

# Current Thinking and Liberal Arts Education in China

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Boston College Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, 2013

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**Boston College**  
**Lynch School of Education**

**Department of Education Administration and Higher Education**

**Current Thinking and Liberal Arts Education in China**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2, 2013



## **Conceptions about Liberal Arts Education in China**

### **Abstract**

Liberal arts education is an emerging phenomenon in China. However, under the pressure of exam-oriented education, memorization, and lecture pedagogy, faculty, university administrators and policy makers have not embraced it whole-heartedly. Through qualitative methodology, this study explores the current thinking of Chinese policy makers, university administrators, and faculty members on liberal arts education and its challenges. A study of the perceptions of 96 Chinese government and university administrators and faculty members regarding liberal arts education through document analysis and interviews at three universities helps in comprehending the process of an initiative in educational policy in contemporary Chinese universities.

This research analyzes Chinese policy making at the institutional and national levels on curriculum reform with particular emphasis on the role of education in shaping well-rounded global citizens, and it examines how the revival of liberal arts education in China would produce college graduates with the creativity, critical thinking, moral reasoning, innovation and cognitive complexity needed for social advancement and personal integration in a global context.

This research also found that the revival of interest in liberal arts education in China demonstrated that government and universities have begun to realize that the current curricula, professional training, and narrowly specialized education fail to help students to be competent in a globalized economy, and liberal arts is valued in China, and will be more effective as politics, economy and society more developed.

## **Acknowledgment**

I am deeply indebted to the members of my committee: Dr. Philip Altbach, Dr. Karen Arnold, and Dr. Mark O'Connor. I am especially grateful to my chairperson, Dr. Altbach, for guiding my research and for his encouragement. My deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Karen Arnold for her insights and helpful views. I also thank Dr. Mark O'Connor who broadened my views on global development of liberal arts education.

I also wish to thank the President's Office of Boston College and the Jesuit Conference of the US for providing the scholarship for the completion of my program.

I am grateful to Fr. Harvey Egan, S. J., Fr. William Elliot, S. J. and Mr. Vincent Murphy for their editing and suggestions. I would like to thank my Jesuit community at Boston College for their support. I also thank my classmates for their friendship and educational support.

I also would like to thank my friends in the US and in other countries for their support and prayers.

Finally, I thank my beloved mom and dad who always taught and encouraged me to love and to serve generously.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
	Statement of research	10
	Research questions	11
	Significance of the study	13
	Content of chapters: methodology, literature, findings and analysis	15
	Recent discussions of liberal arts education in China	17
	Conclusion	22
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>23</b>
	Introduction	23
	Theoretical framework	23
	Description of research methods	26
	Pilot study	28
	Data collection and participant selection	29
	Interviews	31
	Selection of participants and process	33
	Data analysis and report	35
	Data analysis procedures	36
	Document analysis	37
	Validity and reliability	38
	Ethical concerns	39
	Conclusion	40
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Review of liberal arts education in the Chinese context</b>	<b>41</b>
	Introduction	41
	Confucian tradition	41

Liberal arts education in the modern Chinese period	46
The Republican era (1911-1949)	46
The New China era (1949-1978)	51
The Opening-door era (1978-present)	54
Review of Chinese policies regarding liberal arts education	60
Liberal arts education studies developed by Chinese higher education institutions	69
Conclusion	73

#### **Chapter 4 Literature review 76**

Introduction	76
Liberal arts education in the Western historical context	76
Jesuit tradition of liberal arts education	78
Harvard and Yale impact	79
Liberal arts education in the 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> century in the US and Europe	81
Liberal arts education in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century	84
Definition of liberal arts education	87
Definition of liberal arts education in the Chinese context	91
Related empirical studies on China's liberal arts education	93
Studies and researches by Chinese scholars	93
Literature on liberal arts education in China	100
Conclusion	101

#### **Chapter 5 The three purposive sample study universities: Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China Normal University 103**

Introduction	103
<b>Fudan University</b>	104
The Jesuit and Catholic context	104
The founding of Fudan	105

Fudan in the post-revolution period	108
Curriculum development in Fudan	110
Fudan College (liberal arts college at Fudan University)	113
Structure of Fudan's liberal arts college	114
Liberal arts education core curriculum modules	115
Life and culture of residential colleges (residential hall)	118
Conclusion	119
<b>Shanghai Jiaotong University</b>	120
Historical background	120
Liberal arts education in Shanghai Jiaotong University	122
Liberal arts education curriculum	123
Methods of implementation of liberal arts course	125
Methods of evaluation the quality of liberal arts education courses	126
Conclusion	127
<b>East China Normal University</b>	128
Historical background	128
Liberal arts education in ECNU	131
Liberal arts curriculum	132
Meng Xiancheng liberal arts college	133
Conclusion	135
 <b>Chapter 6 Curriculum development of liberal arts in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China Normal University</b>	 <b>137</b>
Introduction	137
Historical view	138
Definition of liberal arts education from the perspective of the three purposive sample universities	140



Curriculum development at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU	143
Historical background	143
Curriculum reform at Fudan University	145
Curriculum reform at Shanghai Jiaotong University	146
Curriculum reform at East China Normal University	148
Conclusion	149
Faculty member's view on liberal arts curriculum	149
Faculty member's role	154
Attitude of students, administrator and policy maker on liberal arts reform	163
Impact of the labor market on implementing liberal arts curriculum	169
Conclusion	174
<b>Chapter 7 Critical thinking in the context of liberal arts education</b>	<b>177</b>
Introduction	177
Definition of critical thinking	178
Challenges within the curriculum for critical thinking in Chinese context	180
Chinese high school system for critical thinking	180
Emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), IT (information technology) and business	183
Derailment of the purpose of education	184
Teacher's role in educating students with critical thinking	187
Evaluation for faculty promotion	193
The ideological-political education course curriculum and critical thinking	197
Mentorship program for critical thinking	200
Conclusion	205
<b>Chapter 8 Moral reasoning in the context of liberal art education</b>	<b>207</b>
Introduction	207
Moral education vs. character education	208

Moral reasoning education in China: historical approach	210
Contemporary concern for moral reasoning through liberal arts education in China	211
Aim of moral reasoning	214
Education for moral reasoning through liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU	217
Moral reasoning education in Fudan	218
Moral reasoning education in Shanghai Jiaotong	220
Moral reasoning education in ECNU	221
Religious dimension in moral reasoning education	223
Challenges of high school and family education for moral reasoning	226
Impact of corruption on moral reasoning education	232
Teacher training for moral reasoning education	236
Conclusion	239
 <b>Chapter 9 Spirituality in the context of liberal arts education</b>	 <b>243</b>
Introduction	243
Definition of spirituality	245
Spirituality in Chinese context	247
Historical perspective	248
Spiritual perspective in Confucian tradition	250
Spiritual perspective in modern China	253
Spirituality development in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU	255
Curriculum development and teacher's role	256
Policy concern for spirituality development	262
Service learning and spirituality	265
Conclusion	269
 <b>Chapter 10 Discussion and analysis</b>	 <b>273</b>
Introduction	273

Curriculum development for critical thinking cultivation	275
Faculty member's role in liberal arts education development	281
Government policies concerning liberal arts education development	287
Internationalization and globalization	292
Confucian philosophy and moral reasoning	297
Evaluation of faculty for promotion	300
Secondary education and the college admissions system	303
Spirituality development in the liberal arts education	306
Conclusion	310
<b>Chapter 11 Summary and conclusion</b>	<b>312</b>
Overview	312
Current development	313
The philosophy of culture in liberal arts education	317
Challenges to liberal arts education in China	322
The teacher's role in the development of liberal arts education	322
Employment and economic concern	325
Professional ethics in Chinese universities	326
Future trends	328
Recommendation for future study	340
<b>References</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>361</b>
Appendix A: Recruitment email	361
Appendix B: Consent form	362
Appendix C: Interview protocol	366

## **Chapter 1          Introduction**

### **Statement of research**

Through purposive sampling study of three universities in Shanghai, this dissertation provides the academic and the historical context for understanding current development of the liberal arts in Chinese universities. It begins with a focus on liberal arts education in a historical context and with a definition of liberal arts in various contexts. It then considers Chinese higher education over the past three decades since China began its *Open Door* policy and its reform in the social, economic, political and educational spheres in 1978. The past fifteen years when liberal arts education emerged in China will receive special emphasis. The emergence of liberal arts in China and the course of its place in the college curriculum are analyzed through its influence in China's educational, social, cultural, economic system and market value from the ancient Confucian era to modern China. Key issues—such as, curriculum reform, student development, faculty development, critical thinking, educational leadership, moral reasoning, spirituality, and policy initiatives—are addressed. How liberal arts can contribute to a new kind of educational development influencing the Chinese educational system in a global aspect will become more apparent through analysis.

The revival of interest in liberal arts education in the mid-1990's in China has demonstrated that the government and the universities have begun to realize that the current curricula, with their narrow focus on professional training, are insufficient to enable students to meet today's global needs and challenges. Liberal arts, they are learning, leads not only to broad general knowledge, but also to critical skills and innovative thinking. The reemergence of liberal arts education is a result of the great need for educating well-rounded citizens. Liberal arts

education will have an economic, political, social, and cultural effect on contemporary China (Gan, 2006). My presentation is based on the conviction that policy makers and educators in the past fifteen years have come to realize the importance of liberal arts in higher education to achieve a balanced education and to foster critical thinking. How contemporary policy makers, university administrators and faculty members understand liberal education, how they view the role of the liberal arts in the curriculum of colleges and universities will be the subjects of my investigation.

### **Research questions**

This study explores the development of liberal arts education in China from a historical aspect and presents the current thinking of Chinese policy makers, university administrators, and faculty members on liberal arts education. Throughout this study, I focus on three issues:

1. How do contemporary Chinese educators understand liberal arts education? And what are the predominant goals of higher education in the thinking of administrators, policy makers and faculty members in contemporary China?
2. What is the perception of the value of a liberal arts education in contemporary China with reference to educating well-rounded citizens with the capacity for critical thinking and moral reasoning?
3. How might the revival of Chinese liberal arts education build on China's traditions of classical knowledge? How might it produce college graduates with creativity, critical thinking, innovative ideas and complex reasoning needed for social advancement and personal integration in a global context?

### **Sub-questions:**

- a. What is the policy of the central government, the municipal government of Shanghai, and leading universities concerning liberal arts education?
- b. How do administrators, faculty members, and policy makers view curriculum reform?
- c. How do Chinese thinkers and educators define a liberal arts education?
- d. What goals or outcomes do they seek from a liberal arts education?
- e. How do policy makers, administrators and faculty members perceive the relationship between a liberal arts education and education for a “well-rounded” person?
- f. How have government policies influenced liberal arts education reform at the university level?
- g. How have faculty members understood and participated in implementing liberal arts?
- h. How have university administrators supported faculty members who are involved in the liberal arts?

The main goals of this qualitative study are:

- A. To explore the current thinking of Chinese policy makers, university administrators, and faculty members on liberal arts education and its challenges.
- B. To analyze the history and trends of the emergence of liberal arts education in China through its influence in China’s educational, social, cultural, and economic system.
- C. To analyze documents produced by universities and the government regarding curriculum reform, policy initiatives, and the views of intellectuals on a liberal arts education.

- D. To provide the international community with an overview of the current trends of liberal arts education in China.

### **Significance of the study**

A study of liberal arts education in contemporary China is very valuable and timely for several reasons. First, the results of this research may serve as a policy reference for the Chinese government and universities to evaluate the effectiveness of their current policies toward liberal arts education, especially as they consider international exigencies and their own responsibility in educating citizens. Thus, this study seeks to enable policy makers, university administrators, and faculty members to reflect on the educational issues that might enlighten their thinking about future strategic directions for the institutional curricular reforms and to stimulate them to further a liberal arts curriculum in China.

Second, the past decade has seen radical reform at all levels of China's educational system as it attempts to meet changing economic and social needs and aspirations, including transformation of university curricula, pedagogy and evaluation measures, and rapidly increasing joint research and degree programs between Chinese universities and universities abroad. The present study will provide Westerners with a historical framework to understand colleges, universities and the higher educational system in contemporary China and, in particular, the status of liberal arts education.

Third, although much has been written about Chinese higher education, there have been no published studies on liberal arts education in contemporary China based on the views of policy makers, administrators and faculty members. This study is the first research on current thinking concerning liberal arts education in contemporary China. It will provide some of the necessary data and interpretation for an understanding of higher education in contemporary

China for anyone interested in the current trends of Chinese higher education. Faculty members, university administrators and students in both Chinese and Western colleges and universities will benefit from this study and acquire an understanding of liberal arts programs in China because the data and information are first hand, having been derived from personal interviews with administrators, faculty and policy makers.

Fourth, the study manifests the contribution of liberal arts education to China's academic development. The next twenty years will be crucial for educational reform and development as China struggles to build world-class universities (Altbach, 2010, personal communication). While careerism has become the major demand for higher education in China, educational reform—particularly the revival of liberal arts education in some elite universities—will, hopefully, help to educate more students with critical thinking, creativity, innovative skills and balanced development. Conant (1945) pointed out that universities and colleges are responsible for keeping liberal arts education alive. Liberal arts can help to educate the thoughtful and responsible leaders with moral reasoning needed in contemporary Chinese society. For example, liberal arts colleges in the US have produced graduates who have been leaders in many fields: educators, scholars, jurists, statesmen, diplomats, politicians, scientists, business executives, artists, musicians, literary writers, and journalists (Ferrall, 2011).

Fifth, this study also aims to assist policy makers, university administrators and faculty members reflect on educational issues that could relate to future directions of their institutions in curricular reform and may provide the stimulus for further development of liberal arts education in China. As Yang (2012) observed that advancing China to world-class level through science and technology has become a central concern of the Chinese government and a goal that the entire nation is eager to achieve, but the emergence of liberal arts education is a reminder to the



Chinese government, to educational institutions and administrators, and to faculty members that the primary goal of education is to nurture students to become academically, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and morally balanced, and, thus, be responsible citizens. Contemporary Chinese higher education must not focus merely on training engineers or scientists, but on developing the whole student to be a person who can think critically with innovative ideas and moral reasoning, and who is socially, intellectually, and spiritually integrated. Liberal arts education in the Chinese higher educational system can help greatly to achieving this goal, significant emphasis on liberal arts education could be a new sign of hope for Chinese higher education and Chinese society at large.

### **Content of chapters: methodology, literature, findings, analysis**

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology and the process of this study. It begins with a description of how a qualitative purposive research design is appropriate. This chapter also includes the pilot study. It sets forth the process for interviewing participants and discusses validity and ethical issues that emerged from the interview process.

Chapter 3 is a review of the literature. The first section provides a historical foundation of liberal arts education by examining the Greek tradition and its influence for the modern world. The definition of liberal arts education in various contexts follows and the chapter ends with a review of empirical studies on China's liberal arts education.

Chapter 4 presents Chinese history and development related to liberal arts education followed by Chinese policies (in China, liberal arts education was usually an equivalent name for general education). It concludes with a short discussion of the literature on liberal arts education in China.

Chapter 5 examines three focal universities which represent Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China Normal University in detail. It sets forth the history, context, implementation, and the development of liberal arts education in these three universities.

Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9 focus on several forces that shaped the development of liberal arts education in contemporary Chinese universities, particularly in the three qualitative purposive universities as examples. Several themes from interview data are grouped under major categories: 1) cultural quality education and curriculum development; 2) critical thinking about liberal arts education; 3) the role of moral reasoning in the liberal arts education; 4) spirituality. Other factors are described, for example, policy initiative, academic ranking, globalization, academic commitment, professional development, student development, faculty members' role and teacher-student relationship. Chapter 6 also discusses the curriculum from the point of view of those interviewed. Chapter 7 deals with how the interviewed participants understand critical thinking. Chapter 8 examines moral reasoning in liberal arts education. Chapter 9 explores the importance of spiritual development in the context of liberal arts education. The challenges from the labor market, the internationalization of Chinese higher education and their impact on the implementation of liberal arts education, teacher's role, and policy making are also examined throughout the chapters.

Chapter 10 analyzes the current circumstances of liberal arts education from findings in three case universities in Shanghai. Chapter 11 concludes the findings and currents of thought, discusses the implications of these results, and provides suggestions for their application in higher education and for future research studies.

## **Recent discussions of liberal arts education in China**

This section provides a brief overview of recent discussions of liberal arts education in China. Li (2006) stated that the lack of institutional autonomy, the low regard for humanism, and the preponderance of materialism and utilitarianism are the great obstacles to the needed development of Chinese higher education. The last two decades witnessed a historical transition in Chinese higher education which launched a “cultural quality education” (the approximate equivalent words for liberal arts education), as one result of rapid reforms and transformations. In June 1995, the Ministry of Education held a national meeting at Huazhong University of Science and Technology and drafted a program for “Cultural Quality Education” for universities. This program intended “to provide students with a broader intellectual spectrum and a more rigorous humanistic education” (Cao, 2010, p. 154). The program stressed that institutions of higher learning are not only a place for knowledge, but should also provide students with character, competence, creativity, and moral reasoning. In 1998, the Ministry of Education issued the “Outline of Cultural Quality Education for University Students” with the aim that “the qualities include moral quality, cultural quality, professional quality, physical and psychological quality, among which cultural quality is the foundation—stressing the cultivation of humanistic quality” (Ministry of Education, 1999). These efforts are at an early stage, and poorly articulated with career paths. In the past decade, some small-scale experimental faculties of liberal arts have begun to appear at top universities (such as Peking University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, Zhejiang University, Zhongshan University) in order to meet the goal of educating students in critical thinking, creativity, and integrity.

According to Cao (2010), “Cultural Quality Education” was generally implemented through three perspectives. The first focuses on courses (required and optional) taught in the

classroom. The second focuses on campus activities such as public lectures by scholars and experts from a home university or outside the university. These lectures are mostly sponsored by students' clubs or different academic departments and other various extracurricular programs. The third, off-campus fieldwork, is to help students apply the knowledge they acquire in the classroom to actual practice.

The “Cultural Quality Education” has engaged university administrators, policy makers, faculty, and students to think seriously about the ultimate function and role of the university, the purpose of education, the relationship of faculty and students, professional and liberal arts education, and the outcomes of teaching and learning. Questions about the value of education are also being discussed. For instance, what is the ultimate purpose of a university? Is it solely to train professionals for market needs or is it to educate and develop student’s all-round ability to become well qualified global citizens? Should the mission of the university go beyond social and technological advancement? What is the idea of the university (Tong, 2012)? Liberal arts education offered at many colleges and universities is now viewed as required in curriculum reform. It is on the agenda as an important item of Chinese higher education reform (Zhang, 2012).

