a total of 235 participants attended the seminars offered through the CCULP/SULCP projects.

Though the numbers were never to be balanced in a way which satisfied bureaucratic quotas, the quest for gender equity led to one of the greatest successes in the cooperation between the UofR and the EIJP. The EPGEP was conceived to enhance present and future educational opportunities for school-aged girls and to achieve another ancillary objective of collaborating with senior provincial educational administrators in identifying systemic problems that result in the high dropout rate of school-aged girls. Towards the end of EPGEP, frank discussions took place about some of the serious problems counsellors faced in Canadian high schools related to teen pregnancy, drugs, bullying, and suicide. Encouraged by the candor of their Canadian partners, the Chinese participants shared the otherwise taboo topic of how the rapid introduction of a market-based economy had resulted in considerable social disruption and had affected the learning of girls in particular. Through additional funding provided through the National Elements program entitled “Student Services Programming and Implementation Activity for Elementary Schools in North East China,” Student Services Offices were established in Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang in 2001 (Corbin Dwyer & McNaughton, 2004).

The Student Services Programming and Implementation Activity for Elementary Schools in North East China (SSPIA) was the ultimate demonstration of the “social equity” principle at work. In their reflections on the counselling program, Sonya Corbin Dwyer and Kathryn McNaughton describe how the process of establishing counselling services in Chinese schools ultimately compelled them to think of strengths and weaknesses in the Canadian system. Concern on the Chinese side for teacher wellness made the participants aware of the Canadian propensity to focus exclusively on the students. Indeed, the one of the master’s theses which developed through the National Elements program discussed teacher stress (Zhang, 2003). The Canadian participants wondered: Did Canadian schools need on-site “teacher services offices” as well? (Corbin, Dwyer, & McNaughton, 2004).

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## **Evaluating the UofR/EIJP Partnerships**

The previous section has argued that a powerful set of human values flowed through the UofR’s Management Training Program and the EPGEP, values which at times complemented and at times subverted the CIDA China Program’s economic development priorities. Indeed, these “sustainable development” principles may have explained the extraordinary success of the UofR’s cooperation with the EIJP. Yet implicit in “sustainable development” discourse was an unwavering belief that real social progress and accumulated institutional knowledge was something that gets handed down. We are compelled to ask an important question: Did the UofR’s CIDA experience have a lasting impact on the UofR’s international projects? Were the projects themselves ultimately “sustainable”?

To a certain extent, the projects were sustained. By the time the CIDA/AUCC projects had finished, the UofR had created considerable influence over university and government bureaucracy in Saskatchewan and, more importantly, in Jilin. The CIDA projects had allowed the UofR to build up considerable trust with its China partners. The Faculty of Education at the UofR suddenly found itself with broad, deep people networks in Jilin province at a time when other Canadian universities scrambled to establish linkages with China. More significantly, the UofR codified some of its experience in the Centre for International Teacher Education (CITE). Built on Carver’s model of governance,

CITE attempted to distill some of the UofR’s diverse experience with the CIDA China projects into a formula which could be applied to the UofR’s international partnerships. The handprint of the Jilin projects can even be seen in Regina’s current international arm, UR-International. As recently as 2014, the president of the UofR, on a trip to Jilin province, would experience the strong linkages and warm relationships established with the EIJP over 30 years ago.

Yet on another level, the UofR’s CIDA projects could have been more strategically leveraged. The UofR could have better engaged the provincial government, and the Government of Saskatchewan could have used Jilin relationships to advance the province’s economic interests that the government so dearly protected. Ultimately, the UofR was not entirely successful in explaining the relevance of the CIDA projects to other educational and government agencies more focused on regional/provincial matters. Such a failure to explain the benefits of the program was particularly unfortunate considering the significant “in-kind” contributions these agencies made to the overall project and the professional development advantages afforded by these experiences. Collective “in-kind” contribution was CAD\$ 536,000 over the course of the projects.

A large amount of data had been gathered over a decade, but due to diminishing research resources in the period immediately after the SULCP in 2001, little significant research analysis was completed by the UofR. Similarly, the UofR had managed to engage a wide range of Saskatchewan stakeholders in the China projects which included Saskatchewan Education, Regina Public School Board, Regina Catholic School Board, the League of Educational Administrators, Saskatchewan’s Department of Social Services, and the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation, but had not required Canadian participants to prepare an outcomes report for the university.

Ultimately the programs suffered from a “contextual lapse.” “Project fatigue” set in precisely when the programs were finally establishing themselves and funding began to pour into the universities. The enormous physical and psychological distance between the two partner institutions meant that over time the UofR could not sustain its focus on its China relationships, communicate sufficiently the value of the China projects to other stakeholders in the university, or mobilize the CIDA/AUCC experience to support individual China projects. Administrative personnel turnover at the institution led to a loss of institutional memory and a subsequent loss of “buy-in.” The president of the EIJP was

directly involved in the programs, whereas the strategy to include senior UofR (VP Academic) and Saskatchewan government administrators in the project had limited success. Meanwhile, precisely at a time when CIDA and UNESCO begun embracing the four pillars of sustainability, the UofR and Saskatchewan's provincial government unambiguously demonstrated their priority was economic viability and strategic planning around it.

