

## Chapter 17

# The impact of leadership on Chinese higher education Institution merger –a case study from institutional leadership perspective

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### Introduction

Leadership and management of higher education institutions have important roles in managing and coordinating complex changes such as a merger between higher education institutions. In order to build a new institution, both internal relationships and external relationships have to be oriented towards a new goal (D. Li, 2010; D. Li & Kohtamäki, 2011). Carlson (1994) mentioned that the achievement of a mutual-growth merger requires a new vision of higher education management, and its ultimate success depends on the leadership provided by the overall chief executive officer. Cray (1987) shed light on how difficult mergers can be for chief executive officers and he stated that they require “fierce determination, considerable endurance, and thick-shinned aggressiveness.” From these points, it can be established that the leadership in merged universities is a major factor that influences the success or failure of the merger.

In this paper, the leadership of a merged Chinese university is studied by considering human aspects of leadership: what leaders think how they behave and how they overall orient to their roles as leaders. This paper is motivated by the author’s current study on the leadership characteristics related to mergers of Chinese higher education institutions, as well as previous studies on the relevant topics. In this paper, the aim is to employ Bolman & Deal’s reframing theory to examine the main

challenges of the merger in leadership and management dimension, to explore the leadership styles of a case university's institutional level leaders and try to find how the merger influenced the leadership. How do the styles of leadership react with the integration of the pre-merger institutions in a Chinese merged university? What can be learnt from the Chinese experience by other countries which are planning or implementing the mergers in higher education institutions, such as Finland?

## Background

The Chinese government began a series of reforms in the national higher education system in the 1990s. Mergers of higher education institutions were one of the most important elements in this reform, and most of the key universities in China have been involved in this process (D. Li, 2004; D. Li, 2011). In this reform wave, there were more than 430 new merged higher education institutions, and more than 1400 higher education institutions were involved (D. Li, 2011).

With respect to the studies of the merger in Chinese higher education has received a considerable amount of attention from higher education researchers. Some research has been undertaken to investigate the possible implications of mergers on the national education policy and to the individual institutions involved. The available literature covers several categories. First, a particular portion of the literature is, at best, anecdotal in nature or is in the form reports (Dai; Zhou, 2001). Second, some items from the literature are focused on abstract summaries of experiences, which fall short of being concrete studies of practice (Cai, 2002; H. F. Chen, 2001; Wang & Tang, 1997; Zhou, 2001). Third, some of the literature provides a macro-view from the perspective of the national government. This branch of the literature emphasises and analyses the advantages of the mergers of higher education institutions, and thereby ignores the complexity and difficulty of the mergers (Pang & Zeng, 1999; Xia, 1998; Zeng, 2000). Fourth, in recent years, some researchers have completed their thesis and doctoral dissertations on mergers in Chinese higher education. For example, Li D (2004) studied mergers in Chinese higher education institutions in the 1990s, which explored the main factors that have been influenced the nature and outcomes of the merger. One doctoral dissertation was completed by Wan (2008). In her dissertation, Wan provided a conceptual framework based on the external and internal contexts of the impact on the merger of higher education institutions, and to explore the processes and outcomes of a merger case. Finally, regarding the governance, management and leadership arrangements in merged higher education

institutions, most of the articles focus on multi-campus administration (A. P. Chen & Luo, 2000; H. F. Chen, 2001; Y. C. Chen & Shen, 2001; Y. C. Chen, 2002; Shen, Chen, & Liao, X.Y. & Luo, Y., 2001; Yin & Dai, 2000; Yin & Dai, 2000; Yin & Dai, 2000), however, above studies have not yet undertaken a systematic analysis of the leadership dimension from the leadership theory perspective in Chinese merged universities.

From an international perspective, the merger phenomenon of higher education has led to a number of researchers to paying attention to this field. Most of them have focused on presenting a detailed understanding and interpretation of the typical merger in higher education or they present the basic conception of a merger (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Fledler, 1971; Millett, 1976). Some researchers have analysed the national reform, policy, the motivation, process (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Fielden & Markham, 1997; Goedegebuure, 1992; Harman, 1988; Harman & Meek, 2002; Hay & Fourie, 2002; Kyvik, 2002; Meek, 1988; Skodvin, 1999).