Various programs of liberal arts education appear in top universities at the national and local levels. Leading research universities such as Peking University, Zhejiang University, Fudan University, Tsinghua University, and Nanjing University are the pioneer institutions that promote a liberal arts education program and apply these programs in different ways. For example, Tsinghua University defines its undergraduate education on the basis of liberal arts education for a broader professional education. Peking University established “Yuan Pei College” to admit a certain number of students as a pilot liberal arts program. In addition, Peking

University's liberal arts program also consists of elective courses for all undergraduates in their freshman and sophomore year, with junior and senior years focused on professional education. Furthermore, Peking University also requires all freshmen admitted after September 2000 to take at least 16 credits in the liberal arts education curriculum. Zhongshan University established an independent "Bo Ya Shu Yuan" (Liberal Arts College) in 2009 but only about 39 students enrolled. In 2005 Fudan University established Fudan Liberal Arts College (the equivalent of a school of arts and sciences in the US). It is the first university to institutionalize liberal arts education at the tertiary level. At Fudan Liberal Arts College every student is required to participate in a liberal arts educational program in the first year, using the US liberal arts educational system as a model. In 2011, a private liberal arts college "Xing Wei College" was established in Shanghai; its curriculum reflects a liberal arts agenda, with courses on "Intercultural Communication" and "Social Problems in Global and Comparative Perspective," as well as critical thinking and debate. Many other universities also developed additional courses in liberal arts as elective courses, which were commonly called "common courses for humanistic education." Liberal arts education has, thus, become a landmark in the development and transformation of Chinese higher education to provide students with a comprehensive quality education.

Basically, liberal arts education in these universities focuses on four aims. First, it stresses students' intellectual competence; second, what is judged to constitute moral and ethical education closely relates to China's political orientation; third, it integrates scientific and humanistic knowledge; fourth, liberal arts education does not simply intend to advance science and technology, but also to enhance Chinese cultural heritage. The liberal arts education curriculum mainly includes courses such as political and moral education, physical education,

foreign language, social sciences, literature, history, philosophy, arts, and military training. Since the establishment of Cultural Quality Education Centers in the 1990's, liberal arts education—despite some effort from the university and some indirect support from the Ministry of Education—has remained a marginalized program in an era dominated by scientific and technological utilitarianism. Colleges and universities continue to overemphasize rote memorization, a top-down instructional style, and a near-total reliance on exams to evaluate progress. Few understand that besides offering several academic disciplines, liberal arts education is a strong foundation for future engineers, lawyers, doctors, managers, scientists, businessmen, and politicians. Efforts to create a world-class university, emphasis on professional training rather than on values, and on academic research and publications over teaching are great challenges for liberal arts education in China.

In the past decade, globalization and internationalization have had a great impact on China's politics, economy, and culture as well as the environment of higher education. Because many universities have rushed to embrace globalization and internationalization to keep in line with the world, and, consequently, the value of liberal arts education is not recognized by all policy makers, administrators, faculty members and students. If the ultimate purpose of a university education is to enable one to grasp the meaning and value of humanities, transcending utilitarianism to create a better world in which to live, then the establishment of liberal arts education in Chinese universities is urgent (Yang, 2009). The rapid transition of higher education from elite status to massive expansion in the last decade affected not only the number of universities but also the quality of students. In addition to the traditional focus on reading, mathematics, literature, art, and narrowly defined specialized education, Chinese university students face the challenge of an education which imparts social responsibility, creativity,

innovative and critical thinking (Wang, 2004). A rapidly changing Chinese society and the phenomenon of globalization demand that educators pay more attention to critical thinking among their students by drawing upon resources from their own and from Western traditions.

Empirical results of my qualitative study about Fudan University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, and East China Normal University (all are comprehensive universities located in Shanghai — they including one science and technology concentration university, one that focuses on humanities and social sciences, another that is a teacher training comprehensive university) are presented throughout this dissertation in the appropriate sections and, where it is useful, some are reiterated elsewhere. These three universities are not only the leading higher educational institutions in Shanghai, but also rank as leading universities among all the universities in China. Their experience and transformation in the past decade in the 211 project and the 985 project may represent a large group of universities (Li, 2010, personal communication). Their reform liberal arts education provides useful information for curriculum reform for many other universities. Universities in Shanghai—an international and highly developed city—have for some time provided high quality manpower for Shanghai's development and socioeconomic advancement. They emphasize excellence in teaching (at least in theory) rather than in research and stress that teaching is not merely passing on knowledge to students but engaging them to develop critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning and innovative skills. Most of the Chinese higher educational institutions view research and publication as a priority. Consequently, the implementation of liberal arts education in these top universities in Shanghai, if successful, will be a good model for universities nationwide.

## **Conclusion**

This is a purposive sampling study of three universities, policy-makers and government documents in Shanghai, China. The introduction chapter introduced the research questions and the current discussions of liberal arts education in China. The next chapter examines the key concepts that provide the framework for this research. It also discusses the research methods, the introduction of a pilot study, data collection and participant selection, and interview selection.



**Introduction**

This chapter examines the research process of this study. The introduction of the research process begins with the theoretical framework, followed by a brief description of research methods, the introduction of a pilot study, data collection and participant selection, and interview selection. This qualitative purposive sample of three case universities also examines the views of policymakers, university administrators, and faculty members about liberal arts education carried out at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and East China Normal Universities. The study uses mainly three forms of data collection methodology: interviews, document analyses, and relevant documents and debates in print. Chapter two also deals with the reliability and validity of the study and ethical issues that emerged during the research process.

**Theoretical Framework**

Effective research into liberal arts education requires an interdisciplinary approach. Hence, I intend briefly to discuss ecological systems theory and how these systems internally related to each other. The theoretical framework herein includes historical and philosophical elements. From a historical viewpoint, the “Ecological Systems Theory” of Urie Bronfenbrenner (2005) is employed to examine the phases of development in a liberal arts education. The ecological system theory developed by Bronfenbrenner uses different types of relationships and surroundings of individuals to help explain their development. Different environmental layers: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. The theory points out that while relationships close to people have a direct impact; other factors outside also have a powerful impact on their development.

The microsystem, according to Bronfenbrenner, consists of the activities and interactions within a person's immediate surroundings (Berk, 2007). Structures include family, neighborhood, teachers, dorms, peers, and classes. The relationships inside the microsystem have bi-directional influences in that they impact in two directions, away and toward the child. A good example of this involves parents, where the child has an influence on the parents and the parents have an influence on the child (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

The mesosystem Bronfenbrenner classifies as the connecting of the structures of the microsystem (Berk, 2007). An example of the mesosystem is the fact that a person's education and learning depends not only upon the teachers' knowledge but also the parents of the person, as they have equal influence in assisting in learning and education of a child. Adults' relationships as spouses and as parents depend partly upon the effects of relationships in their place of activity.

The exosystem Bronfenbrenner describes as being “made up of social settings that do not contain the developing person but nevertheless affect experiences in their immediate settings” (Berk, 2007, p.25). The exosystem is the outer shell surrounding both the mesosystem and the microsystem. For example, government policies, market economic competition, family status, retirement, and centrally directed higher education will affect the student’s development and the teacher’s commitment to education.

The macrosystem is the outside level of Bronfenbrenner’s structure. This level does not contain a particular subject but, rather, a variety of influences such as laws, customs, resources, globalization, communism, population, and cultural values. The influences (e.g. child and parents) in the inner levels of the exosystem are affected by the support of the macrosystem. Therefore, the exosystem, mesosystem and the microsystem are all affected by the macrosystem.

For example: a child born into strong Christian family will be strongly influenced by parents, (mesosystem), influenced in turn by their parents (exosystem), who would have been influenced by the Christian values and customs passed on through family generations (macrosystem). In a similar way, student development, faculty development, and liberal arts education will be affected by the macrosystem of a Chinese context. Hence, classroom instruction, government policy, communism, an exploding population, economic competition, internationalization, and faculty members and administrators' role in different ecological systems all influence the outcomes of education when Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU implement liberal arts education in their institutions.

On the philosophical side, Chinese cultural resources potentially to shape debates over education toward a more humane future for people in China. The work of Chinese philosopher Tu wei-ming (1998) supports Confucian thought as a way to counteract such influences as instrumental rationality, extreme individualism, and an overemphasis on material progress. Values from Confucian heritage could serve to transform contemporary utilitarianism in Chinese higher education and to modernize Chinese society. Tu (1998) points out that Chinese universities are in a position to bring the resources of Confucian humanism into a global community. This study, through interviews with academic leaders, faculty and policy makers, indicates to what degree Confucian humanism and its liberal arts education tradition are taught in contemporary Chinese universities, and to what degree the curricular reforms foster cultural insight and a sense of civic responsibility (Tan, 2003; Hall & Ames, 1999).

## **Description of Research Methods**

This study employs qualitative research and document analysis methods to examine the current development of liberal arts education in China through a qualitative purposive sample of three universities (Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China Normal University) in Shanghai. The description and comparison of the three study universities is an important data analysis strategy of the pattern of activity in contemporary Chinese universities. The purposive sampling method is deliberative and non-random for a specific purpose. It helps researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the context, rather than to generalize themes (Newman, 2003). The purposive sampling method used in this study engaged policy makers, university administrators and faculty members from various backgrounds in the three universities and the Department of Education in the Shanghai municipal government.

Qualitative research in the social sciences has become predominant in recent years. It explores the attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of many classifications of people involved in education. It aims to understand, describe, and interpret the context of people's lives (Newman, 2003). This present research describes the context and interprets the conversations with participants held in separate, face-to-face interviews on their experiences and their understanding.

The semi-structured, face-to-face interview method was also employed in this study. There are several reasons for use of the interview method. First, the interview method is the most convenient and the most suitable because it deals with personal understanding on the current state of liberal arts education and policy making. Second, because of possible sensitivity regarding some topics or personal opinions, a face-to-face, individual interview might make participants more comfortable. Third, if there is any doubt about the understanding of questions,

personal communication in an interview can resolve the doubt. In addition, an assurance of the validity of the data collected is greater when it is gathered through personal interviews (Newman, 2003).

This qualitative study approach aimed to carry out an in-depth analysis of liberal arts for education in critical thinking during the past decade in China. It will help to make known accurate information on the current trends in liberal arts education by reports on interviews, by document analysis, and by examining available policy initiatives.

The interview and data collection in the three purposive study universities took place in Shanghai from July 2010 to September 2010. The decision to use Shanghai for this qualitative purposive sample of three case universities was made because Shanghai is home to some of the country's most prestigious universities. The Shanghai municipal government has invested enormously in the past decade in higher education development and has advocated education that produces graduates who think critically and innovatively. The Shanghai government has always linked the key role of education to social, economic, and cultural development (the Department of Education, Shanghai municipal government, 2001). As a municipal city that is a key component in economic growth under the direct leadership of the central government, Shanghai plays an important role in implementing the educational policies promulgated by the central government. Shanghai also enjoys relatively high autonomy in education policymaking. This qualitative purposive sample of three case universities represented three general categories of Chinese universities: comprehensive and research oriented (Fudan), science and technology oriented (Shanghai Jiaotong) and teacher education oriented (ECNU). All of these three universities belong to "Project 211" and "Project 985" universities ("Project 211," a project initiated in 1995 by the Ministry of Education of China with the aim of raising the standards of

research and teaching of a group of select universities. The name for the project comes from an abbreviation of the 21st century and approximately 100 participating universities. “Project 985,” a project aimed to promote the development and reputation of an even more selective group of Chinese universities. This project was announced by then Chinese President Jiang Zemin at the 100th anniversary at Peking University on May 4, 1998, and, hence, they are called 211 and 985 Projects).

### **Pilot study**

To conduct formal interviews and to test the appropriateness of the research questions and methods, a pilot study was carried out in May of 2010. This was an informal visit made to the three proposed universities (Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU) in Shanghai to meet senior administrators, government officials in charge of higher education, and faculty members who engaged in liberal arts education. It provided a first-hand account of the current context of these universities and the meaning of liberal arts in these institutions. Such a personal and informal visit was appropriate because the interviewees have various backgrounds in academic disciplines, education and experience in teaching, leadership and as educators. The same people were selected to be interviewed later formally in the research and data collection study. This preliminary visit also provided an opportunity to meet more people, to learn their ways of proceeding and to obtain some facts about the culture, practice and customs in Chinese higher education institutions.

Since this was an informal visit and conversation, consent forms were not sent before meeting to the participants because there was no issue of confidentiality involved. Prior to the preliminary visit, contact was made in advance with some administrators, teachers and government officials to inform them about the purpose of meeting. This informal pilot study

helped to clarify interview questions and to practice interview skills, such as, how to phrase the questions, how to deal with Chinese officials and intellectuals, how to respect their opinions and how to remain open-minded in judging their answers. While in Shanghai for this informal pilot study, I took the opportunity to do library and documentary research on the development of liberal arts education in China. The informal visits with some scholars and administrators in this area also resulted in ongoing connections that eventually provided more information.

In the final selection of individuals for interviews, a balance was attempted in regard to gender, disciplines, academic ranking, position of faculty members, institutional type, length of work in the university, and academic background of the participants to make the study as comprehensive as possible.

### **Data collection and participant selection**

The basic procedure of data collection was through interviews and document resources, as illustrated below:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Types</b>
Interviews	Semi-structured interviews Faculty members=45 Administrators=45 Policy makers=6 Pilot study
Archival documents	Newspapers/newsletters Official documents Development plans

	<p>Reports</p> <p>Acts and regulations</p>
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In addition to semi-structured interviews and archival research, informal interviews were conducted. Archival documents are found in the libraries of the three purposive sample study universities and the Shanghai Municipal Government Archives; some are also available at the Yenching Institute library of Harvard University in Cambridge.

The three data collection stages are illustrated below:

<b>First Stage</b>	<b>Second Stage</b>	<b>Third Stage</b>
<p>Background in China: history and higher education.</p> <p>Literature review on liberal arts education</p>	<p>Pilot study</p> <p>Interviews, document and archives collection</p>	<p>Substantive formal research and study</p>

During my visit to Shanghai in May-July, 2010 I conducted interviews and did research in libraries and archives in three universities and the Shanghai Municipal Archive. All archival documents that were collected relate to higher education and liberal arts education at the national, municipal and university levels. I used these documents to understand the history, policy, the current situation, and the future trend of liberal arts education and provide resources to analyze each university objectively and comprehensively.



A key step in the data collection procedure is sampling. Since “qualitative researchers cannot observe everything about the group or site that might be relevant to their problem, they try to obtain a sample of observations believed to be representative of everything they could observe” (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002, p. 428). Given the dimension of the objective and the various opinions possible among the participants from different universities, I used a purposive sampling method which aims “at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation” (Patton, 2002, p. 234). The key interviewees in this study were connected to the policy and the decision making processes. They were government officers, university administrators, senior staff who know liberal arts education well, scholars in important strategic research centers in China who have influenced national higher education policy, and the faculty who teach courses in the liberal arts. These people have a thorough understanding of the policies on liberal arts education, the implementation process, and the challenges. I searched university websites to obtain information on potential participants. Through advanced information technology, in most cases, the profiles of faculty members and administrators are available on school websites as well as other useful information about administrators and faculty.

## **Interviews**

The major means of data collection was through personal interviews. The purpose of qualitative interviewing was to grasp "how those interviewed view their world, to learn their terminology and judgment," and to comprehend "the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Purposive sampling in a qualitative study design does not seek statistical significance, but attempts inductively to provide an explanation applicable to new areas. Purposive sampling can be used to begin the process of generating theory through the grounded theory approach (Robson, 2002). Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) state that the most

commonly used samples in applied research are purposive samples, and the common element is that participants are selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research objective.

The size of the sample is another concern. Patton (2002) states that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry and in-depth information from a small number of people can be valuable. Different researchers provided varied guidelines for selecting actual sample sizes that ranged from five to sixty (Patton, 2002). 6 government officials whose works are related to higher education/liberal arts education and policy implementation from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government were interviewed and provided much useful information. At each university, I interviewed 30 people: 15 administrators, and 15 faculty members. The total number of interviews was 96. All interviews were based on a semi-structured interview protocol.

Aside from formal interviews, this study also combined some informal conversational approaches with the interview guidelines. Patton (2002) points out that “the conversational interview offers maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate, depending on what emerges from observing a particular setting or from talking with one or more individuals in that setting” (p. 342). This method provides some flexibility and common framework among those interviewed. Five main issues were covered in the semi-structured interview: background of liberal arts education, policy initiatives, implementation, expectations and challenges. For each type of participant, such as a policy maker, administrator, and faculty member, I prepared a questionnaire that could be adjusted according to their background and position (See interviewee protocols in Appendix B). In addition to formal interviews and archival document research, I conducted some informal interviews as a

complementary source. These interviews included different participants: students, other faculty members and parents.

### **Selection of participants and process**

Prior to the research visit to Shanghai, an agreement was made with the purposive study institutions to allow my research and interviews. The participants in this research included administrators, faculty members and policy makers from the three universities and the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government. Participants were selected based on their involvement in liberal arts education either in teaching or administration. All possible participants were contacted before my travel to Shanghai to assure their availability and willingness to participate. It was planned that they would represent three areas: policy making, policymaking, teaching and administration. Based on information on the university websites or recommended by local contacts at the universities, the participants were individuals involved in liberal arts education and selected from different disciplines, academic backgrounds, positions, years of occupation, and age group.

Faculty members and administrators in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU were informally contacted through letters or emails so that they could understand the interview questions and expectations. Upon receiving an agreement of participation in interviews from the government officials, university administrators and faculty members, interview time was scheduled and a consent form with the interview guideline were sent by via email or post mail.

I first introduced myself briefly to create a comfortable environment for communication. To make the data collection process more efficient and objective, participants were asked for

their agreement to be contacted for follow-up questions either by email or telephone in case some clarification was needed.

The interview consisted of three major parts. First, I briefly introduced my research and the purpose of the interview and why I chose Shanghai, and assured them of the confidentiality and anonymity of the interview and the data. I provided an opportunity to let the participant ask me questions at the beginning of the interview. Second, the participants were asked about their academic background and experiences. The third part was the interview questions which consisted of approximately 30 questions for different groups of participants (see Appendix C). The 30 questions had been checked and reviewed by two professors from China for validity of facts and were revised on the basis of my pilot study. The interview questions focus on participants' understanding, practice, implementation, challenges, problems, expectations, curriculum reform and the development of liberal arts education in their respective universities. To be more efficient in collecting data and assuring the quality of an interview, I asked permission of participants to record the interview. For the convenience and comfort of administrators and faculty members, participants were interviewed privately, with the interview focusing on the perceptions of the participants regarding current development issues in liberal arts education problems. All interviews were conducted in offices in Shanghai except a few which were conducted either in a coffee shop or library.

Each interview was set for 45 to 60 minutes, but often the interview lasted more than one hour since some participants were interested in sharing more information. The medium of communication was Mandarin Chinese; however, 17 of them preferred to speak in English. Typically, I used a 'snowball sampling' methodology through which I asked some administrators and faculty members to recommend colleagues who might be able to provide valuable

information for my research. This methodology was appropriate and quite successful to recruit participants because Chinese people are very much dependent on personal relationships (Guan xi) or acquaintances. They feel more at ease when the researcher was recommended by a colleague. Before the start of each interview, the participants read and signed the consent form.

