Brain Drain or Brain Gain? How to Attract Overseas Excellent Talents to Work in Taiwan?

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Abstract: *Because of the rapid development of technology, internationalization, and globalization, various exchanges among nations become more frequent to have international business management and manpower mobility trend become significant and important. The phenomena of low birth rate and aging are getting serious in Taiwan that manpower shortage would become a serious challenge few years later. For this reason, the idea of demographic dividend is utilized in this study for exploring the relationship between social support (SS) and willingness to work in Taiwan (WWT) of overseas students, expecting to find out some beneficial clues for retaining talents in Taiwan. With literature integration and discussion, it is found that overseas learning adaptation (OLA) could be the mediator of the relationship between social support and willingness to work in Taiwan, and cultural difference (CD) could become the moderator factor. The proposition of the relationships among structure and constructs derived from this study would be the structure and hypothesis of successive study on overseas students' willingness to work in Taiwan.*

Keywords: *Culture Difference, Willingness to Work in Taiwan, Social Support, Overseas Learning Adaptation, Overseas Students*

1. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

The rapid development of internationalization and globalization has boomed the trend of multinational corporation operation and manpower mobility. On the other hand, the phenomenon and the trend of low birth rate and aging in Taiwan are getting serious and remarkable (Figure 1). With annually decreasing national birth rate, national manpower would encounter the challenge of shortage few years later. In addition to positively encourage the citizens' fertility with supporting welfare programs, attracting overseas talents to work in Taiwan or stay in Taiwan for work after the study is the international human resource development strategy worth of consideration and planning. According to research on national brain drain (BD), brain gain (BG) and brain circulation (BC), attracting domestic students returning for work after studying abroad or leaving overseas students to work in the country

after the study are valuable methods for talent flow-back or flow-in (Tung & Lazazrova, 2006; Saxenian, 2005). From the data of Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, Taiwan(2016), there was obvious growth of overseas students in past decade, from 27,023 growing up to 110,182 students, who would be the applicable human resource, Table 1.

Table 1: *Statistics of offshore students study in Taiwan for latest 10 years*

Unit: Person

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Regular overseas students for degree	3,935	5,259	6,258	7,764	8,801	10,059	11,554	12,597	14,063	15,792
Overseas Chinese Students (includingH.K. & Macao)	10,395	10,936	11,500	12,912	13,637	14,120	15,278	17,135	20,134	22,918
Regular mailand Chinese Students for degree	-	-	-	-	-	928	1,864	3,554	5,881	7,813
Overseas Students for Degree **Subtotal**	14,330	16,195	17,758	20,676	22,438	25,107	28,696	33,286	40,078	46,523
Overseas Exchange Students ①	1,121	1,441	1,732	2,069	2,259	3,301	3,871	3,626	3,743	3,743
Overseas Students of Short-term Learning and Personal Study ①	1,245	1,146	1,258	1,307	1,604	2,265	3,163	3,915	4,758	4,758
Students of Chinese Language Center affiliated in Universities ②	9,135	10,177	10,651	11,612	12,555	14,480	13,898	15,510	15,526	18,645
Exchange Students from China③	448	823	1,321	2,888	5,316	11,227	15,590	21,233	27,030	34,114
Technical Training Program of Overseas Young People	744	727	862	981	1,241	1,540	1,743	2,160	2,510	2,399
Non-for-degree Students **Subtotal**	12,693	14,314	15,824	18,857	22,975	32,813	38,265	46,444	53,567	63,659
Overseas Students Total	27,023	30,509	33,582	39,533	45,413	57,920	66,961	79,730	93,645	110,182

Source: *Statistic Department of Ministry of Education, Taiwan*

Notes:

1. *the Number of overseas exchange students is not applicable in 2015, estimated by the number of 2014 temporarily.*

2. *students number of Chinese language center affiliated in universities was included China, Hong Kong and Macao.*

3. *students number of short-term learning and exchange included less and more than 6 months.*

In regard to international talent flow-in and brain gain, the USA and Singapore are about the most beneficial countries and the model in past decades. A lot of excellent and outstanding talents in the world would consider studying in universities in the USA. However, quite a lot of people select or attempt to work in the USA after completing the study so that the USA does not need to invest high education costs for international human resources and rich human capitals (Li, 2009; Sun, 2009) to enhance the overall human competence. It could be the reference for international brain gain in Taiwan.