With respect to the leadership dimension, James Martin and James E Samels (1994) provide the core principles of merging colleges for mutual growth. They emphasised the enhancement of complementary missions, strengthening academic offerings, and improving administrative efficiency. They also mention that the key to successful implementation is diversified planning. However, they have not given the analysis in-depth on how to transfer these principles into the management and leadership practice.

The importance of quality leadership in a transformation effort can not be over emphasised (Hippis, 1982; Peterson, 1982). In a merger, it has been argued that strategic and organisational fit offer the potentiality for synergies, but the realization of those synergies depends entirely on the ability of leaders to manage the post-merger process in an effective manner (Green & Mitchell, 1979). In most studies about mergers and acquisitions the need for good leadership is often taken for granted and has not been well articulated and studied. Sitkin and Pablo (Sitkin, 2004) noted that leadership is treated in an almost off-hand way in the literature, that seems to reflect the need to acknowledge what is an obviously important factor, while sidestepping the need to address the issue substantively.

Therefore, this study employs the case study method, basing on Bolman and Deal's (2008) reframing leadership theory, the author has tried to explore the role of the institutional level leadership in the merger situation. To this end, two research questions have been derived:

- 1) From institutional leadership perspectives, what are the main challenges that the institutional leaders are facing in the merged university?
- 2) According to Bolman and Deal's theory, how do they understand the impact of the leadership styles on the nature and outcomes of the merger?

## Reframing leadership theory

Bolman and Deal's reframing leadership theory provides the cognitive frames approach, which has been employed in the field of higher education to explain leadership and management in the changing situations. Bolman and Deal suggest that leaders display leadership behaviour in one of four types of framework: Structural, Human Resource, Political, or Symbolic. The main content is shown in the following Table: 1.

**Table 1.** Overview of the four-frame Model (Bolman and Deal, 2008, P.18)

	<b>Structural</b>	<b>Human Resource</b>	<b>Political</b>	<b>Symbolic</b>
Metaphor	Factory or machine	Family	Jungle	Carnival, temple, theater
Central concepts	Rules, roles, goals, policies, technology, environment	Needs, skills, relationships	Power, conflict, competition, organizational politics	Culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes
Image of leadership	Social architecture	empowerment	Advocacy, and political savvy	Inspiration
Basic leadership challenge	Attune structure to task, technology, environment	Align organizational and human needs	Develop agenda and power base	Create faith, beauty, meaning

Based on the four frames model, Bolman and Deal developed the effective leadership model. The style can be either effective or ineffective, depending upon the chosen behaviour in certain situations as the Table 2 showed. In this table, Bolman and Deal provide a four dimensional frame to diagnostic model for the leadership. Boman and Deal's reframing theory has been widely utilized in higher education field, such as, Bolman and Gallos (2011) developed *Reframing Academic Leadership*, Vuori's study (2011) on *Leadership Frames of Program Directors at Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences*. This study employs the reframing theory as its theoretical framework to examine whether the institutional leaders reframe their perspectives to fit a merger situation, and promote the integration of the merger.

**Table 2.** Reframing leadership ((Bolman & Deal, 2008,p.356))

Frame	Leadership is effective when		Ineffective Leadership	
	Leader is:	Leadership process is:	Leader is:	Leadership process is:
<b>Structural</b>	Analyst, architect	Analysis, design	Petty tyrant	Management by detail and fiat
<b>Human resource</b>	Catalyst, servant	Support, empowerment	Weakling, pushover	Abdication
<b>Political</b>	Advocate, negotiator	Advocacy, coalition	Con artist, thug	Manipulation, fraud
<b>Symbolic</b>	Prophet, poet	Inspiration, framing experience	Fanatic fool	Mirage, smoke and mirrors

Source: Bolman & Deal, 2008, P.356

## Research method

In this paper, the author conducted the study by his own research on the leadership in Chinese merged higher education institutions. Based on the data that collected during 2003-2004 in a Chinese merged university, the author has done the further interview in this university in 2011. Since the author promised interviewees that this study will be anonymous, in this paper the case is called as “NewU”.

The NewU was founded by merging three universities through the two-time mergers. The first time merger happened between two national key Universities in 1993. We call them as University A and B. The second time merged with the third University C in 2000. More detailed information can be found in Table 3. In earlier of the 1990s, it was the first merger case between two national key universities in China. If we consider about its two times’ merger together, in a way, this case likes the merger of Aalto University in Finland in 2010. This study focuses on the first time merger, namely, the merger stage between A and B, since this merger had been undertaking very complex process and it was very typical case in China.