### **Data analysis and report**

The data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously in order to organize the data chronologically (Creswell, 2003). I drew up an interview protocol which includes instructions by the interviewer, the key research questions, and probes to follow key questions and comments of the participant. During the interview I took notes because some participants preferred not to have the interview recorded. If there was a need for clarification or more information, it was obtained by e-mail or phone calls. Interview tapes were transcribed as soon as interviews were finished and a copy was sent to the participant for comments or corrections.

Grounded theory was used in the research study for the data analyses. Data analysis in qualitative research relies heavily on description. The inductive nature of grounded theory methods makes for interplay between data and theory in qualitative research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The data in a grounded theory study are collected primarily through one-on-one interviews. The purpose of grounded theory is to generate data systematically, thereby to develop a conceptual analysis of a living experience and a social world instead of intending to create substantive or formal theory (Chamaz, 2000). I made an independent descriptive analysis of each university's liberal arts education practice and implementation.

## **Data analysis procedures**

I began data analysis with careful and repeated close readings of all interview transcripts. The data were broken down into small, separate concepts and compared for similarities and differences. The data (interview tapes, transcripts, interview notes, and other official documents from government and universities) were organized categorically and chronologically. The data analysis process was conducted using Hyper Research, a qualitative data analysis software program to assist in the process of data analysis.

Creswell (2003) refers to research done in settings that are familiar to the researcher as “backyard research” but warns that such familiarity can cause bias and compromise validity. So a set of keywords or categories based on the current situation of liberal arts education was used to triangulate the data source (the interviews and documents) to corroborate findings from a variety of perspectives: for example, curriculum reform, policy initiative, academic rankings, academic commitment, professional development, cultural quality education, critical thinking, etc. I compared the findings from my study to documents and observations on liberal arts education found in the three purposive study universities. I then presented the case university in detail based on opinions of participants from faculty, administrators, policy makers, and even parents and students. The rationale behind this structure of analysis is to explore the differences and similarities in the three purposive study universities in order to gain an over-arching knowledge of answers to the main questions of the research. While analyzing and identifying separate concepts from each participant, I kept the following question in mind: how is this concept described and does it differ from the description by other participants? From document study and interviews, I used selective coding as a process to identify the major themes of research (Newman, 2003) and to make comparisons and contrasts from the interconnection of

different categories. Since most participants came from various disciplines, I used the interview data in association with specific specialties because they could provide substantial information for the research.

I transcribed the recorded interviews and for the sake of confidentiality, all those interviewed were given pseudonyms in the transcripts. For unrecorded interviews, I kept notes of the conversation during the interview and afterwards I immediately organized the notes to prevent loss of information. Since more than half of the research was conducted in Chinese, the transcripts eventually were translated into English, and then were coded and categorized.

### **Document analysis**

In addition to semi-structured face-to-face interviews and class observations, I used document analysis because documents would provide complementary information to interpret the context of the participants. The main documents analyzed are from the Chinese government and the universities. Documents from the government related to liberal arts education included government plans at the national and municipal levels, policy initiatives, and regulations. Documents from the universities related to liberal arts education included strategic planning (vision, expectations, etc.), annual reports, newsletters, speeches, and conferences. Newsletters of universities included official policies and public opinions from faculty, staff and administrators related to liberal arts education. These published documents and internal documents provided by the sample case universities mostly helped to obtain a more complete picture of the liberal arts education requirements and information about the university's academic program. Some other topics, such as curriculum reform, policy initiative, academic rankings, academic commitment, professional development, cultural quality education and

critical thinking were analyzed in these documents. In order to connect the documents with the interviews, I also cited certain documents to ask interviewees for their opinion and reaction as part of the interview.

### **Validity and reliability**

Newman (2003) states that validity refers to “how well an idea about reality ‘fits’ with actual reality and reliability means dependability or consistency” (p. 179) and researchers are expected to “present a fair, honest, and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone” (p. 185). To improve the validity of the research, data collection methods were triangulated (interviews, analysis of institutional publications and documents) to corroborate findings from a variety of perspectives. While the majority of the data for this research comes from semi-structured face-to-face interviews, the university and the government’s written documents on liberal arts education or so called “cultural quality education” were complementary sources that helped to understand the point of view of participants and the academic environment in China.

Member checking and follow-up interviews were also employed. When a transcription of an interview was completed and before I began the analysis process, each participant received a copy of the interview transcript via email or post mail for any comments. Although I expected all of them to send back comments or corrections, only 18 participants replied. Feedback of the interview transcript confirmed the validity of the data. In addition, participants from different academic disciplines, academic ranks and the characteristics of different comprehensive universities also aided to triangulate the data.

Another way to ensure the validity of the data is to select participants from different departments/disciplines in each case university in order to collect fair, comprehensive, and



balanced information. In my research, among the three case universities one is comprehensive, a second is normal, and the third is also comprehensive but more science-technology oriented. Two experts in Chinese liberal arts education reviewed my interview protocols to identify possible research biases in the questionnaires and to improve reliability. The development of interaction with participants also supported validity. As I began the interview process, most of the participants answered my questions mechanically when I explained to them the challenge and crisis that Chinese higher education faces today to educate citizens with creativity, critical thinking, and social and moral responsibility. However, in regard to the role that liberal arts education can play to meet the challenge and crisis, most of them expressed interest in current thinking concerning liberal arts education in China and more freely shared their thoughts. Lastly, with very different backgrounds, traditions, perspectives and models, the viewpoints of participants contributed to a better analysis and increased validity of the data.

### **Ethical concerns**

In a qualitative research study there are ethical concerns which must be considered, for example, obtaining prior consent from participants (Creswell, 2003). The consent form of the interview is ethically the first step in regard to protecting the privacy and rights of participants. I employed various methods to keep confidential the identity of the participants (except for public information on their websites). First, personal data of participants are not disclosed and are coded with a name according to their titles, for example, professor, senior professor, administrator, senior administrator, officer and senior officer. Second, all information that I received during the research process, for instance, e-mail or mail exchange pertaining to interview transcriptions, was kept confidential. Third, each participant's consent form and interview transcript were kept separately from others. Fourth, since I conducted 30 individual interviews in the same school, I

did not mention to any participant names of others interviewed in the same institution. Fifth, all paper documents and notes taken during interviews and the consent form were destroyed. Sixth, I did not share information from one participant with other participants. I also avoided making moral judgments about the views expressed by participants. I fully understood that my personal values might differ from theirs and that I might not agree with them on various points, but I truly appreciated their point of view and respected their understanding of liberal arts education in a Chinese context.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter described the methodology, theoretical framework, data collection and data analysis procedures that were used to address the research questions in this study. The next chapter will review the Chinese history and development for liberal arts education from different perspectives.

## **Chapter 3 Review of Chinese History and Development Relating to Liberal Arts Education**

### **Introduction**

Numerous books and articles have been dedicated to the study of Chinese higher education, but liberal arts education is the most unknown area. This is due, in part, to the effort and emphasis placed on specialized or professional education since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 (Gan, 2006). Since the early 1990s the reemergence of liberal arts education in China has drawn the attention of Chinese universities, and the Chinese government has realized that this is an important part of comprehensive quality education (a comprehensive quality education is a typical Chinese term for well-rounded education). This chapter provides the academic and historical context for understanding the current development of liberal arts education in Chinese universities. It embarks with a focus on liberal arts education in the historical context and the definition of liberal arts in various contexts. It then introduces the development of Chinese higher education over the past three decades since China began its Open Door policy and reform in its social, economic, political and educational sectors. Special emphasis is placed on the last fifteen years when liberal arts education emerged. The fourth part of this research is a review of the history of Chinese education and the development of liberal arts education. The last section of this chapter is a review of how the Chinese Ministry of Education's policy initiatives have impacted liberal arts education reform at the university level in China.

### **Confucian Tradition**

The emergence of liberal arts education in China in the last decade is a new phenomenon and reality (Li, 1999). Nevertheless, higher learning and liberal arts education has a long history

dating back more than 2500 years to the Confucian era. As Hayhoe (1989) states, “traditional Chinese higher education can be traced back as early as the Eastern Zhou dynasty (771-221 CE). By the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), there was a whole range of higher institutions, headed by the *Guo Zixue* (school for the sons of the emperor) and the *Tai Xue* (often translated university or greatest learning and study) which took major classical texts of the Confucian school as their curricular content” (p. 54). Around the tenth century C.E. in the Tang dynasty, the private academy *Shu Yuan* (academy of classical learning, it is a system of schools) was set up in China. With government support, it was the main institution of the Chinese higher-education system for the next 1,000 years.

The famous *Four Books* (The Great Learning, the Doctrine of Golden Mean, The Analects and The Mencius: the Four Books are collections of sayings and teachings of Confucius and his disciples) defined the purpose of education as the personal advancement of one’s own self (Lee, 2000). The *Five Classics* consist of the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes), the *Shujing* (Classic of History), the *Classic of Poetry*, the *Collection of Rituals*, and the *Chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn Annals). The Five Classics were taught from 136 BC (when Confucianism became the state ideology of China) until the early 20th century. Confucius often emphasized moral advancement and self-cultivation through education and reflection. His teaching is centered on personal enrichment, righteousness, benevolence, empathy, filial piety, loyalty, virtue, universal love, etiquette, faithfulness, self-cultivation, and emulation of moral exemplars. His teachings influenced the entire Chinese education system and still do today.

Fundamentally, Confucius taught that social harmony could be achieved only if humans were free from deprivation and given proper education with a sage king governing the nation. Confucianism emphasizes that the value of education is first of all for individual fulfillment, and

then for the purpose of social development. Although Confucius was interested in building an ideal society under the sage king's leadership, he also believed that personal moral perfection was the foundation of a good society (Zhang, 2006). Personal education was at the very core value of Confucian thinking. The intrinsic value of education for personal development has remained the most essential idea in the Confucian tradition that has influenced and dominated the Chinese educational system until the 1920s. In ancient Chinese culture and Confucianism tradition, to promote all-around development, students were required to master six practical disciplines called the *Six Arts* (liù yì in Chinese): rites, music, archery, chariot racing, calligraphy and mathematics. Men who excelled in these six arts were thought to have reached the state of perfection: the stage of sage or gentlemen. Zhang (2006) observes that the elements of moral education, academic study, physical education and social training are present in the Six Arts that are also considered valuable in the modern world and are the equivalent of the modern idea of the liberal arts education in China. Confucius clearly defined the role of education in the development of society. He developed the most comprehensive curriculum of his time centered on the six arts and a highly innovative and flexible pedagogy which deeply influenced the formation of ancient Chinese culture.

What Confucius emphasized was *You Jiao Wu Lei* and *Yin Cai Shi Jiao* (which means to provide education for all people without social discrimination and to educate people according to their individuality and nature). They are the generally accepted first statements about equality and expansion of educational opportunity in world history. Confucius argued that it should be available to anyone seeking an education. Moreover, Confucian educational ideology emphasized the responsibility of an individual to society and the nation. It is conducive to cultivating global citizens, which can be considered as the core value of contemporary liberal

arts education. Although Confucius and his teachings stress personal moral development and integration, he was also concerned with the social function of education. For instance, in the *Book of Great Learning*, the eight characters of moral and self-cultivation show how personal integration and social order are closely connected:

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy (The Great Learning).

In *The Great Learning*, Confucius also stressed the idea of: study extensively; enquire accurately; reflect carefully; discriminate clearly; practice earnestly. In the Confucian tradition, liberal arts education emphasizes the purpose of education as becoming a “gentleman or sage” and with social, emotional, moral, intellectual and psycho-spiritual integration. The content of education requires broad knowledge.

From very early times, Chinese thinkers and society had accepted that Confucian teachings are the center of education. *The Great Learning* requires an internal transformation, a conscious decision to open to possibilities in historical, cultural, and social conditions. The Confucianism in *Four Books* is a guide to becoming fully human. More than that, it shows systematically how to integrate the perspective of the social life into the ordinary dimension of one’s life, and articulates the purpose and meaning of education. The value of education is to help the person to live a fully human life—a life of *Ren* (humanities) and the realization that

humanities and the achievement of sagehood are the supreme goals of all people through education, based particularly on the curriculum of the six arts which covered a broad range of knowledge. However, the purpose of education is much broader than mastering the techniques of the “six arts.” It is a way to comprehend different knowledge and help to integrate six arts with the highest ideals of humanity (Lee, 2000).

Lee (2000) also observed that the history of the Chinese educational curriculum—mainly Confucian thought which comprised the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics* and were later put into final form by the neo-Confucian scholar, *Zhu Xi* is a history of the canonization of key books with three educational ideals: gentlemen (or sagehood), generalist, and classicist. Classical education was established as the core educational content after the Han dynasty (202 B.C-9 A.D.) until the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.) and remained the predominant curricular content throughout feudal times (Hayhoe, 1989). Although Confucian classics are dominant in curricula and social hierarchy, some thoughts from Daoism and Buddhism were inculturated into the Chinese education system in one way or another. The ideals of Neo-Confucianism from the Song Dynasty (960-1278 A.D.), which encompassed more than traditional Confucianism and included other elements, were canonized and adopted as standard content in the civil service examinations that qualified people to become scholar-officials within the imperial bureaucracy. As Hayhoe and Peterson (2001) state:

Ever since the era of Confucius (551-470 B. C. E), Chinese thinkers have stressed the importance of education as a means of self-cultivation and recruiting “men of talent” to administer the affairs of state. The value that the Chinese culture traditionally placed on education, both for self-enlightenment and the service of the state, was greatly

strengthened...known as Daxue (Studies of the Way) and today as Neo-Confucianism” (p. 2).

In the late Ming dynasty, scholars such as Huang Zong Xi and Gu Yan Wu were among those who were against civil service examination and who sharply criticized it for resulting in retardation of Chinese development. As a result of the Western powers’ invasion of China in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, science and technology courses were added to the curriculum which had comprised the Confucian classics. The last Qing dynasty government began to send some schoolboys to study advanced Western sciences and technology in the United States and subsequently in Japan. By 1875, the Qing government had sent 125 students to the US and about 25000 students were sent to Japan between 1890 and 1911 (Zhang, 2003). In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the abolition of the centuries-old civil examination system transformed the structure of the old education system. Major courses such as arts, sciences, law, commerce, medicine, agriculture, and engineering, were added to the university curriculum in China (Hayhoe, 1989). Liang Qi-Chao, the reformer, educator and scholar in late Qing dynasty, who drafted the first prospectus for Peking University (the former Metropolitan University) in 1898, had emphasized the integration of Western-Eastern knowledge for education and pointed out that educating well-rounded citizens is the foundation of education. In 1902, the government of the Qing Dynasty promulgated the first policy on university education in modern China—the *Regulations of the Metropolitan University* which aims at setting the correct goal for students’ development and training well-rounded citizens (Shu, 1961).

For nearly 2,000 years, Chinese higher education was confined to Confucian classics. Traditionally, it sought to develop well-rounded people with a thorough knowledge of the



Confucian classics and a well-developed skill in composition (Chen, 2011). In Confucian educational tradition, an educated man was not merely an expert in one specific field; he was a person of broad knowledge with moral integrity who could accomplish a wide variety of tasks. Confucian liberal arts education emphasized its purpose as producing gentlemen or sages, and as cultivating social, moral, and intellectual integration. The values that are embodied in the Confucian tradition shaped Chinese education for centuries. Before the eighteenth century, most students in Western universities received an undergraduate education based on the liberal arts, with an emphasis on logic, rhetoric, and grammar rooted in classical texts. Chinese higher education in this period was similarly based on Confucian classics

### **Liberal Arts Education in the Modern Chinese Period**

#### **The Republican era (1911-1949)**

Moving forward to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the abolition of the centuries-old civil examination system brought a transformation to the structure of the old educational system. Major courses such as arts, philosophy, language, sciences, law, commerce, medicine, agriculture, and engineering were added to the university curriculum during the Republican period. Despite extreme hardships, some higher educational institutions, for example, Yenching University, Furen University, St. Johns, Fudan, and the National South Western Associated University, became famous nationwide for having produced many, if not most, of China's most prominent academicians, scholars, scientists and intellectuals with the spirit of liberal arts education. In addition to struggling for physical survival, their staff and students spent the war years (1937-1945) striving to uphold higher education based in large part on the American model, sought to preserve liberal arts education, accountability, university autonomy and faculty

governance (Hayhoe, 1989). Nevertheless, the period saw corruption, lack of economic success and political weakness. Liberal arts education was one of its greatest achievements, even during the difficult time of the Sino-Japanese war.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century was an important landmark for Chinese liberal arts education and various educational experiments developed in China with characteristics of the Western education model (Hayhoe, 2006). During this period, numbers of university students going abroad to study and returning as American and European-trained Chinese scholars brought ideas of a liberal arts education back to China. In 1917, when Cai Yuanpei, the German-educated Chinese scholar, became president of Beijing University, he adopted and implemented Humboldt University's ethos and experience into Beijing University with an aim at curricular reform with Chinese characteristics. As a result, "all students were required to take some courses in the core discipline of philosophy" (Hayhoe, 1989, p. 14). The new curricula in Beijing University led by Cai Yuan-pei were designed to train and develop students with comprehensive knowledge in arts, sciences, humanities, morality, aesthetic and other disciplines in order to educate a student to have a well-balanced personality and character. Inspired by the German model of academic freedom, Cai recruited an intellectually diverse faculty that included Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, Jiang Mengling, Ma Yinchu and Lu Xun; some of them were former students of John Dewey at Columbia University and had already contributed significantly to liberal arts education in China. Influenced by Dewey, Cai was also strongly committed to foundational democratic principles and understood democracy as a way of life, as well as a system of government. Furthermore, Cai clearly stated that the purpose of education is to enhance a student's ability to develop the intellect, and to perfect personal traits that contribute to the culture of humankind (Zhang, 2000).

As a liberal and enlightened educator, Cai's new ideas of education had a large impact on Chinese educational development and social movement by promoting five types of education: military/citizenship, utilitarian, moral, a world view, and aesthetic education. Together, the five modes of learning transferred the Western ideal of a liberal arts education to China. For Cai, the completion of these five types of education would depend on the independence of education. As a critic of traditional education and as an advocate for Western education, he fused China's cultural and educational heritage with the dynamics of modern Western thought. Cai described traditional education as vulgar, disordered, superficial, fearful, discouraging and deceptive (Zhang, 2000) and concluded that the existing educational system was no longer relevant nor adequate to educate and inspire the Chinese mind. His emphasis on the importance of scientific knowledge and democratic movement was influential in transforming and reshaping a new curriculum. Moreover, his promotion of aesthetic education to replace the function of religion made schools give an important place to teaching artistic subjects and training students in general knowledge. His liberal education theory, influenced and inspired by the German tradition of education, guided Chinese universities, and intellectuals, to explore in depth the purpose of education in contemporary Chinese society. Cai advocated the equal importance of five ways of life —Virtue, Wisdom, Health, Collective, and Aesthetics— core values that are still taught in schools today in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau and more and more being adopted by the Chinese educational system.