In past decades, Taiwan created the world economic miracle by the precious and excellent "human resources". Nonetheless, serious internal aging and low birth rate have the demographic dividend lose the advantage, and fierce external competition of international talents is encountered in Taiwan. Businesses in neighboring countries in Asia, e.g. Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, and China, headhunting in Taiwan with high salary has resulted in serious brain drain. Taiwanese Executive Yuan invited National Development Council to establish the "enhanced competitive strategy promotion team" in March, 2018, for the overseas talent match network platform "Contact Taiwan" and the inquiry service platform to reinforce global talent recruitment, enhance the conditions of talent competition, and establish friendly environment to stay in Taiwan (National Development Council, 2014).

According to "2017 IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook" of International Institute for Management Development (IMD), domestic competitiveness, among 63 rated countries, was ranked the 17th, 3 down compared to the previous year. However, "labor market" (among "business effectiveness") dropped from the 12th down to the 38th, revealing the shortage of domestic technological labor force and senior management talents and domestic environment not easily attracting overseas high-tech and innovation management talents. To enhance the economic sustainable development, the government positively retains excellent talents in Taiwan and recruits and develops overseas talents to enhance the demographic dividend of labor force in Taiwan so as to insert vitality and energy to the development of society, economy, and business.
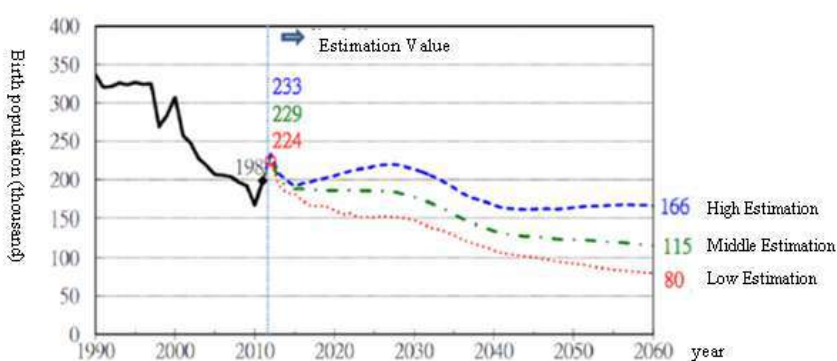

Fig1 Decreasing trend of birth population in Taiwan

Source : Population estimation of Taiwan from 2012 to 2060 (Council for Economic Planning and Development, Executive Yuan, Taiwan 2012)

Although the "improvement of domestic retaining environment program"(National Development Council, Taiwan,2017) was promoted in 2015, the cultivation, retaining, and recruitment of talents in Taiwan encountered internal and external challenges, including the international flow of internal population appearing "high-out low-in", and the challenge of international talent competition, e.g. "the thousand talents plan" and "Changjiang scholars program" in China, "new entry and exit management policy" and "senior talent points system" in Japan, and "introduction of overseas professional personnel supporting business project" and "attracting overseas excellent talents plan" in Korea.

Accordingly, the research propositions are proposed from the relationship among social support, overseas learning adaptation, cultural difference, and willingness to work in Taiwan, expecting to propose relevant structure for the successive empirical research.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

According to above research background and motivation, the social support and overseas learning adaptation of overseas students in Taiwan to the willingness to work in Taiwan is explored at the first stage. It is expected to improve domestic workforce structure and even create the overall demographic dividend to bring the society and economic development in Taiwan toward brain gain. Besides, in consideration of the role of cultural difference in the relationship, the research framework for successive empirical research model is eventually developed.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

(1) Social Support

Social support is the resource exchange process between more than two providers and receivers to enhance receivers' health and psychological happiness. Such resources could be tangible or intangible and could be acquired from interpersonal networks or social support (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984; Colvin, Cullen, & Thomas, 2002). Social support contains aid, affection, and affirmation. Aided social support aims to provide relevant information and assistance in emergency; affective social support is the affective support offered based on the relationship between providers and support seekers; and, affirmative social support refers to support providers believing in support seekers' abilities and beliefs to deal with pressure and giving affirmation (Kahn & Quinn, 1976; Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski,2001). It is therefore realized that social support is different types of assistance acquired from others when an individual faces pressure to release the pressure and spiritual comfort. Moreover, social support is an interactive process to acquire tangible or intangible assistance from others or groups, through the interaction of interpersonal relationship, for solving personal difficulties or problems.