The interviewees’ choice: The interviews mainly focused on the institutional leaders who were taking part in the whole merger process in the first time merger, such as, rector, vice rectors, the general secretary of Chinese Communist Party, and vice general secretaries. With the help of a former leader, the author successfully interviewed four institutional leaders. In this paper, the author uses L1, L2, L3, L4 to instead of their name. Before the interview, the author sent these interviewees the

instrument – “Leadership Orientation (Self)” developed by Boman and Deal (see Appendix). The main function the instrument was to help them understand the reframing theory. During the interview, the author gave the more detail descriptions on this theory, and then asked them relevant questions from four perspectives (structure, human resource, political, and symbolic). The research questions are as the core questions to conduct the interview, and in the meanwhile, the author also asked some relevant sub-question.

## The case description

**University A:** it was founded in 1896. It was comprehensive university with remarkable advantages in literature, historical science, religion, mathematics and biology. It was a very strong and famous national key university under the leadership of the Chinese Ministry of Education (hereafter referred to as Chinese MOE).

**University B:** it was the product of the reform wave of *Yuanxi Tiaozheng* (the nationwide restructuring reform) in the 1950s. Before 1993, university B was a top level national key university of science and engineering in the fields of materials science, chemical engineering, waste conservancy and hydroelectricity, mechanics, textile and light industry. It was administered by Chinese MOE.

**University C:** it originated from the private Medicine University. It was established in 1910. It was a prestigious university in both national and international university market in the fields of stomatology, biomedicine, basic medicine, and clinical medicine. University C has been a famous national key university in China before it was merged to the NewU in 2000.

### *The process of the NewU merger*

Most of researches divided the merger into three phases: 1) the pre-merger phase; 2) the transition (implementation) phase; 3) the integration (or post-merger) phase (Eastman & Lang, 2001; Harman & Meek, 2002; D. Li, 2004; D. Li, 2010; D. Li, 2011; Wan, 2008). With regard to this case university, the whole process agenda is shown in Table 3. The pre-merger phase: The initial merger idea started in 1992. The Chinese MOE announced the merger between A and B on 24<sup>th</sup>, November, 1993. With the effect of the national government requirement, the local provincial government decided to merge University A and B in the early of 1993. *The imple-*

*mentation phase* (1994–2000): 1994–1997, merged all administrative departments; 1998-1999, merged all faculties, units, and schools. *The post-merger phase* (2000–), in 2000, merged again with one medicine science university C.

**Table 3.** Agenda of NewU

<p>November 1992 The idea came from top level leaders of both University A and University B</p> <p>January 1993-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After the discussion and receiving support from both universities' Chinese Communist Party Committees in January, the rector, general secretary, as well as relevant vice leaders of two universities submitted the idea of merger to local provincial government</li> <li>- In February, obtained support from local Government.</li> <li>- In May, obtained the support from MOE.</li> <li>- In November, MOE officially announced the merger plan</li> <li>- Local provincial government gave extra 150 Million RMB Yuan to the new university and help them to apply for "Project 211"</li> <li>- Establish steering group to prepare the merger, including the name of merged university, budget making, administrative departments, faculties and disciplinary merger issues.</li> </ul> <p>1994-1997</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The new name was announced in April 1994</li> <li>- Based on the equal principle, the new leader group at top level of NewU was established by government</li> <li>- At the beginning, only top level leaders and a few administrative departments joined together work, the rest departments and all faculties were still separate.</li> </ul> <p>1998-2000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adjusted and merged all departments, faculties, and units</li> <li>- The restructuring model of "Five Unifications" were established in NewU, namely, "one single leadership group, one organization, one administrative system, one financial administration department, and one development plan."</li> </ul> <p>2000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Merged with University C</li> </ul>
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(Source: adapted from Li, D 2011)

After two-times mergers, the number of students and staff in NewU was respectively 60,000 and 11,994. Among the staff, there are 3,010 teachers and 1,883 researchers. The total number of Professors and senior researchers was 930 in 2002. In the 1990s, NewU was the first "strong – strong" merger case, and the biggest university

in China. Through the merger, the structure of the governance system in NewU was shifted to two-tier administration system. In fact, most of the Chinese merged universities design their organizational structure based on the “Five Unifications” principle (see Table 3). The two-tier administrative structure was adopted, namely, “institution - middle units (academic units, administrative units, units of CCP, and affiliated enterprises)”.