The development of modern Chinese universities and the idea of liberal arts education are also closely related to a Chinese Jesuit, scholar and educator, Ma Xiangbo. His vision for Chinese-Western cultural and intellectual cooperation and education has been largely ignored (Hayhoe, 1996). As a principal of St. Ignatius high school, one of the earliest Western-style

secondary schools in Shanghai, Ma advocated a new curriculum that “included a strong emphasis on Chinese classical literature and history as the basis to be supplemented by advanced studies in Western mathematics, languages, and philosophy, following Jesuit patterns” (Hayhoe, 1996, p. 1). In 1903, Ma Xiangbo founded l'Universite Aurore which offered a curriculum that focused on basic sciences and Western classical literature. His vision enabled Chinese youth to gain a fundamental understanding of Western thought, in both the natural sciences and in literary and humanities studies, in order to create context “for a critical and self-reflective approach to nation building” (Hayhoe, 1996). According to Lu (1996), Ma set three essential policies for Aurore: “to place a priority on science; to emphasize liberal arts; and to avoid any religious dispute” (p. 160). In 1905, due to some conflicts and misunderstanding between Ma and the French Jesuits, Ma left Aurore and founded Fudan University to continue the vision and ideal of Aurore University for educating Chinese youth with comprehensive and profound Chinese and European knowledge in the tradition of liberal arts education.

According to Hayhoe (1996), “neither of these two institutions fulfilled Ma’s ideal of a university that would educate Chinese youth in the fundamentals of both Chinese and Western knowledge, and bring together the most valuable aspects of both traditions” (p. 4). With his vision to educate youth in a holistic way, Ma and his colleague Ying Lianzhi—a well-known scholar in China—petitioned Pope Pius X in 1912 to establish a Catholic university in China that would serve as a national model for introducing Western science and for revitalizing Chinese culture. In 1925, with the cooperation of American Benedictines, Furen Catholic university was founded in Beijing and its early curriculum, designed by Ma, was divided into five areas: theology and philosophy, Chinese and foreign languages, natural sciences, sociology and history, and mining and architecture.

Ma's vision of a modern Catholic university for China and his concern for holistic education for youth placed basic knowledge in philosophy, humanities, religion, and the sciences at the center of the curriculum and constantly emphasized integration of the Western and the Eastern traditions. As a Jesuit well-trained in theology, philosophy, humanities, Western classics and as a fine scholar in Chinese literary history, Ma's vision of education was to improve people's qualifications and to cultivate useful talents (Lu, 1996). Unlike his student Cai Yuanpei who advocated replacing religion with aesthetics, Ma strongly believed that religion "was central to the individual's life, to the order of a society, to the prosperity of culture and to the formation of morality" (Lu, 1996, p. 196). His commitment to dialogue in the Chinese-Western tradition through education not only made a great contribution to his time, but can also serve as a reference and insight for contemporary liberal arts education in China.

In looking at the Nationalist period, the liberal arts model that emerged in China was built on China's scholarly traditions, and while influenced by the American model, Wang and Li (2001) observed that the pressures for rapid economic development and industrialization after years of war and strife and revolution made for a situation where the highly specialized Soviet model seemed like the only way to move forward effectively, thereby to build a socialist economy quickly; in that situation, a general or liberal education became totally neglected. Hence, it was not China's ideal choice but a result of the sense of pressure and urgency in difficult times (Hayhoe, 2010, personal communication).

### **The New China era (1949-1978)**

At the beginning of the new China in 1949, Mao Zedong's and the Chinese Communist Party's primary goal was the economic development, reconstruction and modernization of China

corresponding to the Soviet Union's model. Influenced by its ideology, the CCP also regarded education as a means to enhance socialist ideas in Chinese society. The state tightly controlled educational institutions at many different levels and applied a centralized policy in the educational area. Many universities with broad curricula were reorganized into single-disciplinary universities, such as foreign language institutes, medical institutes, railway institutes, and so on. According to Ouyang (2004), the transition period of higher education from 1949 to 1976 was characterized by two goals: "First, the higher educational system should have the right political vision; it should belong to the new government led by the Chinese Communist Party. Second, it should directly serve the needs of the rapid economic development taking place in the new country" (p. 141). Furthermore, Hayhoe (1989) states that "Mao Ze-dong directed in 1957 that...education must serve a proletarian politic and be combined with productive labor" (p. 72). This reflects the revolutionary spirit and influence of that particular time.

Post-revolution higher education in China was specialized and did not have any kind of liberal component. All tertiary institutions were to be run by the central government with a focus on technical or vocational education to educate students who could achieve academic excellence along with socialist political ideas. However, the Soviet model was ultimately unsuccessful and Chinese higher education encountered many obstacles in its development (Hayhoe, 1996). During this period, Chinese universities were merged or re-organized. According to Chen (2011), there were two results of the 1950s reconstruction in China. First, while the specialized institutes increased, the total number of comprehensive universities was reduced from 49 to 21. Engineering institutes increased from 14 to 33, and agriculture and forestry colleges increased from 11 to 25. Corresponding departments across the universities and colleges were also restructured. Second, the main goal of higher education was to focus on specialization. For

example, majors—or intensive training in particular subjects to prepare students for specialized professions—were established according to the needs of the national economic development. Since the newly founded Chinese government lacked experience and manpower to manage educational models, it depended on assistance from the Soviet Union. During the 1950s, the Russians provided personnel, financial aid, and technical support to the new China and the CCP. By 1952, the Chinese higher education system duplicated the Soviet model of administration, teaching methods, textbooks, and classroom design of higher education institutions and aimed at training more technical and vocational experts to attain academic excellence with socialist political ideas. Within a centralized educational system and structure, the government played a dominant role and was responsible for policy making, school planning, administration, personnel assignment, curricula arrangement, textbooks, funding and legislation. During this period, 861 educational and technical experts from the Soviet Union were sent to China to help the government build the Chinese educational system along the lines of the Soviet model (Chen, 2003; Turner & Acker, 2002).

Although the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education constantly gave priority to training specialized personnel in industry and to the development and strengthening of comprehensive universities, there was no significant development in higher education from 1956 to 1976. During these two decades, China experienced two disastrous periods of political turmoil: the Great Leap Forward Movement (1958-1962) that caused one of the largest famines in world history and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) that destroyed the Chinese higher educational system, as well as Confucian educational values, and the academic life of teachers and students. This led to a decade of deterioration in China's economic, social and educational development and left an entire generation uneducated. It was the greatest disaster for the Chinese educational

system. Wang (2001) states that the pressures for rapid economic development and industrialization after years of war, strife and revolution made for a situation wherein the highly specialized Soviet model was a better choice, and in that situation general or liberal arts education became totally neglected. Thus, specialized institutes and specialized training became a key feature of Chinese higher education, reflecting the demands of the Chinese state in an era of rapid industrialization. The separation of liberal arts from sciences and engineering contributed to the narrowing of fields of study and was characterized by intense specialization during this era.

### **The Opening-door era (1978-present)**

When Deng Xiao-ping was restored to power in 1977, he and the CCP leadership set China on an economic-oriented path to modernize China through restoration of the educational system and economic reforms (Hayhoe, 1996; Zhou, 1995). With the open-door policy, the Chinese government and the CCP not only entered a new stage of economic development but also focused on educational system change and reform. In 1977, the National College Entrance Exam was restored. More than 5 million students took the exam and about 270,000 were admitted to higher education (China News, 2010). Indeed, the 1980s was a watershed time in China's higher education reform, transformation, and development. The transformation from a planned economy (learned and duplicated from the former Soviet Union) to a market economy with socialist characteristics beginning in the 1980s has profoundly changed all sectors of Chinese society. It especially accelerated the reconstruction of higher education institutions. As part of China's economic modernization development, the government placed great emphasis on natural sciences and technology, especially at the tertiary level. At the secondary level, more and



more students streamed into sciences and mathematics disciplines and humanities became less attractive and less desirable subjects to study. Humanities departments in colleges and universities then and now are less well funded from the State (Turner & Acker, 2002).

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping affirmed the importance of education in transforming China into a powerful modern socialist country and urged that education be oriented to face the future, the world, and modernization. In 1979, the Ministry of Education was given the role and power to nationally regulate standard teaching plans, teaching outlines, and textbooks (Hayhoe, 1989). In 1985, the Chinese government promulgated the “Decision on the Reform of the Educational System” which opened up a whole-scale reform across the country. According to Hayhoe (1989), this new decision consists of two major directions of higher educational institutions. First, it reflects the Soviet model: training of advanced specialized manpower, developing science, technology, and culture. This was actually, however, a move away from the Soviet model by allowing universities much more autonomy over their curriculum. The Soviet model had been put in place in 1952, and then challenged in 1958 by the Great Leap Forward and in 1966 by the Cultural Revolution. Second, the Decision on the Reform in 1985 stresses the important role of research and indicates potential possibilities for curricular reform. This decision also gives higher educational institutions some power to reorient the goal of various disciplines and reform teaching plans and programs. However, unlike the Chinese scholarly tradition or those curricula prior to 1949, the curriculum reform in the 1980s did not cover greater interdisciplinary studies nor focus on comprehensive quality education. Rather, these curricula emphasized the natural and applied sciences and the liberal arts, sciences and engineering was not successful. Nevertheless, electives and political education courses were more flexibly modified; students were encouraged to study humanities in a critical and creative way on issues concerning a

socioeconomic system; and young graduates were expected to be creative, thinking people (Hayhoe, 1989, 2006).

Higher education has profoundly changed in the past three decades in the era of globalization and internationalization. Globalization has accelerated change not only in the area of economic development and exchange, but also has made a great impact on other aspects of life—for example, higher education (Altbach, 1997, 2007). With the rapid global growth of population and the tremendous demand caused by continuing economic development, labor force and massification of higher education has become a necessary supplement for increasingly national and international competence. In the last three decades, higher education in China has progressed greatly and developed into a multi-mission system (Hao, 2000). The role and purpose of Chinese higher education is a response to meet the need of making China into a knowledge-based economy society, and as a way to implement the national development strategy of making China strong and prosperous through science, technology and education. With this vision and goal in mind, the Chinese higher educational system has been rapidly transformed through policy reform, privatization of colleges and universities, massification, internationalization and globalization (Zhao & Guo, 2002). At the beginning of the economic reform in the early 1980's, there were approximately 700 higher educational institutions in China with a total student enrollment of one million (Ministry of Education, 1984). Since the 1990's, China's higher educational system has been undergoing a long process of restructuring in order to advance China through science and technology. In 1999, the Chinese government launched a dramatic expansion of its higher educational system and attempted to build a few world class universities. By the end of 2010, the total student population in Chinese colleges/universities was 27 million (Ministry of Education, 2010). It is the largest in the world and accounts for a gross enrollment

ratio of 23 percent of the 18-22 year old age group (Ministry of Education, 2010). The goal of higher education is to make China prosperous through science and technology and become a powerful nation in respect to education.

Altbach (2006) observes that two major social forces have stimulated the growth of higher education globally. First, the widespread movement in a public higher educational system; and second, the financial trend in higher education. Internationalization and globalization are two of the strongest factors pushing the global development in economics, education, culture, democracy, and other social sectors. In the past two decades, especially internationalization and globalization in the field of higher education have become a new force that has energized universities to seek more opportunities for global collaboration and for student and faculty development. International exchange programs, study of pedagogy, and different curricula have begun in universities nationwide. Horn et al, (2007) note that internationalization and globalization can be conceptualized at several levels, including the world, region, nation, state, community, the organization and the individual. China's context generally follows this world trend.

While new development and reform in the Chinese higher educational system have brought great progress in expansion of access and massification, they have also caused a decline in the comprehensive quality education of students (Yang, 2009). In the context of market economy and building world-class universities, many leading Chinese colleges and universities became more utilitarian-oriented and emphasized research products, university ranks, infrastructure construction and advanced laboratories. However, they did not engage very well in comprehensive quality education for students, which remains a significant challenge for Chinese society and China's higher educational system in the past two decades. Although much work has

been done in developing higher education in China, the current higher educational system as a whole is still unable to meet the demands resulting from social and economic progress, particularly to educate well-rounded citizens. The Chinese government and universities realized that the highly specialized undergraduate education model faced serious challenges and needed to be reformed.

Generally, the Chinese higher educational system in the 1990's underwent several reforms: decentralization (this is manifested by encouraging the establishment of private higher educational institutions by social sectors, and increasing the autonomy and decision-making power by the local government or by the university), merging of universities, expansion, consolidation, internationalization, globalization, and building world-class universities through project 211 and project 985. As Zhong (2008) stated, the general goal of the two projects is

To upgrade the level of higher education as a component of the strategy for advancing China. The focus of the projects is on the preparation of creative talents and the key measurement is to enhance faculty development. In the past 25 years, 580,000 Chinese studied abroad, and 150,000 have returned. World class universities must be composed of strong faculties (p. 8).

These reforms had enormous impact on Chinese higher education. For example, the enrollment of students in colleges/universities increased from 10 to 27 million within the past decade; the central and local governments provided billions RMB (the local currency) to project 211 and project 985 universities for research and development. The Chinese government aimed to spend 4 percent of its GDP on education (Ministry of Education, 2010). Pedagogy became more diversified and Chinese colleges/universities more involved with international academic communities. In addition, Chinese colleges/universities were encouraged to increase revenues

through university-industry cooperation—for example, through intellectual-property licensing and start-ups/spin-offs. In 2005 more than two-thirds of the patent applications in China belonged to universities (Altbach, 2009).

The Chinese higher educational system recognized the importance of shifting from the Soviet model of specialized education to one of comprehensive education and educating graduates to be creative and competitive in a globalized world. However, pressure from exam-oriented education and transmission teaching methods (that is, the teachers lecture for the entire period without any question and answer dialogue with students) impeded faculty and university administrators from embracing liberal arts education whole-heartedly. Another concern is the pressure on faculty to do more research and produce publications as these impact income, ranking and position (Gan, 2006). Thus, many teachers are not interested in teaching but in research and publication. Relatively narrow studies in professions still dominate the curricula of most Chinese colleges and universities.

A rapid expansion of higher education enrollment and lack of teachers dedicated to teaching resulted in a decline of quality in teaching and research (Yang, 2009). Since a decade ago, academic corruption has seriously threatened China's universities in teaching, research and service to society. In China, the scope of corruption reaches into almost all aspects of higher education: for example, misuse of research grants, abuse of power, bribing for publication in academic journals, lack of academic honesty, and an absence of meticulous scholarship. Furthermore, most Chinese students view education primarily as a means of securing good jobs, high salary, and mobility. The pursuit of humanistic values and personal and academic integrity has been eroded by utilitarianism and money-oriented commercialism.

Advancing China to the world-class stage through science and technology has become a central concern of the Chinese government and a goal that the entire nation is eager to achieve. China's higher education policy is being driven by market-led forces, and higher education institutions are being changed from academic-oriented institutions into market-oriented enterprises. The main emphasis is on professional training rather than on values, and with higher rewards for academic research and publications than for teaching (Yang, 2012). Many universities are rushing to embrace globalization and internationalization in order to be in line with the world. As a result, liberal arts education in universities is not recognized as important. The lack of institutional autonomy, the low regard for humanism, and the preponderance of materialism and utilitarianism in educational goals are great obstacles to appropriate development of contemporary Chinese higher education (Chang, 2010).

Still, Chinese policy makers, educators, and university administrators are aware of the questions that challenge contemporary Chinese universities: What type of citizen does Chinese higher education want to cultivate? How does the Chinese system educate citizens of integrity with critical thinking? There are those who believe that the role of Chinese colleges and universities is not only to train professionals or to provide human capital for market needs, but also to educate responsible citizens with critical thinking and moral integrity who are prepared to become committed, global citizens. Ironically, although contemporary Chinese society and its people are now more advanced in science, technology, and economic development, the education of citizens with critical thinking, creativity and innovation still remains a great challenge. The revival of interest in liberal arts education in the mid-1990's in China has shown that the government and universities realized the importance of educating citizens with critical thinking

skills and that current curricula, too much focused on professional training, cannot help all students to meet global needs and challenges.

### **Review of Chinese Policies Regarding Liberal Arts Education**

This section provides a review of China's policies of curricular reform in colleges and universities in general, and the curriculum in liberal arts education in particular, to present a context to understand better the perspectives of the policy transformation in the last three decades. The Chinese Communist Party adopted the Soviet Union model after 1949 to build up a new higher educational system. Universities with liberal arts, science, engineering, agriculture, political science, law and medicine were eliminated and reorganized or transformed into specialized colleges. The Chinese Communist higher education policy enhanced vocational higher education, cutting the comprehensive universities into specialized institutions. All of these policies, as Sun (2005) stated, had a big impact in destroying any idea about liberal arts education. By 1952, the Chinese higher educational system duplicated the Soviet model of administration, teaching methods, textbooks, and classroom design of higher educational institutions and aimed at training more technical and vocational experts. In general, lopsidedness in major fields of study, the overspecialization of undergraduates, and the narrow scope of course offerings and the outmoded methods of instructions were major problems. Moreover, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government repeatedly emphasized that education should serve proletarian politics and the socialist new China. Under China's special circumstances, Hayhoe (1989) states "political authority was explicitly integrated with academic authority...the main unit of curricular knowledge was the specialization" (p. 34). Higher education has been playing a vital role in China's economic success and development. The curriculum development in China since 1949 has been the central control of a nationally unified

teaching syllabus. The main mechanisms for this control are the teaching syllabi and teaching programs.

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping, the architect of China's open door and economic reform, affirmed the importance of education in transforming China into a powerful modern socialist country and urged that education be oriented to face the future, the world, and modernization. In 1979, the Ministry of Education was given the role and power to regulate nationally standard teaching plans, teaching outlines, and text books (Hayhoe, 1989). In 1985, the Chinese government promulgated the "Decision on the Reform of the Education System" which opened a whole scale of reform across the country. The 1985 *Decision* recognized that curriculum reform is central to the restructuring of the educational system. Without a radical change in curriculum, the demands for more effective education and training for a high level labor force would not be possible. The direction of the 1985 *Decision* emphasized the overall aims of improving high quality education and producing more qualified skilled people for building a modernized socialist China. It states that all these people

Should be persons of moral integrity with lofty ideals, well-educated and disciplined, have an arduous love for the socialist motherland and the socialist cause, and work with dedication for the prosperity of the country and the people. They should constantly pursue new knowledge and cultivate the scientific spirit of seeking truth from facts, thinking independently and daring to make innovation (CPC, 1985, p. 2).

The 1985 Decision also recognized that:

Education in our country is divorced from the needs of economic and social growth and lags behind scientific and cultural development of the present world...many course



textbooks are outdated, teaching methods are stereotyped and practical activities are ignored; the specialties now offered cover a very limited range of academic subjects (we must) reform any guidelines, course content and teaching materials that are at odds with socialist modernization (CPC, 1985, p. 4).

Through government-readjusted policies, institutional efforts and market regulation, those problems began to be solved little by little. Mass higher education which rapidly developed in the past few decades became a global phenomenon and is now a key reality of the 21st century (Altbach, 2006). Currently, many countries have reformed their academic systems to make education available to a growing number of age groups. In the last decade, as the economy in China developed rapidly, an increasing demand for higher education was felt. Moreover, compared to the large population of this age group, the access to higher educational institutions is still considered low and admission of high school graduates to higher educational institutions is still extremely competitive. Within these special circumstances, the test-oriented education model in high schools across China has been a leading factor that devalued the importance of comprehensive quality education. As I discussed above, under the national strategy of building a powerful nation of higher education, particularly through its 985 and 211 projects, China's higher education system is becoming more involved with infrastructure construction, research, and ranking—and with less emphasis on teaching. China's higher educational policy is more and more being driven by market-related forces and needs.