Social support is generally divided into three classfications (1)emotional support, instrumental support, information support, and evaluation support (House, 1981), (2)self-dignity support, information support, social relationship, and instrumental support (Cohen & Wills,1985), and (3)self-dignity support, information support, social partnership, instrumental support (Robert & Angelo, 2001).

Although the past classifications were not exactly the same, it could be organized into information support and emotional support. Information support allowed individuals acquiring information, suggestions, or knowledge for solutions to further feel being affirmed and accepted to enhance the self-confidence and self-dignity. Emotional support, on the other hand, was to generate positive and pleasant emotions through others' encouragement, concerns, trust, and empathy to further perceive comfort and safety that it was the core of the concept of social support.

Such a point of view is extended to overseas students. Overseas students visiting an unfamiliar new environment for foreign study have to enhance the understanding of the new country and reduce strange and uncertain senses through the interaction with and assistance from others to gradually adapt to the new environment. Furthermore, the major pressure of overseas students is the academic and cultural problems, which might result in dissociation from local society, sleeplessness, and discouragement as well as appear graduation problems and loss of self-dignity (Zhai,2002). For this reason, it become extremely important how they interact with family and friends, contact with

schools, teachers, and classmates in Taiwan, and engage in activities in Taiwan, as those are the items and factors in the social support.

(2)   Cultural Difference

Cultural difference is the difference caused by environmental background, social structure, and traditional custom and culture of the regions or countries in which providers and receivers stay in the knowledge transfer process (Schlegelmilch & Chini, 2003; Ambos & Schlegelmilch,2006). Hofstede (1980) regarded culture as the common psychological process of a group in the shared living environment and the shared psychological process of groups with same education and life experiences. Yang & Yen (2008) pointed out cultural difference as the difference among distinct culture that cultural differences could generate cultural gap due to religion, racial group, language ability, social class, gender, nationalism, and age gap. In face of such cultural gap, the background of language, culture, and cross-border cognition might not be able to successfully deal with such cross-cultural difference problems. The most important was the ability to integrate culture (Chang, 2009). Hofstede (2001) considered that cultural gap was the difference of national culture, i.e. the difference in value, beliefs, and behaviors of employees of a multinational corporation in different countries. The major cultural gap of overseas students lied in the beliefs, value, codes of conduct, and custom & habits being different from the culture in Taiwan. Such cultural difference was resulted from overseas students' cognition and thoughts to generate maladjustment due to cultural impact in the cross-cultural exchange. Hofstede (2001) proposed five cultural dimensions of 1.power distance, 2.uncertainty avoidance, 3.individualism/collectivism, 4.masculinity/femininity, and 5.long-term orientation/short-term orientation.

1. Power distance: referring to "the degree of the fact of social acceptance or uneven power distribution in an organization", i.e. the gap of decision-making power between leaders and subordinates.

2. Uncertainty avoidance: revealing "the perceived threats from the uncertain and fuzzy environment and the avoidance of the society".

3. Individualism/collectivism: Individualism revealed "people in a social structure with relaxing organization concerning about themselves and the close family". Collectivism referred to "tight social structure as the characteristic, in which people distinguished in-group and out-group and expected their in-group (relatives and organization) to take care of them; and, they would present absolute loyalty on in-group as the exchange".

4. Masculinity/femininity: referring to the degree of masculinization of dominate value in the society, i.e. authority, self-confidence, possessed materials, regardless of life quality, and ignoring others". Femininity referred to "sensible, emphasizing family, paying more attention to emotion, and concerning about others". According to the survey, Japan was regarded as the most masculine country, while Sweden was the most feminine country.

5. Long-term/short-term orientation: It was the attitude orientation to life and work. Basically, it presented long-term oriented national culture, with the value tending to simplicity and thrifty as well as long-term insistence to achieve goals. On the other hand, short-term oriented national culture emphasized more on personal benefits, growth, happiness, and living in the present.