## Findings and discussion

As the conclusions that many researchers have gotten the merger of higher education institutions are very complex process. There are a lot of challenges that new university leaders will be facing. In this section, the author based on Bolman and Deal’s reframing theory to explore the challenges of the NewU from four frames aspects, as well as examine their leadership styles.

### Structure perspective

According to the Bolman and Deal’s reframing theory (Table 1 and 2), an organisation can be seen as a factory or machine. The central concepts of leadership in this frame are rules, roles, goals, policies, and so on. The effective leaders should own the skills as analyst or architect. They should be good at structuring their work, carefully designing their reform process and developing a reasonable strategic plan, and so on.

With respect to the structure leadership style, all of these interviewees thought that they utilized the structure style in the restructuring process. In the beginning of the merger, they emphasized the rules, polices, and organization structure and design, etc. The merger process was following up both the government and the internal design as Table 3 shows: firstly, the top level group combined together; secondly, the middle level administrative sectors were merged, finally, they merged all academic sectors (schools and faculties). The final outcome realized the design as the “Five Unifications”, which formed the centralization of the administrative power. However, when asked these leaders, some of them didn’t think that they were “always” using structural leadership skill, such as, the L1 mentioned:

“We designed and issued many relevant internal policies and rules during the pre-merger phase and implementation phase, however, we were the first case of merger between



two key universities in China, and we did not have any experience or other references to learn. The complex situation was out of our imagination. It was very difficult for our institutional leadership group to cope with so many challenges. I have to say we could not always follow up the design and schedule. ”

In the pre-merger phase, the big issue was about the new name of the merged university, the government proposed that the university A's original name should be continually used as the name of the new university. But, University B's society was not support this decision. They thought these two universities almost had the same level reputation in China, and their sizes were almost same. So they supported to use a new name. After the internal fighting and the negotiation with local government, a new name was decided. However, they received a lot of negative comments on the name in the followed years. Under the influenced by the vice-primer, and MOE, the name of merged university was changed back to that of university A. The fighting on the name was the painful experience for both sides, as one leader told to the author:

“Because we could not reach the agreement on the name of NewU, we had to choose a name that can be accepted by both sides in that period. The debate had been undergoing almost four years. From this perspective you can image how tension of the relationship was between two pre-merger institution's communities.” (L3)

During the merger process, the new university lunched a lot of rules and policies. Some policies were forwarded from the relevant governmental documents. There were also a number of internal policies. For instance, regarding the university organisation structure, the university decided firstly combined some important centre administrative offices and departments, such as financial department, human resource department, academic affair departments, and so on, then extended to all administrative departments, which led to a lot of challenges. Specially, as for some middle level leaders and common administrators, they felt that their job and future were uncertain. This led to they could not concentrate on their normal work. From another hand, some policies were seen as being too general, which led to the leaders of the schools or departments not knowing how to implement. In that period, many issues in the whole university were uncertain. With respect to the new organization structure and design, these interviewees mentioned that they received a lot of against from both sides' academic societies. With regard to these problems, two leaders explained as the following:

“Even though we have a strategic plan for the merger, but we could not guarantee all policies and rules are following up the long-term strategic purpose. Sometimes, we had to set up the temporary rules or policies to deal with some urgent situations, in particular, some major challenges came from the human resource and financial resource fields. For example, how to distribute the budget money and external investment of government to two original campuses? Even in faculty level, regarding the resource distribution, we were also facing a lot of challenges. The struggles were always taking place between two parts. The process was so complex during the merger”(L2).

“If rethink our merger process, we had a lot of problems that could have done better. For instance, if we had a good design for the organisation structure, then we could have shown the whole organisation structure at the beginning. If doing so, we could avoid a lot of confusions for staff. ”(L4)

With respect to the whole merger process, all interviewees thought it was a complex process. As the institutional leaders, all of them thought their tasks were very hard to deal with these challenges. According to the interview data analysing, we can found: On the one hand, their pre-merger phase was too short. Many of designs should be done before the merger, but they did during the implementing. On the other hand, before the implementation, the government and institutional leaders were taking into account only the positive aspects, while ignoring the negative side, in other words, they underestimated the difficulties of the merger.

However, based on their over rating, comparing with other perspectives, all of interviewees felt that they use structure skills more often than other three frames (human resource, political, and symbolic), which means they often use the structural styles in the leadership and management practice.