The Chinese government and its higher educational system often overemphasize colleges and universities as instruments for economic development and success (Gan, 2006). Those who study natural or applied sciences do not know how to communicate with others and often lack social responsibility. Those who studied humanities do not know how to think creatively and

critically. Many Chinese educators pointed out that while specification in an educational program has trained special talents for national construction and development, the division of science and humanity education has constrained a whole person development and must be reformed (Liu, 2003). Thus, providing and maintaining comprehensive quality education has become a significant challenge for Chinese policy makers, Chinese colleges and universities, and China's entire higher educational system. Realizing the serious teaching problems of the Chinese higher educational system for quality education, the Ministry of Education launched the "Reform Plan of Teaching Contents and Curriculum of Higher Education Facing the 21st Century" in 1994. This action formally ratified the establishment of 211 projects and nearly a thousand sub-projects with tens of thousands of teachers participating. This plan covers all areas of teaching—teaching ideology, teaching content, curriculum structure and teaching methodology (MoE, 2010). An advisory group for the reform of teaching content and curriculum, consisting of domestic experts from all disciplines, has been set up to implement the reform.

In 1995, the MoE aimed to strengthen the cultural education of university students and began its cultural quality education in 52 colleges and universities across the nation as a pilot program to improve quality education that provides courses in the humanities, history, philosophy, fine arts and sciences with broader scope. With the goal of enhancing the cultural quality of university students, moral integration, cultural identity, professional quality, physical and psychological quality were combined together with an aim to educate well-rounded citizens. These higher educational institutions utilize various measures in this pilot program, such as identifying and enhancing compulsory reading programs, strengthening classroom teaching, offering lectures and seminars, and organizing all kinds of cultural activities, to promote the development of comprehensive quality education. Some colleges and universities identified

clearly the goals, basic requirements and assessment standards of the pilot program, but others had to adjust teaching plans in the light of the new requirements of MoE (MoE, 2010).

In October 1995, the Ministry of Education in China held the first national conference on cultural quality education in Chinese colleges and universities in Huazhong Technology and Science University in Wuhan. This unprecedented conference laid a foundation for the initiation of general education in China (Li, 2006; Wang, 2006). According to the Ministry of Education, the cultural quality education for Chinese university students can be achieved in multiple forms and methods, for example, core and fundamental courses, elective courses, workshops, and extracurricular activity. It also sought to combine professional courses with cultural quality education, and strengthen campus cultural development in the humanities with particular emphasis on traditional and classical education to improve well-rounded quality in science and humanities.

After the three year pilot program, the central Chinese government and the MoE in 1998 promulgated the “Opinions on Enhancing Undergraduates’ Cultural Quality Education” which set up a directory committee for cultural education and ratified 32 “Centers for the Enhancement of Cultural Education of University Students” in 1999 to promote the reform and remodel of the undergraduate system. A year later, the MoE promulgated another policy emphasizing that cultural quality education is the foundation for implementing the national development of making China prosperous through science and education. Since then, the concept of “general education” has undertaken a process in many higher educational institutions on Mainland China. On October 29, 1998, the Chinese National People’s Congress (the legislature) passed the “Higher Education Law of People's Republic of China”, which was implemented on January 1, 1999.

This is the first higher educational law in Chinese history which stated the basic goal of a general education:

- (1) undergraduate education should enable students to master systematically the basic theory and basic knowledge necessary for the respective discipline and specialty, master the basic skills, techniques and related know-how necessary for the respective specialty and acquire initial capability for the practical work and research work of the respective specialty;
- (2) master's post graduate education should enable students to become proficient in the basic theory of the respective discipline, systematic specialty knowledge, acquire corresponding skills, techniques and related know-how, and acquire capabilities for the practical work and scientific research work of the respective specialty. Doctoral post graduate education should enable students to master basic theory, systematic and in-depth specialty knowledge and corresponding skills and techniques, and acquire capabilities for independent creative scientific research work and practical work of the respective discipline (MoE, Chinese Higher Education Law, 1999).

In addition to these policies from the MoE and the central Chinese government on liberal arts education, some top research universities at the national level since the 1990s —such as Peking University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, Beijing Normal University, Nanjing University, Wuhan University, Zhongshan University—have clearly set the goal of undergraduate programs to meet the needs of general education and to fill the gaps in general education missed since a few decades ago. General education has been carried out and enforced in these key and comprehensive institutions whose bases of human culture and social sciences

are priorities of their teaching and research through university policymaking. For example, Peking University in 1989 remodeled its teaching plan to emphasize fundamental knowledge and basic course programs rather than vocational training or specialized programs. The university required students in freshmen and sophomore years to take fundamental or core courses before choosing their major in the junior year. Based on this directive, Peking University revised its teaching plan with an aim to educating a student's comprehensive capacity and ability. In 2001 the university launched an innovative teaching plan for the purpose of general education by establishing the Yuanpei pilot program. The program was designed to introduce general education to its students. A few years later, the Yuanpei pilot program made great progress in promoting this special teaching method for general education and was established as a college for providing university-wide general education, which was incorporated into the undergraduate students' formal curriculum. Other research universities also included general education programs into their undergraduate curricula.

Historically, Shanghai municipal government (the place of the three purposive sampling study universities) has always made education its priority for social and economic development and progress. In order to implement the 1985 "Decision on Reform of the Educational Structure" as promulgated by the central government, Shanghai reformed its education policy and since 1986 has emphasized the research-based strategy and educational development was viewed as an important research program in its "Seventh Five-Year plan" (1986-1990). In 1993, the Shanghai municipal government outlined its educational blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as "a first-class lifelong educational system in Asia with excellent structure and a focus on people's all-rounded development" (Leading Group of the Project on Shanghai into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 1995, p. 447). Overall, Shanghai aims to build a modernized education system that links liberal arts (general)

education, professional education and adult education. In 2001, the Shanghai municipal government stated that its educational goal was to build an advanced, modernized, and well-organized sustainable educational system that is world-class oriented and eventually build Shanghai into a learning city (the Department of Education, Shanghai municipal government, 2000).

Since then, Shanghai municipal government reorganized its educational administrative system and reformed the curriculum, textbooks and extracurricular activities to implement cultural quality education. To better prepare students to meet the global challenge and whole-person development, Shanghai also was one of the first few cities to reform the national college entrance examination. With this new national college examination system, students only take three subjects (it was six subjects in the old model) and can take twice a year (either spring or autumn). Although the Shanghai municipal government did not issue any document or policy on liberal arts education, the educational reform in Shanghai has demonstrated that its goal is to educate well-rounded individuals.

At the provincial level, some local, non-research universities also began to reform their curriculum, teaching plan and system to promote general (liberal arts) education. However, many provincial-level colleges and universities did not fully comprehend the essence of general education, and simply added a few courses in humanities or interdisciplinary studies, or provided more elective courses in science, technology or arts, or adapted the US model credit system. Indeed, these teaching innovations and policies did not transform the view of general education. Students and teachers still focused on the sciences, engineering, or professional education, with general education as still a far off goal (Li, 2006). Although the local institutions would like to implement general education in their undergraduate curriculum, there is often no faculty, staff or

facility to carry out general education. Once a liberal arts education curriculum is established in those local higher educational institutions, administrators face the challenge of finding teaching personnel. Proper teaching is a key factor in any liberal arts education program (Becker, 2003). Furthermore, many students are not really interested in a liberal arts education since it is not directly beneficial for their career or job search (Qin, 2009). For some institutions, the administrators of those institutions have no interest or awareness in promoting general education in their curriculum. Therefore, awareness of the need for a general education must be enhanced and promoted.

The transformation and development of Chinese policies with respect to liberal arts education in the past two decades, especially in the past ten years, indicate that a liberal arts education has a special role in educating students to be global citizens with a comprehensive view, and is receiving more attention from the Chinese government, the Chinese higher educational institutions, and Chinese society. But even though the Chinese government and universities at different levels have made great efforts to promote liberal arts education, its implementation through policy reform, revision of teaching plan and curriculum, and faculty participation will continue to remain challenging. Nevertheless, policy reform is a new beginning and a new direction as it has established a solid foundation for the unique role and characteristics of liberal arts education in the context of building a powerful nation of higher education in China (Li, 2006).

### **Liberal Studies Developed by Major Chinese Higher Educational Institutions**

In addition to extensive studies and research by several Chinese scholars on liberal arts education, Chinese colleges and universities realized the importance of an integrated graduate achieved through a liberal education, particularly through curriculum reform and a service

learning program that utilizes the American type of liberal arts education. A few of China's top universities have begun experimenting with varied aspects of liberal arts. However, many Chinese colleges and universities interpret and apply liberal arts education differently. Some view the liberal arts curriculum as the cultural quality education courses, particularly in regard to humanities courses; others include common selection classes as the liberal arts course; yet others added all courses that are not the major program to assume the role of the liberal arts curriculum (Gan, 2006, 2012). Despite these differences, liberal arts education reform implies a crucial transformation of the core value and goal of Chinese higher education, and transformation of the structure of the traditional Chinese higher educational curriculum that has been dominant in the last few decades (Fudan University, 2008). Overall, Chinese colleges and universities realize that their role is not only to train professionals or to provide laborers for market, but to form responsible and well-rounded adults with critical thinking, intelligence, moral integrity, spiritual balance and who are committed global citizens just as in college and universities in Hongkong, Taiwan and in the United States. Peking University's Yuanpei College was established to be a world-class institution and to educate more students with comprehensive quality in the 21st century. It is one of the pioneers that began a liberal arts curriculum on the basis of a pilot program since 2001 and was established as a college in 2007.

The Yuanpei College is named after a former president of Peking University, Cai Yuanpei, an outstanding scientist, reformer, and educator who assumed the presidency in 1917. The Yuanpei undertaking is Peking University's top undergraduate program that selects the crème-de-la-crème out of the eight million graduating senior high school students in China (Beijing University, 2009). Students in this school are allowed to pursue a liberal arts curriculum during the first two years before declaring their major. The school is guided by four major



concerns: strengthen foundation, reduce the boundary of specialty, foster individualize education and triage training. There are four components: liberal arts curriculum for all freshmen, free selection of courses and a major, flexibility of credit system, and a mentor system.

Fudan College in Shanghai is another example of how liberal arts education is available in some prominent universities. Shanghai's Fudan University has introduced an Oxbridge style residential college structure and, in a significant break with tradition, allows students to put off deciding their major until their second year. In 2005 Fudan University carried out a profound reform in its undergraduate program aimed at quality higher education and intended to train more creative talents for the country and for the world. The reform began with the construction of the liberal arts college at Fudan University. The university requires all freshmen to enroll in Fudan College. All first-year students live in small residential colleges modeled after Yale's undergraduate program. A curriculum of general education in arts and sciences has been implemented. By encompassing a comprehensive range of disciplines, a general education enables students to pursue education in diverse fields. In this way, Fudan provides more options for the students and, thus, along with minor programs and extracurricular academic activities, the new curriculum contributes greatly to the intellectual development of undergraduate students (Fudan College, 2010). Beginning with the academic year of 2012, Fudan University requires all undergraduates to reside at Fudan College's residential halls for four years (China Educational News, 2012).

Guangzhou's Sun Yat-sen University has gone further by setting up a separate liberal arts college in which a test group of 30 top students study courses based on the Chinese classics, Greek, Latin, science and economics. With the motto, "study extensively, enquire accurately, reflect carefully, discriminate clearly, practice earnestly" words stated in 1924 by Sun Yat-sen,

the founder of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-Sen (Zhongshan) University in 2009 launched a series of reforms in liberal arts education, including a new requirement that all freshmen must follow the new liberal arts curriculum. Sun Yat-Sen University also launched Boya College, a liberal arts institution, as an attempt to implement the so-called elite education by selecting 30 students from the freshmen class. In these new liberal arts curricula there are four areas of study: (a) Chinese Civilization; (b) Global Perspectives; (c) Technology, Economy and Society; (d) Humanities and Classical Reading. Through the liberal arts curricula, Zhongshan University aims to cultivate high-quality and well-rounded citizens (Zhongshan University, 2009).

The role of a liberal arts education is essential to the advancement of Chinese culture, international competition, social development and whole person education. According to Gan Yang, the founding dean of Boya College, liberal arts education in universities can be an underlying platform for the education of well-rounded citizens and provide a solid foundation for the development of Chinese society with global perspectives. The curricula for Boya College completely abandon the “Major or Concentration.” The principal courses for the first semester include *Shi Jing* (Book of Songs), ancient Greek Epic and Latin, which are consistent with philosophy and the humanities. Gan Yang, who has the leading role for the experiment, said that Boya aims at cultivating great scholars but not individuals aspiring to make a large fortune. It will create socially engaged thinkers rather than instant billionaires (Gan, 2009). But it has sparked criticism for promoting elitism. Many educators and even mass media warned that such programs could lead to intellectual discrimination (China Daily, 2009). Others argue that China should, instead, focus resources on advanced vocational education to provide the technical skills to meet the demand of the social market (Yu, 2009).

Kwok (2010), the executive vice president of United International College in the southern city of Zhuhai, a cooperative with liberal-arts-based Hong Kong Baptist University, states that in the 21st century Chinese society needs to be much more flexible, receptive, and sensitive. Liberal education can match the human-resources needs of China and of the multinational corporations coming in, which need people with wider horizons. It is an economic logic that the Chinese bureaucracy might actually buy” (Hvistendahl, 2010, p. 2). Today, liberal arts education is a global issue and each country and institution incorporates it differently into the educational system. Although liberal arts education is becoming more and more important in contemporary Chinese higher education, the biggest issue is still how liberal arts education can fit into the Chinese social, political and cultural environment with its focus on the essential elements, such as broadness of study, different skills like communication skills, critical thinking skills and problem solving skills, innovation, civic value, spiritual integration, and physical and mental health.

## **Conclusion**

Liberal arts education has long been associated with the classical Chinese traditions since the Confucius era and has made a significant impact on Chinese society and the history of education in China (Huang, 2006; Zhang, 2006). It also originated in the Greek and Roman cultures, in education and philosophy, and was well developed in the Oxford/Cambridge tradition. Some Chinese scholars and intellectuals performed studies and research on liberal arts education (or general education) in China since the early 1990s. The importance of a liberal arts education and its contribution to China’s higher education development and educating for comprehensive and high quality citizens are documented. As China continues to move forward in economic development, quality education is both a serious problem and a challenge. While the

majority of research studies on China's emergence of liberal arts education in the last two decades focused on theoretical analysis on curricula and teaching plan reform, policy making, cultural quality education and its contribution to modernize China and to promote economic development, only a few studies have examined the goal of a liberal arts education to educate well-rounded persons through education. We, therefore, are left with the question: What type of citizen does Chinese higher education want to graduate? Moreover, even fewer studies examined the influence of social, cultural, and spiritual phenomena and its relation to a successful liberal arts education. Since the success of the Deng Xiaoping reforms and China's rapid economic prosperity, it has been possible to rethink the higher curriculum and acknowledge that general education or liberal arts education has come so quickly to the fore - it is a revival of China's own traditions, as well as influence from the West.

My analysis research points out that those policies from the central government are essential factors that changed the liberal arts education curriculum and education reform in China. Still, how colleges and universities and their faculty members apply the policy to their programs remains a challenge in as much as the liberal arts education curriculum is considered as dull and useful only for credits (Tang & Yu, 2008). Education is an essential element of social development in every nation, region, or society and is an important factor for individual success. But more importantly, it prepares and equips students with knowledge and skills that are needed in order to participate effectively and responsibly as well-rounded members of society with values and morality that is for the good society. As China has moved to a market economy and capitalist development, Chinese society and the higher educational system experienced rapid change and reform in the past two decades. While China still considers economic development as its priority, higher educational institutions at different levels were influenced by economic

reform policies and were regarded as new forces to accelerate socio-economic development. However, much evidence shows that specialized or professional educational programs in the context of an economic market have not provided the well-rounded and responsible citizens that contemporary China needs (Guo, 2009), and this has been realized by the Chinese government and colleges and universities.

This chapter has reviewed the Chinese history and development of liberal arts education from different perspectives. While higher education is being used as a strategy to increase the country's economic growth and development, it must be taken into account that education is not only focused on students' competency for a globalized world, but also that it addresses moral and social values and issues, social and gender inequalities, care for disadvantaged and marginalized groups, and environmental protection. These are basic values for the sustainable development of a society, either in China or in the rest of the world. With the increasingly globalized world, international and intercultural exchange has transformed fundamental elements of human life. How can the university help people to judge what is of ultimate value in a diversified world of technology and information? There is much in Western philosophy and Christian tradition that can offer guidance to Chinese education of the whole person, but it is also important to consider how China's traditions of learning and its philosophy of Confucianism can enrich higher education and deepen and enhance its development. The next chapter discusses the literature of liberal arts education in a global aspect.

**Introduction**

Liberal arts education has traditionally and primarily related to the classical idea of cultivation of well-rounded people who are expected to be well integrated and knowledgeable of the sciences, the humanities, the arts and morality. It can be traced back to fifth century B.C.E Greco-Roman and European origins. Socrates' teaching on reflective life and Aristotle's thought on examined life not only built the foundation of Western philosophy and tradition, but also had great impact on Western humanistic studies and particularly influenced modern theory and the development of a liberal arts education. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ideal of liberal arts education from the Western tradition also influenced Chinese society and Chinese higher education. This chapter presents the historical development of liberal arts education in the Western tradition as well as its development in China. The chapter is divided into several parts: first, liberal arts education in historical context; second, the definition of liberal arts education; third, related empirical studies on China's liberal arts education; fourth, literature on liberal arts education in China.

**Liberal Arts Education in the Western Historical Context**

The classical Greek model has been a dominant paradigm in liberal arts education (*artes liberales*) globally (Flannery & Newstad, 1998). The quest for truth and knowledge in a cosmic-centered world led the ancient Greeks to create learning *polis* (*city*), which prepared learners for *paideia* (*education*). It assumes that truth is both universal and accessible and emphasizes the pursuit of truth through reason as its ultimate end. A curriculum for seeking truth, knowledge and wisdom was then established and consisted of two categories: the trivium (logic, grammar, and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (mathematics, geometry, music, and astronomy). Following the

classical Greek tradition, the humanistic tradition of liberal arts education, however, places more emphasis on seeking for freedom. Two aims of a humanistic education are morality and civilization (Glyer & Weeks, 1998). Through absorbing great works, humanistic education enables one to be a cultured, civilized and good citizen as seen in Socrates' value of "the examined life," and Aristotle's idea of "reflective citizenship" (Nussbaum, 1997). For Socrates and Aristotle, liberal arts studies were appropriate for the education of free citizens and pursuing human happiness. Nussbaum (1997) further observes that in addition to its significant influence on American higher education in the middle of last century, a liberal arts education stems is based, "above all, on Greek and Roman Stoic notions of an education that is 'liberal' in that it liberates the mind from the bondage of habit and custom, producing people who can function with sensitivity and alertness as citizens of the whole world" (p. 8). The idea of educating citizens of the world had a significant influence on Western higher educational institutions and on many educators and philosophers, such as David Hume, Cardinal John Henry Newman and Adam Smith in the English tradition, and Thomas Paine and other significant founding fathers of American liberal arts education (Nussbaum, 1997).