(3)   Overseas Learning Adaptation (OLA)

A person leaving the original national culture for a different culture would be induced emotional or physical hurt because of racial discrimination, language barrier, diet discomfort, and culture misunderstanding, which are regarded as cultural impact (Lin & Yi, 1997).Winkelman (1994) mentioned that cultural impact would result in psychological discomfort as well as physiological discomfort. When an individual bore cultural impact to result in psychological discomfort, the maladjustment contained the factors of environment, affection, interpersonal relationship, physiology, and cognitive dissonance. Such a point of view was extended to overseas learning. In addition to academic pressure, overseas students also received psychological and social pressure caused by being in different environments. Overseas adaptation covered language barrier, living habits (diet, dwelling, and transportation), custom & culture, religion &beliefs, and environment& climate. Maundeni (1999) mentioned that overseas students often faced the problems of psychological, academic, and social support, and sometimes racial and gender discrimination, in unfamiliar countries. At the cultural impact stage, people would intend to reduce such uncertainty and pressure resulted from not leaving the own country before to adapt to new countries or culture. Some people might appear worse adaptation because of not being able to overcome. Adaptation therefore was regarded as a state, an individual adjusting the behavior orientation, enhancing the fit between environmental needs and personal attitudes and behavioral tendency, and reducing conflict (Berry, 1992).

Weissman & Furnham (1987) considered that reducing the uncertainty could determine the adaptation to local culture. In addition to cultural problems, international students might face academic adaptation, e.g. learning adaptation(Sam, 2001; Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977). Learning adaptation referred to taking proper and suitable skills and strategies and well applying various environmental resources to seek for pressure relief and solve problems when encountering difficulties in the learning process; it related to students' academic performance and personality development and was the key success factor in learning. Wang (2009) pointed out learning adaptation as an individual, in the learning process, taking proper skills and strategies to harmonize the environment. Huang, Chung, Wen, and Chang (2005) discovered that international exchange students' overseas adaptation showed significantly positive effects on the satisfaction with life.

Tsang (2001) applied the dimensions of overseas adaptation proposed by Black (1988, 1990), including general adjustment, interaction adjustment, and job adjustment, and included the previous two dimensions in the adaptation analyses of international exchange students. It was considered that adaptation was related to performance and could indeed expand the vision of international exchange students' study.

(4)   Willingness to Work in Taiwan (WWT)

Holland (1985) pointed out willingness to work as seeking for satisfaction and adaptation, meaning that individual job satisfaction, stability, and achievement were related to individual personality traits and adaptation to work environment. Chen (2004) defined willingness to work as individual desire to achieve the future employment. For individuals, it was individual attitudes or behaviors to determine personal preference when entering workplaces. For the society, individual willingness to work reflected the proper distribution of human resourcein the society. Liu (2005) regarded willingness to work as a decision-making process, i.e. individuals determining the preference,

ambition, or interests when making decision to enter the employment market. Such a decision had to conform to personal aptitudes, abilities, or interests and was close related to the behavioral reaction or self-growth reaction to the changes of social environment and adaptation to social life, as well as the final decision of willingness to work. Fu (2006) considered that willingness to work was individual evaluation of the preference, ability, and work value and the cognition of future development after the self-concept and occupational ability achieving perfection and being able to select occupation to form the free will to involve in the labor market. Guo (2011) indicated that willingness to work was the ideas tending to select work environment conforming to personal characters and good adaptation after an individual balancing the effect of external factors. Wu (2014) pointed out willingness to work as an individual realizing personal work interests and ability to acquire job satisfaction and stability and fulfill self-value and sense of achievement to further be willing to engage in the workplace.

Furthermore, there are various factors in willingness to work. Isaacson and Brown (1993) indicated that willingness to work would be affected by personal value, personality traits, interests, and parents' socio-economic status, education, and occupation to further influence children's willingness to work or professional career. Liu, Yeh, Yang, and Cheng (2010) classified the factors in willingness to work into external factors of economic prosperity, occupational structure changes, and national policies and internal factors of gender, interests, ability, occupational skills, and job value. Weatherald and Taylor (2002) divided the factors in willingness to work into

1. Education factor: educational standard, knowledge level.

2. Family factor: family environment, parents' education and occupation.

3. Social factor: identity and status, parents' socio-economic background.

4. RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

From above background, motivation, objective and literature review, the following propositions are proposed in this study.

(1) Social support and learning adaptation

Social support refers to an individual being able to acquire assistance from interpersonal network or social support (Colvin, Cullen, &Thomas, 2002). Regarding the patterns of social support, researchers present different opinions, including emotional support, instrumental support, information support, and evaluation support(House, 1981); self-dignity support, information support, social relationship, and instrumental support(Cohen & Will,1985); and, self-dignity support, information support, social partnership, and instrumental support(Robert & Angelo, 2001). After the organization, social support is generally classified into information support and emotional support. Information support allows individuals acquiring solutions through information, suggestions, or knowledge to further feel being affirmed, enhance self-confidence and self-dignity. Emotional support is the pleasant emotion resulted from others' encouragement and concerns to further feel comfortable, which is the core concept of social support.