## Human resource perspective

According Bolman and Deal’s theory (see Table: 1), they see an organisation as a family. The human resource frame’s central concepts are needs of individuals and organizations, Skills, relationships, etc. it is emphasis on the satisfaction, motivation, empowerment, productivity, and skills development, as well as caring and encourage people. Through the interview, all of interviewees agreed with this perspective and recognized that they all used this leadership style in their practice. In the merger process, these interviewees understood the human resource skill mainly reflects on the restructuring of the middle leaders and different level staff, as well as guiding

people to realize the goal of the NewU. With respect to the selection and appointment of new middle level leaders, an institutional leader mentioned:

“In our merger experience, we found it was very difficult to adjust internal leaders. For example, we had made the criteria and requirements for all middle level administrative positions, so that we only followed these principle to adjusted middle level leaders. In the practice, we could not always follow up these requirements, in order to avoid more struggles between two pre-merger institutions. We had to base on the principle that we did all best to be the right person taking right positions, at the same time, we had to retain the balance between two parts. (L1)

Within the merger situation, the leader (L1) believed it was the better solution that followed up the “balance” principle since the tension between two parts. With respect to the appointment of new middle level leaders, the rest interviewees mentioned other Chinese merged universities also utilized the principle of “retaining the balance”. As we know all the faculties and administration departments normally have two main leaders in Chinese universities: one dean/directors and one branch general secretary of Chinese Communist Party, they also have a number of vice directors or branch general secretaries. The principle of “retaining the balance” means, in a faculty, if the dean / director came from University A, then the branch general secretary of Chinese Communist Party normally came from University B. These interviewees believed that the institutional leader group had tried their best to take care of all leaders who had the senior positions in the original institutions. However, the challenge was that the total numbers of positions had to be reduced. Although they set up some departments and units in the new university, but in NewU, there were almost 40-50% middle level leaders lost their administrative titles and positions.

Through the interview, some interviewees also recognized that some institutional leaders were favorite their previous colleagues and against others sometimes, because they were influenced by “*Renqing*” (emotion) and “*Guanxi*” (relationship or network). In addition, during the merger, some different interest groups formed among the pre-merger institutions. As the institutional leaders, sometimes, were also influenced by these different interest groups. Therefore, it was challenge for the institutional leader group to restructure the human resource. The arrangement of the middle level leaders was a very significant challenge for the institutional leader group in the merger process.

During the interview, some interviewees mentioned that they recognized that negotiation and communication between institutional leader group and staff community was insufficient. They also heard a lot of voices that the staff didn't

think institutional leaders cared the people enough. One leader mentioned during the interview,

“The personal arrangement was a sensitive issue in the merged university. We were real headache when we made a decision, since we had to consider so many external factors rather than the certain position requirements. It was even difficult to get the agreement within institutional leadership group, and really took energy and time, which also led to we do not have enough time to communicate with internal society”.(L4)

Another negative point presented by a vice institutional leader on the principle of “Five Unifications”, he mentioned that the “Five Unifications” led to the whole university governance was more centralisation. The university did not give the enough power to the middle level leaders, which also led to institutional level leaders had to always work on the detail for all matters, which increased the workload of institutional leaders. On the other hand, the middle level leaders’ working motivation and enthusiasm was influenced.

In addition, as above section discussed, the strategy and implementation plans were not very clear which led to the common staff and middle level leaders emerged the feelings that the future is uncertain and unsafe. This kind of effect led to the need of individual could not fit the needs of the NewU’s development. This was really influence the efficiency and effectiveness of the merger.

## Political perspective

From political frame, in Bolman and Deal’s reframing theory (Table 1 and 2), an organisation is seen as a jungle. The central concepts are power, conflict, competition, and organizational politics. The basic leadership tasks include bargain, negotiate, build coalitions and manage conflict. All interviewees recognized that they followed a political leadership style in the restructuring. According to the interviews, the different leader gave the different understanding regarding political skills. They recognised the political struggles were one of the major challenges in the merger process. The conflicts mainly reflected some of the sensitive areas which include the new name of university, the allocation models of the financial and other resource, personnel position arrangement, and so on. With the two universities merged, the people from pre-merger institutions formed themselves into various interest groups. The new university received some extra government funding, but compared with the cost of restructuring the new university, these resources were insufficient. With regard to

the allocation of resources, there even existed a struggle within the institutional level leaderships. As some interviewees told to the author during the interview,