In the beginning of the 13th century, the birth of the first universities in Salerno, Paris and Bologna in medieval Europe adopted the Roman and Hellenic tradition of liberal arts education. These universities integrated the courses of the trivium and the quadrivium as the foundation on which to prepare students for more advanced learning in medicine, law, philosophy and theology. With the establishment of Oxford and Cambridge universities, the ideal of a liberal arts education with a focus on seven arts courses, classics, religious studies and moral education became a the basis for educating English gentlemen.

## **Jesuit tradition of liberal arts education**

In the middle of the 16th century, Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish soldier from a noble family, founded the Catholic religious order, the Society of Jesus, which eventually dedicated enormous resources and personnel to education. By the early 18th century, the Jesuits had more than eight hundreds colleges (colleges in this case means high schools) and universities in both the Old and New Worlds (O'Malley, 2008). Jesuit institutions of higher education were unique and successful “because they wedded the views of the humanists, grounded in the classical conception of rhetoric as training in clear thinking and expression, to a methodical pedagogy that the first Jesuit had learned at Paris” (O'Malley, 2008, p. 39).

In addition, the Jesuits began to develop their own famous classical curriculum called the *Ratio Studiorum*, or plan of studies. The general purpose of the *Ratio* was the balanced development of intellect and will, of mind and spirit, to educate a person regardless of gender and background. Besides mastering the Latin and Greek languages and literatures, students in Jesuit schools had to spend one year studying rhetoric and another year studying the humanities: poetry, history, moral philosophy, math, science, theology and branches of philosophy. The Jesuit Ratio cultivates the mind and moves students constantly to achieve, to express themselves, to practice the art of language and keeps the students thinking critically and active. It educates students in human, social, academic, spiritual and moral integration (O'Malley, 2008).

The Jesuits created a system of liberal arts education that was international and intercontinental. Graduates from their schools, such as Descartes, Moliere, and Voltaire, played a central role in the evolution of seventeenth and eighteenth century thought in Europe and in the New World. Following the Latin and Hellenic tradition of liberal arts education, Jesuit higher education rooted its pedagogy in the concept of the humanities to develop moral goodness,



devotion to truth, and a disposition to act for civic responsibility by studies in language, poetry, history, rhetoric, logic, mathematics, the sciences and the philosophy of nature. Through these academic disciplines the Jesuits expected to open students' minds, sharpen their wits, deepen human sympathy, and develop clarity of thought and force in expression. A liberal arts education was complementary to traditional Catholic scholastic education and Jesuit educators appreciated the potential of poetry and oratory in a liberal arts education to elicit and foster noble sentiments and ideals in their students.

### **The Impact of Harvard and Yale**

While the Jesuits represented the Catholic version, from Harvard, Yale and other institutions a Protestant version of liberal arts education arose. During the early seventeenth century, universities in European countries also expanded their curriculum to offer courses that related to the Judeo-Christian tradition. The traditional Greco-Roman canon of texts was replaced by seven liberal arts that became the core curriculum of this period. The intellectual, cultural and religious aspects formed the center of liberal arts education and became the Western educational tradition (Peterson, 2012). According to Peterson (2012), Great Britain absorbed these traditions and exported them to its colonies (such as the United States of America) in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. From the founding of Harvard College in 1636 until the late nineteenth century, undergraduate studies in American colleges and universities focused significantly on a classical curriculum, the study of the liberal arts (Rudolph, 1977).

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the central purpose of the first colleges and universities in the United States was to train Christian citizens (Thelin, 2004). These colleges and universities provided special curricula, such as mathematics, logic, classics, rhetoric, and Christian ethics to achieve

the goal of Christian gentlemen (Harvard, General Education in a Free Society, 1945). The post-war period witnessed the emergence of new colleges in the United States and a shift from the religious to the secular also occurred. In addition, college curricula contained a wide range of offerings, and the academic world and that of society changed rapidly. In response to this transformation in higher education, the faculty at Yale, after much debate, published a report in 1828 that defended a classical education. The Yale Report of 1828 was a major milestone in the debate on curriculum in American higher education (Rudolph, 1977). The Yale Report stated that the goal of a college education was “the discipline and the furniture of the mind; expanding its powers, and storing it with knowledge” that is both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable (Yale Report, 1828).

The report consisted of two parts: a general discussion of the nature of a liberal education, and an argument for the retention of Greek and Latin literature in the college curriculum. It argued that “in laying the foundation of a thorough education, it is necessary that all the important mental faculties be brought into exercise. It is not sufficient that one or two be cultivated while others are neglected” (Yale Report, 1828). The report also stated that a classical education would form the proper character of an educated man. Advocates for the traditional curriculum believed that exercising the mind and providing a general foundation common to all was more important than providing specialized education for a particular discipline. The Report states that “our object is not to teach that which is peculiar to any one of the professions; but to lay the foundation which is common to them all....The great object of a collegiate education ... is to give that expansion and balance of the mental powers, those liberal and comprehensive views....”(Yale Report, 1828).

The second part of the report argued that beyond the requisites of the liberal arts and

sciences, knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin was the foundation for a liberal education. It states that the study of the classics is useful because it lays the foundation of correct taste and furnishes the student with basic concepts found in modern literature, acquired best from their original sources, and because the study itself is the most effectual discipline of mental faculties (Yale Report, 1828).

### **Liberal arts education in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in the US and Europe**

In the 18th century American reformers advocated and eventually adapted German innovations to further transform and reform higher education in the United States. With the establishment of Johns Hopkins University, the German model of research universities was imported and implemented in the US (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). And the emergence of German research universities was an obstacle for developing liberal arts education. Universities and society placed more value on the natural and applied sciences, and the traditional humanistic, liberal arts education eventually lost its position of prominence and was regarded as conservative and backward.

From the middle of the 19th century, a few traditional Christian universities still followed the Oxford and Cambridge model, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, and their curricula were largely focused on theology, medicine and law, but they also provided students with a liberal education, with courses on classical languages, philosophy, ethics and other humanitarian studies. These universities focused on the original tradition of liberal arts, mainly, with a strongly Christian spirit, except at institutions such as the secular University of Virginia. In the early nineteenth century, a number of factors began to change the dominance of the classical liberal arts curriculum. One was the growing influence of the German university model which

placed great emphasis on research, especially in the applied sciences. From 1815 to 1914, nearly ten thousand Americans studied in Germany. German educated American scholars sought “in a uniquely American context to establish scholarly activity as a true profession in its own right” (Sheridan, 1998, p. 31). American college and university professors identified themselves as published professionals in their disciplines and the curricula were diversified. In response to the rapid industrial and agricultural development of the United States and to meet the demands for accessible education, President Lincoln had signed the *Morrill Act* in 1862 for the development of American public and private universities (Kerr, 2001). The Morrill Act of land grants established “a complex partnership in which the federal government provided incentives for each state to sell distant Western lands.... The state government was required to dedicate land sale proceeds to establishing collegiate programs in such 'useful arts' as agriculture, mechanics, mining, and military instruction”(Thelin, 2004, p.76).

Thus, American universities, focused on training more skilled professionals, went beyond graduating gentlemen, teachers, preachers, lawyers, and doctors. Research in farming and manufacturing fields emerged, and service to different social sectors expanded during this period. Nevertheless, in addition to the “A&M” fields, the Morrill Act also gave land-grant colleges and universities the encouragement to offer liberal arts courses. Some states also used the land-grant resources to create liberal arts colleges and a classical curriculum (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Thelin, 2004). Hence, the German research model and the Land Grant model affected the direction and character of American higher education differently in fundamental ways.

During this period many colleges and universities in the United States focused on specializations to meet the demands of knowledge and the economy (Nussbaum, 1997). Thus, more students were graduated in the fields of science and technology. A liberal arts education

could not meet the need of social development and was less attractive because it did not develop the economy or create social wealth. The traditional classical curriculum was, thus, abandoned by many American universities and colleges in the mid to late 20th century. In education, the primary concern was to advance knowledge in the applied sciences and to train students to engage in research resulting in the orientation of higher learning towards more practical and useful ends.

While liberal arts education went back to the middle of the 19th century in Europe and the United States, many philosophers and educators suggested that the traditional European liberal arts education be replaced with a new idea of education (Li, 1999). One prominent reformer was the Catholic educator and thinker John Henry Cardinal Newman. In his famous writing, "*The Idea of a University*", Newman (1873, 1996) pointed out that the primary goal of education was not the acquisition of useful information or skills needed for a particular occupation in life, but the cultivation of the mind. The special fruit of university education was not to produce experts in different disciplines, but to produce a philosophical habit of mind, and the refinement of mental powers would equip the student to enter many walks of life. Whether one becomes a soldier, a statesman, a lawyer, or a physician, one will need the ability to think clearly and critically, to organize knowledge, and to articulate ideas so as to deal effectively with the questions at hand (Dulles, 2002). For Newman, a narrowly professional or vocational program of training would fail the test of pragmatic usefulness and of liberal arts education. Although Newman initially believed that religious faith (Catholic or Protestant) should play an important role in education, his emphasis later on a liberal arts education was to form and to provide moral values and a spiritual ethos in college and university with formal religion playing a minimal role in a liberal arts education. Newman defended liberal arts education as "the

cultivation of the intellect . . . Nothing more or less than intellectual excellence” (Newman, 1996, p. 121).

Cardinal Newman (1873, 1996) insisted that in his ideal university theology would be established as a science of the sciences. Religion was to provide the ethos and the fundamental framework for education and “religious truth is a condition of general knowledge” (p. 57). For Newman, liberal arts education addressed mainly a natural human being in a natural civic society but not human redemption, as he stated that “liberal education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentlemen”(p. 89) and liberal arts education led to “intellectual excellence” (p. 90). Newman’s vision of the university is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Moreover, there is a special social purpose for universities: “that of training good members of society . . . It aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind . . . and refining the intercourse of private life” (pp.125-126).

### **The Liberal Arts education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The industrial revolution eventually placed professional education at the center of colleges and universities and education became more narrowly defined and developed by a growing number of sub-disciplines (Christopherson & Miyahara, 1998). The curricula of liberal arts education were replaced by practical and technical courses in applied sciences and technology. By the middle of the 20th century, although liberal arts education was still an important offering, it seemed that colleges and universities lost the original ethos and moved away from the purpose of education. Educators and universities were faced with these questions: What should the “rising generation” be taught? what should Americans be like? How can general education improve our citizenry (Lewis, 2006)? The early and middle 20th century witnessed in the United

States the rebirth of liberal arts education in higher educational institutions. An important figure was John Dewey. For him, the pursuit of knowledge is geared to promote progressive adaptation on the part of men and women to their respective environment (Dewey, 1925). During this period two forces, Harvard College in 1945 and the University of Chicago (with its famous president Robert Hutchins from 1929-1951, and Great Books advocate) in 1950, were at work reforming, developing and implementing ideas about liberal arts education.

In the late 1930's, education reformer and advocate Robert M. Hutchins introduced his Chicago Plan for a liberal education. The curriculum consisted of 14 year-long comprehensive courses, each integrating a basic field: the physical, biological, and social sciences and the humanities. Hutchins also introduced a Great Books course at the university to encourage a wider breath of knowledge. By 1942, after a long battle between President Hutchins and the Chicago faculty, the University of Chicago was awarding the bachelor's degree to those who had completed the new program. Hutchins (1936) stated that the primary task of education was to train the rational knowledge in people. The real value of liberal education, according to Hutchins, was to integrate traditional Western liberal education and American democratic political theory, and the idea of a free society. The purpose of the university was nothing less than to bring about a moral, intellectual and spiritual revolution throughout the world (Gan, 2006). In other words, Hutchins identified the primary goal of higher education as the development of human powers, the same goal that is traditionally associated with the liberal arts. Hutchins insisted that a liberal arts education developed the elements of common human nature by helping the students connect their lives with the world, relate to others, and deepen their knowledge of humanity.

In 1943, James Conant, the president of Harvard, appointed a committee of professors to reevaluate the curriculum that would give students a common understanding of society. After

two years of intensive discussion and deliberation and extensive inquiries inside and outside Harvard (Menand, 2010), the committee published its report in 1945, “General Education in a Free Society” (also referred to as the Harvard Report or the Harvard Red Book). Conant (1945) stated in his introduction to the Harvard Red Book: “the heart of the problem of a general education is the continuance of the liberal and humane tradition. . . . We are concerned with a general education, a liberal education, not for the relatively few, but for a multitude (p. viii-ix, cited from the introduction, General Education in a Free Society Report). This report became a watershed in the history of American liberal arts education (Menand, 2010). And it had wide coverage nationally and within the university. The report discussed general education in high schools and at the undergraduate level, and analyzed the importance of general education in the American life and society. Conant further argued that citizens of a democratic society needed the abilities “to think effectively, to communicate thought, to make relevant judgments, and to discriminate among values” (Hirst, 2003, p. 508). The Report also recommends the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences as three core areas for the general education curriculum.

The reformation of general education by the University of Chicago and Harvard College laid a foundation across the country, and many public and private colleges and universities, inspired by Hutchins and Harvard College, had begun to find locally relevant and effective adaptations of liberal arts education in the form of general education (Katz, 1995). Although liberal arts education today varies from institution to institution, liberal arts education continues to remain “an integral part of the American undergraduate course of study” (Ratcliff, Johnson, & Gaff, 2004, p. 1). In her famous book, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Nussbaum (1997) states that a liberal arts education must support and promote an understanding and appreciation of the diverse cultural traditions in American society



and enable all students to meet the needs of contemporary world. She argues that today's curriculum needs to be deeply guided by values grounded in a Socratic self-examination. Furthermore, Nussbaum (1997) argues that liberal arts education must foster critical thinking in the context of a globalized and multicultural world, and human beings need to freely develop cognitive and reasoning abilities through liberal arts education and then to foster morality and compassion for the sake of developing a truly human person. Nussbaum points out that in order to become responsible and globalized citizens, students must develop a reflective understanding of themselves and society, including knowledge and history of non-western and minority cultures through liberal arts education.

### **Definitions of Liberal Arts Education**

Although a liberal arts education among academics has positive connotations, its meaning is extremely vague (Weaver, 1991). Hirst (1965) observed that the Greek notion of liberal arts education was rooted in a number of related philosophical concepts, such as the relationship between knowledge, mind and reality. Liberal arts education is, thereby, concerned with the comprehensive development of the mind in acquiring knowledge. The Yale Report of 1828 states that a liberal education has been generally understood to be a course in the arts and sciences best calculated both to strengthen and enlarge the faculties of the mind and to familiarize it with the leading principles of the great objects of human investigation and knowledge. A liberal education is distinct from the education for a profession. The former educates one with knowledge needed or helpful for any situation in life; the latter educates to qualify the individual for a particular station, business or employment. The latter rests upon the former as its most appropriate foundation.

Liberal arts precedes professional education: a liberal arts education is aimed at engaging the mind while its powers are developing; an education for a profession requires an understanding already cultivated by study, and prepared by exercise for methodical and persevering efforts (Yale Report, 1828). Daley (1988) defines liberal arts education as the kind of education which aims at training a free citizen to be effective in expression, to have knowledge of literature that shapes a culture, and to possess skill in the art of persuasion as in ancient Greece and Rome. Daley further indicates that the goal of a liberal arts education is to create a kind of inner transformation: to become a human being for social good and to lead people to that “joy in the truth” which St. Augustine identified as the “truth of the highest good.” Plato promoted the undertaking of a liberal arts education through the Socratic vision in book VII of his *Republic*, and he insisted that the ultimate purpose of a liberal arts education was to equip a free citizen to take an active and intelligent part in the life of his or her environment, and to work for its good (Daley, 1988; Glyer & Weeks, 1998; Nussbaum, 1997). The educators of the classical tradition of liberal arts education from the period of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle insisted on the student’s engagement with the humanities not merely for acquisition of the trivium (the literary arts, the verbal arts, the humane letters, the arts of eloquence—grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (mathematics, wisdom and understanding, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy), but, also, for the formation of character, and the refinement and deepening of moral ideals of the citizen (Daley, 1988; Will, 2005).

Glyer and Weeks (1998) state that “it is so difficult to clearly define the idea of a liberal education . . . and nearly every institution of higher education speaks of a liberal education but few institutions define it with precision” (p. xii). Liberal arts faculties seldom state clearly what they mean by liberal or general education (Schneider, 2008). Policy makers or educators often

use terms such as, liberal arts, liberal arts education, or general education interchangeably. Glycer and Weeks (1998) define liberal arts education as “an education grounded in the liberal arts which extends to an investigation into the central human questions: Who am I? What is my responsibility to God, to other individuals, to the community? It also relates to the development of transferable intellectual capacities and the sharpening of basic skills, and general education.” (p. xiv) Although liberal arts education takes many forms in American higher education, the liberal arts commonly encompasses fields of study in the humanities, fine arts, and natural sciences in the general curriculum.

Furthermore, the core value of a liberal arts education is beyond time and space and universally recognized as such. For instance, Plato’s Republic is relevant to twenty-first century thought and to education as it was to the ancient Greeks (Kimball, 1996). Contemporary scholars argue that professional education is useful but insufficient because technical training can be used for good and ill. A liberal arts education seeks a whole formation of the whole person by examining life’s important questions, truth, justice, beauty and service (Flannery & Newstad, 1998). While a traditional liberal arts education relies more on trivium and quadrivium courses, a contemporary liberal arts education contains arts, humanities and natural sciences as its core courses. Scholars, such as Levine (1978), observed that “liberal education is perhaps the most commonly used synonym for general education” (p. 525). The Harvard Redbook of 1945 states that “General education . . . is used to indicate that part of a student’s whole education which looks, first of all, to him as a responsible human being and citizen (Harvard General Education in a Free Society Report, 1945). Scholars have defined liberal arts education as being something beyond multi and interdisciplinary studies. They suggest that the content of liberal arts education has to be extended outside the classroom through service learning programs, social engagement

and student-centered programs (Cohen, 2000; Nussbaum, 2004, 2010). Through these activities beyond the classroom, liberal arts education courses prepare students for excellence in a professional career useful and beneficial and leading students to contribute to a more humane, just and democratic society because of its development of the intellectual capacities and the promotion of moral goals.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2005) defines liberal arts education as:

An approach to learning that empowers individuals to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal arts education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility as well as strong, transferable, intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

Liberal arts: Specific disciplines (the humanities, social sciences, and sciences).

General education: the part of liberal arts education curriculum shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capacities. General education may also be “the core curriculum” or “liberal studies” (Adapted from AAC&U website, 2010).

The Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) described the liberal arts education as:

A basic grounding for all higher education students, whatever type of institutions they attend or course they study; a discrete and substantial component of general education, which helps broaden the experience of students engaged in specialist, professional, or technical study; an intensive general education curriculum that provides exceptionally promising, intellectually oriented students with a solid basis for their careers or for advanced specialist study (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000, p. 87).

### **Definition of liberal arts education in the Chinese context**

Before exploring liberal arts education development in Chinese higher education institutions, it is important to understand what liberal arts education means in the Chinese context. This section draws upon the historical development of Chinese intellectual traditions and their contemporary developments in higher education. Chinese scholars and intellectuals often define liberal arts education as general education: *Tong Shi Jiao Yu* or *Bo Ya Jiao Yu* (education), (Li & Lin 2003; Wang, 2006; Gan, 2006). The direct translation of liberal arts education, *ziyou jiaoyu*, connotes freedom and democracy--sensitive topics in China — so less direct phrases like general education and cultural quality education are used instead. *Tong* means: understand, interconnected, lead to, authority, coherent, and communicate; *Shi* means: knowledge, to know. *Tongshi* literally means: a general interdisciplinary knowledge which includes humanities, and social and natural sciences. Although the term and origin of *Tong Shi Jiao Yu* can be traced back to Confucian tradition, it was first used by some neo-Confucian scholars who wanted to establish a university program rooted in the Chinese tradition, culture and values as well as related to international understanding of liberal arts education at the Chinese University of Hong Kong University in the early 1980s (Liang, 2005). Some scholars (Huang, 2006) debated that *Tong Shi Jiao Yu* is an equivalent term of general education or

liberal arts education and it is a western concept and ideal. According to them, Tongshi education is a process of learning from the Western, especially from the US tradition and model. According to Hu (2009), other scholars hold the view that Tongshi education has always been part of the Chinese education tradition and reflected the Confucian tradition of cultivating the whole person with responsibility, moral reasoning, knowledge and virtue. Hence, the essence of a liberal arts education is the free spirit of humanity in the Confucian tradition, the value and dignity of life, the fulfillment of soul and universal harmony (Huang, 2006a). Still, some other Chinese scholars define liberal arts education as an idea of education which leads students to comprehend general knowledge of interdisciplinary studies and guides students to develop themselves as physically, spiritually, intellectually and emotionally balanced people with the skills of problem solving, creativity and critical thinking (Wang, 2006).

Li (2006) observes that according to its nature, liberal arts education is one aspect of higher education, a non-specialized program that all students should take. According to its ethos, liberal arts education aims at educating responsible and well-rounded citizens. According to its content, liberal arts education is a broad, non-professional, non-utilitarian education for basic knowledge, skills and attitudes. More importantly, a liberal arts education lays stress on the fact that the goal is the education of people, not the making of practicing professionals (Zhang, 2005). Liberal arts education has always attracted attention from educators and philosophers since the Ancient Greeks until the present day. However, the core of liberal arts education has been transformed. Today, a liberal arts education is given a wide range of interpretation. Indeed, modern liberal arts education courses have little to do with the classical liberal arts tradition. Colleges and universities have broadened their understanding and reformed the curriculum. Nevertheless, Flannery and Newstad (1998) and Kimball (1996) state that the liberal arts are

basic; for they are the foundation of a full liberal arts education to search for the highest end and education of person.

The common definition of liberal arts education by Chinese policy makers, administrators and faculty members relates to educational goals for personal integration, intellectual and interdisciplinary studies and only secondarily to student-centered pedagogy. The problem in China is lack of a formal understanding of liberal arts education. It is not precise enough, does not have academic status, and pertains to personal living. In my view, a liberal arts education is an interdisciplinary education conducted in a spirit of free inquiry. It impels students and faculty to reflect on their beliefs and priorities, to be more critically aware of their decisions and motivation, to be more creative in problem-solving, and more responsible in regard to personal, professional, and social issues. The ultimate goal of a liberal arts education is to prepare students to live harmoniously in society with concern for other individuals. It not only provides students with intellectual knowledge and skills but, also, cultivates students' moral and spiritual integration and forms them to be responsible global citizens. In another word, the aim of liberal arts education is to cultivate students to become socially, intellectually, morally and spiritually balanced and responsible citizens. Regardless of their livelihood, be it a farmer, physician, lawyer, teacher, worker, nurse etc., they will be prepared to face a multicultural and pluralistic world consciously and responsibly.

### **Related Empirical Studies on China's Liberal Arts Education**

In the last three decades, the Chinese government has repeatedly emphasized the importance of education and the connection between education and economic development (Yang, Vidovich & Currie, 2007). Throughout the history of China, especially in the last 50

years, education has been used as a mechanism for political and social orientation to promote the moral, social and political education of youth under the guidelines of the government (Turner & Acker, 2002). Recently, the Chinese government has realized that although schools have incorporated political, economic and social elements into the curriculum, they have fewer and fewer well-rounded graduates (Xu, 2006). Yang (2002) noted that globalization and an immature economic market in China have brought about moral confusion, and an unhealthy worship of money has seduced young people away from their Confucian tradition and culture. Educators are more concerned about what is wrong with contemporary education, colleges and universities and what is missing in their curricula and cultural formation (Pan & Luo, 2008). Wiest (2006) argues that contemporary Chinese youth are frustrated with the prevailing values of their society and their education. And the search for meaning in life and for their own identity is expressed widely and intensely within youth groups.

### **Liberal studies and research by Chinese scholars**

Liberal arts education, commonly called general education in China (I will use the terms interchangeably) has re-emerged in Chinese colleges and universities since the last 15 years (Li, 2006). Numerous scholars have studied and implied in studies Chinese higher education as a whole but rarely have done any research on liberal arts education in China. Professor Ruth Hayhoe, an esteemed Canadian scholar on China, has researched in depth the educational vision of Ma Xiangbo, who as noted previously is a former Jesuit and the founder of Aurore and Fudan Universities, both connected to the idea of liberal arts education. Some Chinese educators believe that liberal arts training is vital to help China deal with its increasingly complex new realities of modernization, internationalization, globalization and the establishment of a harmonious society in China (Li, 2006; Zhang, 2012).



Prior to 1995, the Chinese government and the Chinese colleges and universities were paying more attention to quality or cultural quality education. While the liberal arts have been absorbed into education systems and were well developed in Taiwan and Hong Kong from a few decades ago, it is a new discipline in Mainland China. In the past decade, numerous studies on China's development of liberal arts education have been conducted by Mainland Chinese intellectuals. Some of these studies have analyzed and examined the emergence of liberal arts education in relation to social turmoil and social decay that eventually damaged the development of harmonious society in China, but these studies are more focused on quality education and cultural quality education (Wang, 2006). Although quality education and liberal arts education differ, the rise of liberal arts education in China has much to do with the comprehensive development of quality education. Some Chinese scholars purposely use the term quality education to replace liberal arts education and some think that quality education is the soul of liberal arts education in Chinese colleges and universities. These scholars believe that if quality education is developed in depth, liberal arts education will be further strengthened (Chen, 2006; Wang, 2006; Zhang, 2006).

Studies that analyzed the historical issues stated that curriculum reform of liberal arts education by policy makers and its acceptance by university administrators and faculty remain as a great challenge. Professional studies still take the leading role in Chinese colleges and universities (Li, 1999, 2003, 2006; Gan, 2006; Yang, 2007). While the majority of these studies focus on student's quality education, moral reasoning, and philosophical reflection, there are a few studies that have comprehensively examined the meaning and application of humanities studies. Moreover, these researchers constantly ask: "What kind of citizen does Chinese higher

education want to graduate? How does Chinese education form an integral person and responsible global citizen?" (Gan, 2006).

Yang Shu-Zhi (2006), one of the most prominent scholars in China and the founder of liberal arts education in modern China, argues that education in itself is a cultural activity in which man's body-mind, including knowledge, feeling and will, develops intellectually, morally and physically. For Yang, the key issue of higher education is to educate a person how to be, not how to do. Yang (2006) also criticized that the Chinese higher education institutions are now more utilitarian oriented. University administrators currently ignore the purpose of education and care more about the internal development, rankings and government funding. Faculty members cared about the results of research and publishing. Consequently, few are serious about teaching and student development.

Indeed, as the Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) dealing with higher education in developing countries argues that if a society is without some liberally educated citizens, it will not enjoy many benefits that higher education potentially brings. The Task Force (2000) states that well-trained citizens can contribute to society's advancement, identify problems and solutions, and "a general education is an excellent form of preparation for the flexible, knowledge-based careers that increasingly dominate the upper tiers of the modern labor force." (p. 83). Hence, Yang (2006) and Huang (2006) state that the goal of higher education is not merely to produce scientific and technical professionals, but to lead and educate people to serve others through their skills and talents.

Wang (2006) states that Chinese higher education has emphasized too much the Soviet model for professional education in the last 40 years, which has constrained the development of the Chinese higher education system and its students. Hence, it is necessary to reform the core

courses and pedagogy in Chinese colleges and universities with a focus on humanities. Wang further suggests that Chinese colleges and universities can learn from the American form of liberal arts education and that of Taiwan and Hongkong's model of general education. A case study by Li Man Li (2003) is important for understanding the nature of a liberal arts education in China. Li found that the key issues of liberal arts education which Chinese colleges and universities face are that neither the Chinese higher institutions nor the Chinese government have regard for liberal arts education as a whole and do not consider it essential to college education. Indeed, the curriculum of liberal arts education in many Chinese colleges and universities is just political theory, art, music and mathematics. Moreover, the Chinese education system has left the entire responsibility of general education to colleges and universities and ignored the fact that high schools need partially to implement some topics in general education. Citing from the Harvard Red Book that American liberal arts education is for all people and to be implemented at all educational levels from K to 12, post-secondary and graduate schools, Li pointed out that the Chinese educational system must change its spoon-fed teaching style and exam-oriented education method to a well-rounded person formation.

Gan (2006) and Li (1999, 2003, 2006) pointed out that Chinese college students often lack a knowledge of traditional humanities and have less commitment to social service and responsibility. Hence, it is impossible to educate high quality and well-rounded global citizens. In addition to reforming the liberal arts education curriculum, Li (1999, 2003) suggested that Chinese colleges and universities should establish a department that oversees liberal arts education in each institution to continue to update the faculty's comprehensive knowledge, to provide a special fund for teaching and research on liberal arts education, to strengthen communication among faculty members and administrators and to invite top scholars to join in

the development of liberal arts education. Hence, according to Li, an effective implementation of liberal arts education should not merely depend on teaching and course work, but, also, needs to develop a relevant liberal arts curriculum by reforming the entire system.

Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009) state that if higher education is to succeed, the faculty must be a center of concern in universities worldwide. Some prominent Chinese scholars, such as Wang Yi Qiu, Gan Yang, Huang Jun Jie, Yang Shu Zhi, who have enthusiastically been committed to promoting liberal arts education in Chinese colleges and universities, point out that faculty members are key factors in a successful implementation of liberal arts education. Due to the labor market demand and economic and educational competition among Chinese institutions of higher education, Chinese universities and their faculties still emphasize applied sciences and engineering disciplines and often reluctantly spend more time on the humanities. In other words, compared to practical courses for market economy, liberal arts education is viewed as just an expansion. Having realized this serious problem, Gan (2006) suggests that Chinese colleges and universities should find relevant courses and a teaching pedagogy that reflects the contents and spirit of liberal arts education by developing common core courses.

Unlike Western liberal education, which is tied to values, citizenship and democratic development and always encourages students and faculty to engage actively in political, democratic and social movements, liberal arts education in China has always been connected with politics as a means of controlling people's ideology for the service of the Communist Party regime (Li, 2006). Thus, the meaning of liberal arts education is interpreted differently and is not well practiced in the Chinese context. Nevertheless, the Chinese government and the colleges and universities repeatedly refer to the curriculum of liberal arts education as holistic education and aim at developing a psycho-emotional, socioeconomic, spiritually balanced and integrated

person (Chen, 2006; Huang, 2006; Li, 2003; Tong, 2012). Gan (2006) and Chen (2006) state that liberal arts education in Chinese colleges and universities faces several challenges: first, universities and colleges need to form a relationship with the high school educational education system; second, college undergraduate courses need to balance studies among humanities, social sciences and applied science; third, there must be a clear relationship between college liberal arts education and special education and professional education; fourth, in college liberal arts education it is necessary to maintain a balance between the means and the end of higher education.

In a research study that compared the liberal education models of Chicago, Stanford, Harvard and Columbia universities, Gan (2006) argues that while the Chinese colleges and universities can refer to American liberal arts education, they have to develop their own Chinese relevant curriculum by absorbing the spirit of the American liberal arts education system. The author also suggests that as China is more aware of educating responsible and civilized global citizens, Chinese colleges and universities can concentrate on five major areas as their common core courses to achieve this goal: namely, Chinese civilization, Chinese language, Chinese humanities and classics, Western civilization and Western humanities and classics. In an era of a socialistic market economy as the goal of the Chinese government economic reform and innovation, the market economy and need of knowledge bring challenges as well as opportunities to China's higher educational system. Advancing China to a world—class level through science, technology and education has become a central concern of the Chinese government and a goal that the entire nation is eager to achieve.

However, in recent years student enrollment has become a more urgent topic in higher educational institutions in China and globally (Altbach, 2006; Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley,

2009). In the last decade, the enrollment of students in post-secondary institutions has increased from 14 percent to 23 percent (MoE, 2009) and pedagogy has become more diversified while the quality of faculty members has improved. Nevertheless, students' comprehensive quality has not improved as much as the Chinese government and educators expected (Huang, 2006). The core content of higher education programs has not kept pace with social and personal needs (Gan, 2006; Yang, 2007). China's rapid expansion of higher education, from 1.5 million graduates a year in the late 1990s to more than 6 million last year, has had a detrimental effect on the curriculum as the country's universities race to compete globally (MoE, 2012). Education these days is like factory-farming of chickens: universities all want to get international rankings and this usually depends on research. They are not interested in providing a unique education for students (Tong, 2012). Hayhoe (1985) observes that "the transformation of social science into an open, tentative and experimental area of knowledge has been an almost intractable problem in a country where classical texts had always been their authoritative basis" (p. 698). Her observation reveals two facts about the development of present day Chinese higher education. First, the adaptation of the Soviet Union model in professional education regarding the social sciences has prevented contemporary Chinese intellectuals from addressing the issues of humanities studies. Second, the classical texts need to be reevaluated from the aspect of liberal arts education as part of common core courses.

### **Literature on Liberal Arts Education in China**

There is very little literature on liberal arts for contemporary China. Among them, Ruth Hayhoe's books *China's University and the Open Door*; *China's Universities 1895-1995: A Century of Cultural Conflict*; *Education and Modernization: The Chinese Experience*, *Contemporary Chinese Education*; *Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-Century China*;

*East-West Dialogue in Knowledge and Higher Education* provide overviews of the historical development of higher education and reviews the purpose of education in the Chinese tradition. *General Education: An Idea of a University Education in China* by Li Manli illustrates the development of liberal arts education in the last three decades in China. Huang Junjie's book *The Idea and Practice of University's Liberal Arts Education* offers a study of the idea and purpose of liberal arts education from a Confucian tradition and sociological perspective. His work remains critical for thinking about the need for the liberal arts education in particular. Peking University Education Review, a renowned research center for Chinese studies, dedicated an entire volume in 2006 to *Liberal Arts Education in China: Past, Present and the Future*.

Some prominent Chinese scholars, such as Yang Shu Zhi—who has enthusiastically been committed to promote the liberal arts education in Chinese colleges and universities—in his book *Quality Education for University Students* points out that faculty members are key factors in a successful implementation of liberal arts education. Due to the capital market demand, and economic and educational competition among Chinese institutions of higher education, Chinese universities and their faculties still emphasize applied sciences and engineering disciplines, and often reluctantly spend some time on the humanities. In other words, compared to practical courses for a market economy, liberal arts education is viewed as unnecessary. Having realized this serious problem, Gan Yang's article *the Challenges of Liberal Arts Education: A Philosophical Reflection* in 2006 suggests that Chinese colleges and universities should find relevant courses and a teaching pedagogy that reflects the contents and spirit of liberal arts education by developing common core courses.

In a research study that compared the liberal education models of several top Chinese universities, Xiong Sidong's book *The Liberal Arts Education and Education in China: China's*

*Exploration* (2010) argues that as China is more aware of educating responsible and civilized global citizens. Other resources that have discussed liberal arts education include articles from renowned Chinese journals *Higher Education*; *Tsinghua University Education Review*; and the *Fudan Education Forum*, which provide informed knowledge about higher education and liberal arts education in China.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed liberal arts education in the Western historical context and the Chinese tradition. It also reviewed the definition of liberal arts education from various perspectives; all are aimed to cultivating whole person. The ideal of Greco-Roman tradition of liberal arts education not only made great impact on Western tradition, it also influenced the development of liberal arts education in Chinese higher educational institutions, while some scholars insisted that liberal arts education originated from the traditional Confucian education. The related empirical studies on China's liberal arts education and literature on liberal arts education in China have also been mentioned. The next chapter will deal with the three purposive sample study universities: Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China Normal Universities, and their liberal arts education programs.



## **Chapter 5 The three purposive sample study universities: Fudan University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, East China Normal University**

### **Introduction**

The emergence of liberal arts education in some top Chinese higher educational institutions in the last two decades has been the focus of attention. Liberal arts education curriculum has been implemented to broaden students' learning experience with the aim of cultivating students with critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning and innovation skills. This reform reflects an educational transformation from specialization to liberal arts education, from training experts in specialized disciplines to educating students so as to “develop understandings of a breadth of topics, enhance their critical thinking abilities, and become well-rounded, educated citizens” (Bourke et al. 2009, 221).

This chapter explores liberal arts education in the three well-known purposive case universities: Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China Normal Universities in Shanghai from various aspects and is divided into three major categories: history and context, curriculum development, and liberal arts core curriculum modules. It begins with examining some key dimensions of each university: brief history, initiatives, and the present implementation of liberal arts education curriculum. The process of how liberal arts curriculum came into being at each university and how it differed from the old curriculum is analyzed and examined. All these perspectives from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China Normal University are foundational elements that help to understand the main interview themes of the dissertation in the following chapters.

## **Fudan University**

Fudan University is unique among the three purposive sample study institutions as the only university founded by the private sector affiliated with the Jesuit Religious Order (a Roman Catholic Religious Order founded in 1540) prior to 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party took power in China. This chapter begins with a brief historical overview as a background for understanding Fudan's reform on liberal arts education. Then it looks at its overall content of curriculum, institutional policy, development of liberal arts education, liberal arts education curriculum, common course selection. The tension of course selection is then analyzed. Finally, issues on dominance of utilitarianism are discussed. My conclusion seeks to identify the challenges that lie ahead.