Certain administrative features of CIDA's China Program also prevented the successes of the Jilin projects from immediately being applied to other projects in an ongoing way. O'Brien (2000) points out that during the development of the China projects a new fiscal accountability was being imposed by the Auditor General on CIDA, a pressure which ultimately led to the formal introduction of a Results Based Management (RBM) model by CIDA in 1996. Pressure on development agencies to develop a Project Management approach based on big infrastructure projects had been growing since the late 1970s when the World Bank began to codify the management process of its projects and carefully limit their scope. "A project is a planned complex of actions and investments, at a selected location, that are designed to meet output, capacity, or transformation goals, in a given period of time, using specified techniques," one tidy 1984 definition read (Ika, Diallo, & Thuillier, 2010, p. 66). CIDA has since embraced RBM, and deploys it as a public relations tool (Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, 2014).

What kind of thinking had RBM introduced into the CIDA China Program? In the development world, RBM systems are typically comprised of some combination of formulating objectives, identifying "indicators," setting targets, monitoring results, reviewing and reporting results, integrating evaluations, and deploying performance information (Ika & Lytvynov, 2009). Indeed, we can see that by the end of the first phase of the UofR's CIDA projects in 1996, the agency had downloaded the imperative to track results on to its executing agency. In its final report on the Canada-China University Linkage Program, the AUCC states "CIDA has begun a major initiative aimed at transforming the Agency into a more results-oriented, focused, efficient and accountable organization. This new approach is based upon a better understanding of what results realistically can be expected in each country. In the framework of results-based management, projects will be evaluated on the basis not only of achieving planned outputs, but on the long-term effect of these outputs on development priorities" (Winch, p.

30).

RBM had a distinct effect on the implementation of the UofR’s Jilin projects. RBM had added another layer of bureaucracy to an already complex system. The AUCC schooled all the project directors in RBM, and program participants scrambled to produce results which were “attainable,” “measurable,” and “sustainable.” The UofR even hosted an RBM workshop for both Chinese and Canadian participants. With RBM came a reduced cycle life of initiatives, quarterly reporting, and more pragmatic and shorter-term priorities. This new system was particularly vulnerable to changes in personnel: A number of CIDA/AUCC program directors changed, and this significantly influenced the projects. The UofR program managers learned that keeping in contact with the new program directors as they moved into their new positions in the aid and executing agency was critical, as the new directors did not necessarily immediately grasp the programs’ “objectives,” “indicators,” “targets,” and “results.” The profile of the programs had to be maintained with CIDA and the AUCC.

The most profound effect of the RBM was felt at the end of the projects. By 2001, expertise had been shared, funds transferred, results identified, and reports written, so the programs finished on schedule like a “technology transfer” which, arguably, was how the projects had initially been conceived. The imperative to efficiently “complete” complex projects discouraged extensive follow-up with the Chinese partners. As a result, the success of the project was not sufficiently publicised by the university, the provincial government, CIDA or the AUCC.

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## Some Reflections

To a certain extent, the success of North American universities depends upon their ability to forge sustainable cooperative arrangements with their Chinese counterparts. Institutions like the UofR who have completed extensive China development projects with the support of prestigious development agencies must build on and learn from their experiences. Future successful China projects will be the purview of agile, learning institutions which have used past China projects as building blocks for new ones.

Almost 15 years after the completion of the CIDA China Program, some practical lessons remain for Canadian universities. Some of the lessons have

already become painfully obvious. Successful international projects must be protected from changes in leadership, and mechanisms for institutional learning must be established which are not vulnerable to struggles over territory in university administration. Senior leadership must be involved in the implementation of important university development projects so that the legacy of past successful projects informs future ones even if new participants are not explicitly following the template set by former project champions.

Other “best practice” features will require shrewd planning. Successful cooperative projects will strategically engage a wide variety of stakeholders. Since 2001, Saskatchewan’s province-to-province, city-to-city, and institution-to-institution engagements with Jilin have not been systematically coordinated and the UofR’s partnerships with Jilin institutions have been sporadic and ad hoc in nature. On a local level, the UofR demonstrated it could team up with public and separate school boards, the provincial teacher federation, government departments, and the Saskatchewan Trade and Export partnership in international projects through the Jilin projects, but that flexibility must be consciously maintained or it will be lost.

The UofR’s cooperation with EIJP demonstrated that successful engagement with international partners requires fundamental human values of respect, curiosity, tolerance, and understanding. At the same time, the UofR/EIJP project exemplified an approach which carefully situated economic growth in the context of social values and environmental concerns. The four pillars of sustainable development were more than international development jargon which would be replaced in time. Instead, the pillars worked together to balance and strengthen the projects and ensured that the attention of program administrators was apportioned based on the needs of people rather than economic indicators. In the future, the UofR and other Canadian universities may be able to align their international projects with the Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) which took shape during the “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” (2005–2014) promulgated by the United Nations University-Institute of Advanced Studies (UNU-IAS). Decisive action is needed; if future projects are to succeed they need to embrace as “equitable essentialities” economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of growth.

Finally, the UofR’s CIDA projects showed that faculties of education in Canada and around the world have an important role to play in the next phase of the internationalization of higher education. The UofR’s Faculty of Education



provided no technical support in fields of agriculture, medicine, business, or information technology to CIDA projects. Yet the Faculty of Education had adeptly anticipated shifts within CIDA towards a focus on HRD, while pulling some of the weight in development activities from the “economic pillar” to other equally urgent matters. Canada’s faculties of education may turn out to be important keys to universities’ future international success.

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