“In the beginning period of the merger, due to the financial situation were different between two original universities,, some faculties were rich, some were poor, therefore, the allocation mechanism of the bonus and income for the staff were different both institutional and faculty levels in two pre-merger institutions. After the merger, the university issued the new policy to ask all resources put together. In the financial aspect, there existed a lot of conflicts.” (L1)

“As for the merger, although we received the extra funding from both central and local governments, however, it was insufficient to fix the need of the restructuring. The scare resource was one of major reasons that led to the political struggle.” (L3)

Concerning the human resource arrangement, especially for the middle level leaders' positions as the last section discussed, it was really hard job for the top level leaders. These interviewees recognized that there were some political struggles both institutional and faculty levels. Some interviewees also recognized that the decision making followed a “top-down” model, which led to they didn't have enough negotiation and communication with middle level leaders and academic communities. The lack of the openness and transparency led to the rumor and unofficial message spread in the campus, which increased the conflicts. The “retaining the balance” principle on the appointment of leaders both institution and faculty levels, in a way, enhanced the confrontations when the opinions were different between these leaders who were from different pre-merger institutions. All the interviews thought that the political conflict (power struggle) had existed a very long term. Therefore, they thought that the power struggle was a key factor that has been influencing the integration of the merger in the long-term.

### Symbolic perspective

In Bolman and Deal's theory, they see the organisation as a theater or temple. As table 1 shows that the central concepts include culture, meaning, ritual, ceremony, heroes, etc. In this frame, Boman and Deal think the leaders should have the skills as prophet or poet. In this case university, these interviewees could not give a clear answer regarding using the symbolic style in the restructuring process, and did not talk they belongs to charismatic leadership or not. When the author directly asked

interviewees about their personal leadership skills from the symbolic perspective, some of them recognized they only occasionally use, but not often. From other hand, an interviewee mentioned that the two main leaders (rector and general secretary of Chinese Communist Party) came from two pre-merger institutions. University A's staff was not familiar with the leader who came from University B, from other side, it was the same. Therefore, none of them could be accepted as the core of the leadership group from the whole internal society, which led to two top leaders were not easy to become the charismatic leader. The topic of the interviews had to mainly concentrate on the building new culture, vision, and so on. A leader mentioned,

“In the value and vision perspective, of course, we always promoted our value and vision of the merger. The purpose is to establish “the world class university”. If we do so, everybody can get benefits from that. However, with the uncertain and unsafe situation, most of staff only paid attention to immediate interests, which influenced the leadership effectiveness” (L2)

Another leader mentioned that their strategic plan just followed up the government documents and fitted governmental requirement. Some contents were too general and not feasible. In point of view, some interviewees were emphasis on the main reason was that the preparation period was too short. Therefore, they did not have a reasonable strategic development plan and a clear implementation plan, which led to most of followers were not very clear about the vision and value of the merger. Even some people did not care about it. Most of staff only consider self-benefit and their own group interests, such as the job safety, their income increasing or reducing. In a way, the most previous middle leaders mainly considered their positions after the merger. As for the institutional leaders group had paid a lot of attention to encourage people, but the effect was not very positive sometimes. These interviewees recognized this was a challenge for the institutional leaders group.

An interviewee (L1) gave the comments on the culture issue. He mentioned that the big challenge for them was the identification problem. The main reason was since NewU merged from two strong universities that owned a long history and good reputation in China. Each one had its culture, identity, beliefs, which were no easy to integrate. According to Boman and Deal's reframing theory, as institutional leaders, they should consider this perspective, unfortunately, the author got the feeling that the leaders' decisions always followed up the certain policies and rules, and ignored the impact of culture on the integration of the new university. Therefore, we can get conclusion that the symbolic skills were not popularly used by these top leaders.