When studying abroad, overseas students are likely to become the high-risk group of serious illnesses because of lacking care and support from parents, family, and friends, unsuitable or abnormal diet and sleep, different living

quality, cultural impact, or academic pressure. Huang et al. (2005) considered that the experienced impact and pressure of international exchange students might affect the adaptation to life and learning effectiveness; the adaptation and satisfaction would be improved by acquiring proper support and assistance. Tsai & Xu (2013) classified 11 categories of Thai students' adaptation to Taiwan, containing homesickness, finance, renting and diet, language fluency, understanding lecture contents and participation in classes, preparation of paper and oral reports, comprehension of local social custom, making friends, adaptation to physical environment, and inadequate support systems. Such adaptation problems are classified into lack of family support, friend support, and school support in this study, including material and psychological assistance.

Accordingly, overseas students' foreign adaptation would be affected by parents, friends, and society in the native country and even governmental support. It is therefore proposed in this study that

Proposition 1: Overseas students' social support would affect the overseas learning adaptation.

(2)   Social support and willingness to work

Holland (1985) regarded the correlations between willingness to work, job satisfaction, personal characteristics and work environment. In other words, individual future career planning was influenced by the interaction of individuals and the environment stayed; it was not single dimensional, but was multi-dimensional effects, including individual, society, and economy. You & Li (2010) pointed out the factors in students selecting career as gender, parents' socio-economic status, type of school, major, academic achievement, and self-efficacy. In other words, willingness to work was the process of individuals making decisions, which would generally influenced by surrounding environment from family to society. Factors in willingness to work in this study are therefore divided into internal factor and external factor. Internal factors cover some personal characteristics, e.g. gender, interests, ability, family socio-economic status, and self-efficacy; and, external factors contain external economic environment, type of school, and employment opportunity.

To sum up, factors in individual willingness to work are dimensional; however, assistance from interpersonal network of teachers, classmates, and friends would help the willingness to work. This study therefore proposes that

Proposition 2: Overseas students' social support would affect the willingness to work in Taiwan.

(3)   Overseas learning adaptation and willingness to work in Taiwan

Sun and Wang (2010) pointed out willingness to work as the possibility of individual employment selection in the future. In other words, willingness to work referred to individual selection of occupation according to personal interests and ability and the desire to achieve future employment objective (Chen, 2004). Adaptation referred to how an individual made personal psychological comfort in various new environments (Black,1988), where overseas adaptation objects could be divided into expatriates and overseas students (Tsang, 2001).

   In this case, they could self-adjust pressure and show positive attitudes to the work environment in Taiwan. For this reason, people with good overseas learning adaptation in the study processes could better overcome pressure caused by psychological uncertainty and could benefit the willingness to work locally. It is further proposed in this study that

Proposition 3: Overseas students' overseas learning adaptation would influence the willingness to work in Taiwan.

(4)   Mediating effect of overseas learning adaptation

According to above assumptions, overseas students' willingness to work in Taiwan might be affected by social support and overseas learning adaptation, and overseas learning adaptation might show mediating effects on the relationship between social support and willingness to work in Taiwan. This study therefore intends to discuss the relationship model of "social support—overseas learning adaptation—willingness to work in Taiwan" to realize whether overseas learning adaptation is the mediator of social support and willingness to work. That is, the relationship between overseas students' social support and willingness to work in Taiwan would be mediated by overseas learning adaptation. Consequently, it is proposed in this study that

Proposition 4: Overseas students' overseas learning adaptation would reveal mediating effect on the relationship between social support and willingness to work in Taiwan.

(5)   Moderating effect of cultural difference

There are cultural differences among countries, and culture is the soft power of a country (Qi, 2014). For this reason, characteristic national culture is a deep factor in overseas students fulfilling harmonious management.