## Conclusions

1) From above finding and discussion, we can generalize the challenges that have been facing for the institutional leadership, they include: from *structure* perspective, the merger process of the NewU followed the government's decision, the relevant decision making was "Top-down" manner; the new institutional leadership group also followed this manner on decision making within university, some institutional leaders recognized that the negotiations and communications with the internal society were insufficient. These had influenced the motivation of staff, and they were not satisfied with some new policies and rules. The identities of two pre-merger institution influenced they accepted the new name of the merged university; the pre-merger phase was too short led to the NewU did not design a reasonable strategic plan and a clear implementation plan, which increased the complex and difficulty of the merger process. From *human resource* perspective, these institutional leaders recognised that human resource restructuring was a major challenge in the merger process. In particular, the appointment and selection of the new middle level leaders were a major challenge. Due to the lack of the negotiation and communication between institutional leaders and middle level leaders, as well as the lack of openness and transparency, the followers felt that the institutional leadership was not caring them enough. From *political* perspective, because of the scare resources, the re-allocation of the finance and other resource led to the conflicts between two parts. The principle of the "retaining balance" on the appointment both institutional and middle level leaders led to the power struggles during the decisions or policies making among the different interest groups. From the *symbolic* perspective, due to the leaders did not pay attention to the symbolic skills. The promotion on the new merged university' vision, ceremonies, heroes, etc. were ignored, which influenced to create the new culture and new identity of the merged university. The result of this study shows that perhaps some institutional leaders have insufficient leadership skills. They need to learn from the multi-frame notions to deal with the merger complex situation, so that they can increase their leadership skills more effectively.

2) Implication: the leaders in other countries and in other universities that are planning mergers or who are implementing mergers can learn something from the experiences of this Chinese case university. This study can be as a reference for others to avoid some of the conflicts, and to enable the merger process to flow more smoothly. Some institutional leaders also can learn from Bolman and Deal's reframing theory in order to embrace the multi-frame view for managing emerging conflicts during mergers between pre-merger institutions.

## Appendix:

Form S-4

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

### LEADERSHIP ORIENTATIONS (SELF)<sup>1</sup>

This questionnaire asks you to describe your leadership and management style.

#### I. Behavior

You are asked to indicate *how often* each of the items below is true of you. Please use the following scale in answering each item.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Sometimes	Always	Occasionally	Often

So, you would answer '1' for an item that is never true of you, '2' for one that is occasionally true, '3' for one that is sometimes true of you, and so on.

**Be discriminating!** Your results will be more helpful if you think about each item and distinguish the things that you really do all the time from the things that you do seldom or never.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ *Think very clearly and logically.*
2. \_\_\_\_\_ *Show high levels of support and concern for others.*
3. \_\_\_\_\_ *Have exceptional ability to mobilize people and resources to get things done.*
4. \_\_\_\_\_ *Inspire others to do their best.*
5. \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly emphasize careful planning and clear time lines.*
6. \_\_\_\_\_ *Build trust through open and collaborative relationships.*
7. \_\_\_\_\_ *Am a very skillful and shrewd negotiator.*
8. \_\_\_\_\_ *Am highly charismatic.*
9. \_\_\_\_\_ *Approach problems through logical analysis and careful thinking.*
10. \_\_\_\_\_ *Show high sensitivity and concern for others' needs and feelings.*
11. \_\_\_\_\_ *Am unusually persuasive and influential.*
12. \_\_\_\_\_ *Am able to be an inspiration to others.*
13. \_\_\_\_\_ *Develop and implement clear, logical policies and procedures.*
14. \_\_\_\_\_ *Foster high levels of participation and involvement in decisions.*
15. \_\_\_\_\_ *Anticipate and deal adroitly with organizational conflict.*
16. \_\_\_\_\_ *Am highly imaginative and creative.*
17. \_\_\_\_\_ *Approach problems with facts and logic.*
18. \_\_\_\_\_ *Am consistently helpful and responsive to others.*
19. \_\_\_\_\_ *Am very effective in getting support from people with influence and power.*
20. \_\_\_\_\_ *Communicate a strong and challenging sense of vision and mission.*
21. \_\_\_\_\_ *Set specific, measurable goals and hold people accountable for results.*

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22. \_\_\_\_\_ *Listen well and am unusually receptive to other people's ideas and input.*
23. \_\_\_\_\_ *Am politically very sensitive and skillful.*
24. \_\_\_\_\_ *See beyond current realities to generate exciting new opportunities.*
25. \_\_\_\_\_ *Have extraordinary attention to detail.*
26. \_\_\_\_\_ *Give personal recognition for work well done.*
27. \_\_\_\_\_ *Develop alliances to build a strong base of support.*
28. \_\_\_\_\_ *Generate loyalty and enthusiasm.*
29. \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly believe in clear structure and a chain of command.*
30. \_\_\_\_\_ *Am a highly participative manager.*
31. \_\_\_\_\_ *Succeed in the face of conflict and opposition.*
32. \_\_\_\_\_ *Serve as an influential model of organizational aspirations and values.*

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