The culture in Southeast Asian countries is similar to it in Taiwan, and they are subtropical countries with similar climate. It seems that there is not large adaptation problem in life, climate, and diet. However, cultural background, historical background, race, and languages among countries are fundamentally different that there is large cultural gap. Cultural difference indeed is the intangible power to determine the success of internationalization, e.g. language, food, diet, clothing, architecture, and art. The other part, implied value, morality, body language, gender relationship, family loyalty, and learning model, is easily ignored. In this case, when overseas students encounter different cultural background, the abilities of discovering cultural difference and adapting to new culture are the key success factors.

Accordingly, cultural difference would determine interpersonal interaction that language, race, and social norms in a country might result in distance between overseas students and people in Taiwan. It is considered in this study that such cultural gap appears moderating effects on overseas students' social support, overseas learning adaptation, and willingness to work in Taiwan. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed in this study.

Proposition 5: Overseas students' cultural difference would reveal moderating effect on the relationship between social support and overseas learning adaptation; between overseas learning adaptation and willingness to work; between social support and willingness to work.

5.   THEORY AND EXPECTED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Theory of reasoned action (TRA) was first proposed by Martin Fishbein in 1967 and then completed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1975 and 1980 (Fishbein, 1967; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The theory considered that individual intention to perform a behavior was the most direct factor in the psychological decision of the behavior, i.e. individual psychology with behavioral intention, and individual attitude to the behavior

and subjective norms were the key factors in behavioral intention (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974).

Icek Ajzen included perceived behavioral control in 1987 and proposed theory of planned behavior (TPB). The theory pointed out behavioral intention (BI) as the best indicator to predict and explain behaviors. Behavioral intention reflected individual intention to engaging in specific behavior, which was composed of attitude toward the behavior (ATB), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) (Figure 2).

Social support, overseas learning adaptation, willingness to work, and cultural difference proposed in the propositions in this study conform to the relationship among attitudes toward behavior, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention in theory of planned behavior and consider the research objective andthe role of overseas students to form the expected conceptual research framework, Figure 3. Such a structure would be the hypothesis of successive empirical research and the expected conceptual research framework.
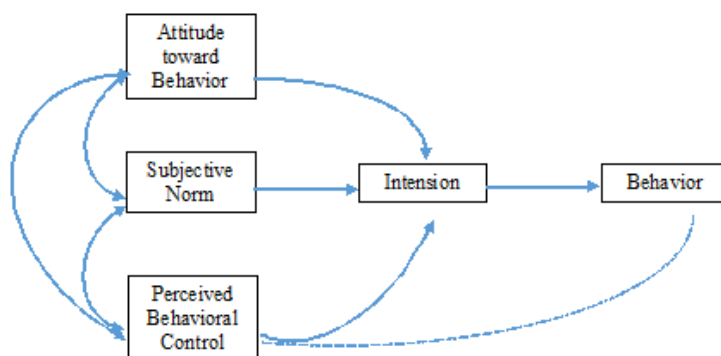

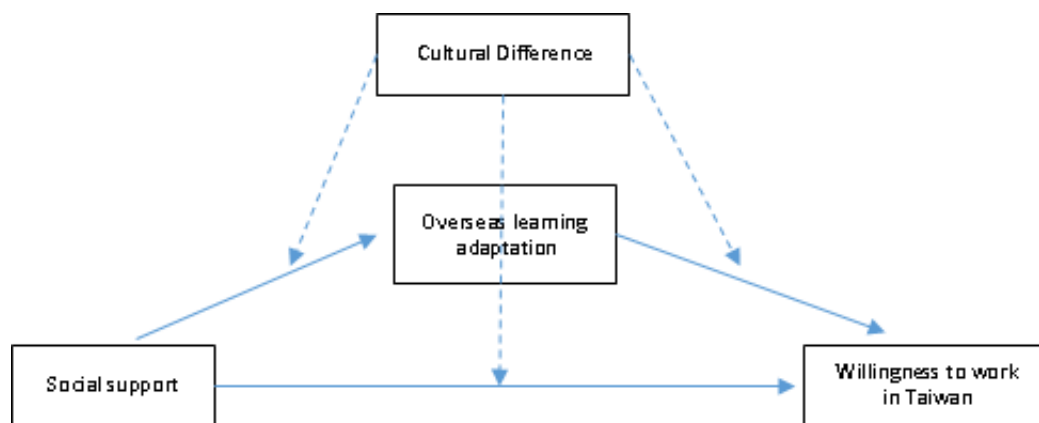Figure 2 Framework of theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1987)

Figure 3: *Expected conceptual research framework*

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