### **The Jesuit and Catholic context**

In order to understand the background of Fudan University in Shanghai, it is necessary to explore the history of Jesuit education as it plays an important role in the history of Fudan University and Aurora University in Shanghai. Both universities were founded by Ma Xiangbo, a former Jesuit, statesman and educator. In the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish soldier from a noble family, who founded the Society of Jesus in 1540 as a religious Order, dedicated enormous resources to education. By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuits had established more than eight hundred secondary schools and universities in both the Old and New World (O'Malley, 2008). What made Jesuit institutions of higher education unique and successful was “their wedding of the views of the humanists, grounded in the classical conception of rhetoric as training in clear thinking and expression, to a methodical pedagogy that the first Jesuit had learned at Paris University” (O'Malley, 2008, p. 39).

The Jesuits' system of liberal arts education was intercontinental. Following the Latin and Greek tradition of liberal arts education, Jesuit higher education based its pedagogy, including the principle that the humanities develop moral goodness, devotion to truth, and a disposition to act for the civic good, on the study of language, poetry, history, rhetoric, logic, mathematics, the sciences and the philosophy of nature. The Jesuits intended that this curriculum would open minds, sharpen wits, deepen human sympathy and develop clarity of thought and force in expression. While a liberal arts education was complementary to traditional Catholic scholastic education, Jesuit educators esteemed the potential of poetry and oratory in liberal arts education to elicit and foster noble sentiments and ideals in their students (Scaglione, 1986). The Jesuit mission to China in the 16<sup>th</sup> century opened up channels for east and west communication, and it was a Jesuit missionary, Mateo Ricci, from Italy who first provided a detailed introduction to the university for Chinese readers (Hayhoe, 1995).

### **The founding of Fudan**

The founder of Fudan University, Ma Xiangbo, was born on April 17, 1840 into a well-to-do Catholic family in Dantu County, Jiangsu province. He was baptized when he was one month old and brought up in a strict Catholic tradition of faith. He was also educated in the Chinese Classics in traditional private schools. The young Ma Xiangbo was not satisfied with this traditional education (Wiest, 2002). At the age of twelve, he visited his married sister in Shanghai and was amazed at its development. He then asked to stay in Shanghai to enroll in the newly opened French Jesuit college of St. Ignace, Xuhui Gongxue, in Xujiahui. His years (1851-1870) at St. Ignace laid the foundation for his acceptance of views of Western education, especially that of whole-person formation (Jiang, 2011). During his studies at St. Ignatius Ma Xiangbo not only learned the Chinese traditions and classics systematically but he was also

educated in Latin, Greek, mathematics, philosophy and other liberal arts disciplines. He was also invited to teach classical Chinese literature and philosophy at St. Ignatius.

As China faced the great challenges of the Western invasion in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Ma Xiangbo began to discern his future career to serve his nation. After such discernment and with the full support of his mother, he joined the Jesuits in 1862, underwent their theological and spiritual training, obtained his doctoral degree with distinction in 1869, and was ordained in 1870. During these years Ma Xiangbo became close to an Italian Jesuit, Fr. Angelo Zottoli, S. J., who encouraged Ma Xiangbo to deepen his knowledge of the Chinese classics and to follow the well-known Jesuit mathematician Mateo Ricci's dialogue between the West and the East concerning the sciences, culture and humanities (Li, 1996). Fr. Angelo Zottoli, the principal of St. Ignatius College in Shanghai, had not only taught young Ma Xiangbo science, philosophy and classics, but also encouraged him to serve his country whole-heartedly and selflessly with creativity, critical thinking and responsibility.

During the years 1871 to 1875 Ma was the principal of St. Ignatius College (a high school) and he was able to reform the pedagogy in a way that exposed students to the fundamentals of Chinese and European classical knowledge. On the one hand, he demanded that students be familiar with the Chinese classics before studying Western subjects. On the other hand, he wanted to make Western knowledge readily accessible to Chinese students. In 1876, Ma Xiangbo left the Jesuits as an expression of protest against the arrogance of the French Jesuits towards China. From 1876 to 1898 Ma Xiangbo took several minor positions in diplomatic and industrial circles and worked closely with Li Hongzhang. In 1885 and 1887 Ma Xiangbo toured the United States and Europe. Seeing at first-hand the development of these two continents, he was convinced that the educational systems in American and European universities empowered

for success and prosperity. Having learned from the Western educational emphasis on classical languages, culture and sciences, Ma began to deepen his vision of a new type of Chinese higher education that would integrate humanities and science studies as a mean of empowerment.

Because of the Qing government corruption in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ma Xiangbo sought modernization through education and in 1903 established Aurora Academy which was supported mainly by his endowment. He then established Fudan University in 1905. The word Fudan, chosen by Ma Xiang-bo, has its lexical origin in the quotation "Heavenly light shines day after day" taken from "Annotations of Yu and Xia" (Yu Xia Zhuan) of Scholia of The Collection of Archaic Texts (Shang Shu Da Zhuan). It means striving continuously to make new progress and bears the hope of Chinese intellectuals to run a school on their own and rejuvenate the country by education.

The purpose of education for Ma Xiangbo was three-fold. First, education is to cultivate talented students for the nation and to teach them to be responsible citizens. Second, Jesuit education emphasized classical studies and whole-person integration which influenced Ma Xiangbo's view of education is manifested in his curricular reform. Third, the Jesuit emphasis on science also influenced Ma Xiangbo. With an East and West educational background and having been a Jesuit for some years, Ma Xiangbo understood that the study of science was not only to further the advancement of society but also to help train moral citizens with a sound world view (Lu, 1996; Zhu, 1997, p. 1107).

Fudan was initially known in 1905 as Fudan College. In 1911 during the Xinhai Revolution the college was taken over as the headquarters of the Guangfu Army and it closed down for almost one year. The university motto comes from *Analects* Book 19 which means "to

learn extensively and adhere to aspirations, to inquire earnestly and reflect with self-application”. From 1905 to 1911, Fudan had graduated 57 students.

In 1917, the Fudan Public School became a private university named the Private Fudan University and had a middle school and preparatory school. In 1929 Fudan revised its departments, expanding to include the Journalism Department, Law Department and Education Department totaling 17 departments devoted to Arts, Science, Law and Business. In 1937, due to the fall of Shanghai to the Japanese army, Fudan moved with the Kuo MinTang (a political party that was the government at the time so the university moved with the government) to the inland city of Beibei, Chongqing, later the temporary capital in Southwest China. On December 25, 1941 the First Meeting of the Fifth Conference of the Highest Executive Authority of the National Government of the Republic of China voted to change Fudan University (Chongqing) to a public university with Wu Nanxuan as its president. Fudan University then became National Fudan University. A few years later, it moved back to Shanghai in 1946 after the surrender of the Japanese army.

### **Fudan in the post-revolution period**

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established the People’s Republic of China with Marxism and Communism as its central ideology in 1949; the Soviet State model replaced entirely the Western model. The Chinese Communist Party deemed Soviet Union its “big brother” and thus adopted the socialist planning economy for modernization in 1950s. Universities and colleges underwent a restructuring and remerging movement in early 1950s to meet the CCP’s goal to build a socialist country in a fast and time-saving manner (Sun, 2009). During this period, many schools and departments in comprehensive universities were regrouped together to form new specialized colleges for industrial development in New China. After the founding of the new

China in 1949, the Chinese higher education system was forced to follow the Soviet Union model. By 1952 the Chinese higher education system had duplicated the Soviet model of administration, teaching methods, textbooks, and classroom design of higher educational institutions and aimed at training more technical and vocational experts to possess academic excellence with socialist political ideas. Within a centralized educational system and structure, the government played a dominant role and was responsible for policy making, school planning, administration, personnel assignment, curricula arrangement, textbooks, funding and legislation.

Fudan also lost its "National" appellation and became Fudan University to reflect the fact that all universities under the new socialist state would be public and merged with other schools. Fudan was the first university to be revamped by the new government in 1952 and modeled on the Soviet educational system. During this period, Fudan had 17 departments devoted to Arts, Science, Law and Business, with more than two thousand students and over one hundred faculty members. The first twenty years of the Reform and Opening-up Policy brought grand opportunity to Fudan, whose development received the Central Government's serious attention during the 7th, 8th and 9th National Construction Plans for the Next Five Years. The University became more intellectually comprehensive by covering a wider range of academic disciplines: the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, technology, and management. It was to exert a more positive and profound influence on the world.

Fudan University today comprises 17 full-time schools, 69 departments, 73 bachelor's degree programs, 22 disciplines and 134 sub-disciplines authorized to confer Ph.D. degrees, 201 master degree programs, 6 professional degree programs, 7 key social science research centers of Ministry of Education, 9 national basic science research and training institutes and 25 post-doctoral research stations, 77 research institutes, 112 cross-disciplinary research institutes and 5

national key laboratories. It has 40 national key disciplines granted by the Ministry of Education, nationally ranked third. The University confers doctoral degrees in twenty-four Level I and one hundred and fifty-three Level II academic disciplines (with twenty-nine of them established by the University itself and one special degree); there are also twenty-five research stations that offer postdoctoral fellowships. Fudan also set up a technology industry to promote the integration of production, study and research, and has created vibrant “Fudan-run” industries. Fudan was also the first group among the 985 and 211 projects universities in China. Fudan University has an enrollment over 45,000, including full-time students and students in continuing education and online education. Additionally, there are nearly 1,760 students from overseas, ranking second nationally. Fudan University has a high-level research faculty of over 2,400 full-time teachers and researchers, including 1,350 professors and associate professors, 30 academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering, nearly 660 doctoral supervisors, 26 special professors and 2 lecture professors of "Cheungkong Scholars Program", 3 distinguished professors and 10 special professors of Fudan University, 6 principal scientists of Project 973 and 25 "Young Experts with Prominent Contributions to the Country" (Fudan University, 2011). The Times Higher Education placed Fudan University as among 201st-225th in the world in their 2012-13 rankings, while the QS World University Rankings placed the University at 90th worldwide in 2012. Further, ARWU (2012) considers it to be among 201-300th in the world and third among mainland Chinese universities.

### **Curriculum development in Fudan**

As already noted, the purpose of establishing Aurora University was “to place a priority on science, to emphasize liberal arts, and to avoid any religious dispute.” In other words, Ma Xiangbo wanted Aurora University to focus on two major academic categories: science and



liberal arts. Ma himself designed a curriculum that reflected both the character of Jesuit education and his emphasis on integrating Western knowledge, and Chinese culture and tradition. The school offered a two-year curriculum. Students were required to study Latin in depth and to specialize in one modern European language: French, English, German or Italian. All language classes emphasized the reading of ancient or modern Western literary classics. Textbooks included Shakespeare's and Cicero's works. In Ma Xiangbo's view, language study was a means of understanding Western culture. He even compiled a textbook, *Lading Wentong* (A Latin Primer), for teaching Latin literature. Students were expected to expand their knowledge beyond the field of literature. Those who studied liberal arts were asked to master works from all branches of philosophy and other disciplines, such as history, geography, politics, sociology, economics and international law. Those who studied science were asked to become competent in physics, chemistry, mathematics, and astronomy. Students in both areas were required to learn how to think for themselves. Unlike other religion-based schools, Ma Xiangbo did not include religious doctrines as part of the curriculum at Aurora. However, when he cofounded Furen University in 1925, he helped to design the curriculum in five categories: theology and philosophy, Chinese and foreign languages, natural sciences, sociology and history. In Ma's view, theology and philosophy were the foundations for understanding the world and for respecting life. In addition, theology and philosophy could also help in investigating the valid sources of all human knowledge.

After the founding of the Chinese Republic, Ma Xiangbo also wanted to establish an academy of science in the model of the *L'Académie française* which comprised three major curriculum categories. Ma Xiangbo's vision of a modern Catholic university for China and his concern for the holistic education of youth was based on a basic knowledge in philosophy, the

humanities, religion, and the sciences at the center of the curriculum and emphasized the integration of Western and Eastern traditions. Having been trained in theology, philosophy, humanity, Western classics and Chinese literature, Ma's goal of education was to improve people's qualifications and to cultivate useful talents (Lu, 1996). Unlike his student Cai Yuanpei who advocated replacing religion with aesthetics, Ma strongly believed that religion "was central to the individual's life, to the order of a society, to the prosperity of culture and to the formation of morality" (Lu, 1996, p. 196). His commitment to dialogue in the Chinese-Western tradition through education not only made a great contribution at his time, but also served as a point of reference and voice for contemporary liberal arts education in China. The earliest curriculum of Fudan University clearly manifested Ma's Jesuit-based educational ideas as noted in the following table.

Table 1: Fudan University Curriculum of Courses in 1905

Literature	Science
Core courses: Ancient languages—Latin, Greek; modern language: English, French, German; Philosophy: Logic, ethics, metaphysics and psychology.	Core courses: arithmetic, geometry, natural philosophy, algebra, trigonometry, chemistry, descriptive geometry, mathematics, mechanics
Related courses: History, geography; Political sciences: sociology, economics, international law;	Related courses: astronomy, zoology, botany, geology, agriculture and horticulture, hygiene, book keeping, drawing, singing, gymnastics

Source: “复旦大学志” (第一卷, 1905–1949) [*The History of Fudan University*] (Vol. 1, 1905–1949), by Historians of Fudan University Collective (1996). 上海, 中国: 复旦大学出版社 [Shanghai, China: Fudan University Press], p. 29.

Ma Xiangbo often spoke of the importance of sciences and liberal arts. One of his early students recalled what Ma had said: “If we want to save the country, we must study sciences; to study modern sciences, we must first learn Western languages. Those who are willing to learn foreign languages in order to study sciences and save the country, please come to me” (Wiest, 2002, p.10).

### **Fudan College (Liberal Arts College at Fudan University)**

Following Fudan University’s history and tradition in the 1980s, Fudan University presidents Su Buqing and Xie Xide both advocated educating well-rounded students through a liberal arts education. The university then strengthened interdisciplinary studies to nurture students with mastery of both arts and sciences or sciences and engineering because Fudan aims at educating students in both humanities and sciences. In 1994 Fudan University took the lead in adopting the credit system. In the spirit of “broadening vision, consolidating basic knowledge, emphasizing ability and encouraging innovation,” over 60 disciplines were divided into 14 faculties. Since the end of the 1990’s, reform of undergraduate education has taken place in the majority of Chinese universities, and Fudan University improved its curriculum, updated textbooks and courses, and given students more freedom in course selection. Aware of China’s need for more balanced citizens with critical thinking, creativity and social and moral responsibility, Fudan University started to experiment with liberal arts education. In 2001 Fudan issued a document and decided to reform the curriculum in its *Plan for Education of Arts and Sciences*.

In 2003 Fudan University issued an “Outline of the Strategic Planning of Fudan University,” which stated that Fudan aimed at completing the curriculum reform within 3 years

and set up the School of Arts and Sciences. In its *Plan for Implementing the Basic Education of Arts and Sciences 2004* Fudan University decided to “maintain the current admission system by majors in 2005, establish the School of Arts and Sciences and administrate the first-year students regardless of majors.” In September 2005 Fudan College was established in line with the idea of a liberal arts education that aims to nurture well-rounded graduates with creativity and critical thinking. It is the first liberal arts education (residential) college in the Chinese higher educational system since 1949. Each residential college accommodates about one hundred to one thousand students. In November of 2005 the Research Center for Liberal Arts Education was founded with a focus on the mission of education, planning of liberal arts education, development of core curriculum and provision of student services. In the first academic year of 2006-2007, 50 courses of the core curriculum were offered, and 150 core courses were offered by 2011.

### **Structure of Fudan Liberal Arts College**

According to Fudan University’s plan, Fudan Liberal Arts College is responsible for the entire academic life of freshmen and part of the academic life of sophomores. Also, in accordance with the spirit of liberal arts education at Fudan University, Fudan Liberal Arts College designed its structure of management and administration (Fudan Liberal Arts College, 2005).

*Liberal arts education steering committee*: it is the decision-making body of liberal arts education reform which provides guidance to liberal arts education reform and core curriculum construction. The Committee defines the concept of liberal arts education, guides its development, and decides the framework and contents of core curriculum.

*Steering committee for liberal arts education curriculum construction:* this is an advisory committee which provides guidance and suggestions on the design, formulation and implementation of liberal arts education core curriculum.

*Office of academic affairs:* supported by the Registrar's office, schools and departments, it functions as a key office for the implementation of liberal arts education. It is also committed to setting up an open management model of teaching and advancing research on the core curricula.

*Office of student affairs:* this office provides services to students to make them feel at home at residential colleges:

- a. It provides daily service to students.
- b. Manages the residential colleges.
- c. Assists students in developing societies and planning events.
- d. Implements a comprehensive educational program for liberal arts education.

*Office of mentor affairs:* this office is committed to forming a group of mentors for undergraduates and coordination between students and mentors. It works with mentors to provide advice on learning. There are three types of mentors at Fudan Liberal Arts College: full-time mentors, part-time mentors and guest mentors. They give professional guidance on learning by scheduled lectures and workshops.

*Office of general affairs:* this office supports the operation of the college by providing efficient administrative assistance.

*Research and construction team for liberal arts education core curriculum modules:* the team consists of 6 teams for 6 modules, which operate in the form of meetings called by each team leader. The team presents suggestions to the Steering Committee for Liberal Arts Education

Curriculum Construction. The team also discusses and drafts the evaluation plan, criteria, and mid or long-term plan of each module. Each course is matched with a course team, headed by the Principle Leader (PL). According to the goal, PL works with team members to design and teach the course, and compile or publish textbooks.

### **Liberal arts education core curriculum modules**

Fudan Liberal Arts College divided its core curriculum into 6 modules and students are required to take up to 6 courses from any module.

*Module 1.* Classics on Chinese Literature and History; Cultural Heritage. This module includes both ancient and contemporary Chinese writings. Courses in this module include Books of Odes and Chinese Traditional Culture, Book of Change, Chinese Esthetics, Understanding Chuangtze, Tang Poetry and Traditional Chinese Culture, Guide to Song Poetry, Guide to Records of the Grand Historian, Guide to Explaining Text and Chinese Characteristics, Lu Xun and Modern Chinese Literature.

*Module 2.* Philosophy and Critical Thinking. This module focuses on the classics of Chinese and Western philosophy. It aims to help students to be familiar with the thoughts of great philosophers.

*Module 3.* Dialogues of Civilizations and World Outlook. Courses in this module include Western and other world civilizations. It helps students to compare civilizations for a better understanding of development of human civilizations, their clashes and merging and their contemporary significances. Major courses cover History of Cultural Exchange between China and the West, Study on Ancient Greek Civilization, Environmental Change and Chinese

Civilization, Indian Civilization, Guide to Homer's Epics, History of Renaissance, and Evolution of Chinese Modern Disciplines.

*Module 4. Progress of Science and Technology and Scientific Spirit.* Courses in this module emphasize the intellectual basis and history of science and technology. The module also emphasizes the intellectual history of mathematics, natural sciences and technology to foster a spirit of exploration and innovation. Main courses in this area are Material Sciences and Society, Celestial Bodies and the Universe, Science and Technology and Their Intellectual Development, Natural Sciences, Physics and Culture, The Mechanical World, Aviation and Aerospace.

*Module 5. Ecological Environment and Life Caring.* This module emphasizes the relationship between environment and human life, life sciences and ethics. It talks about environmental sciences, life sciences, medical sciences and ethics. Major courses are environment and humanity, sustainable development, human evolution, history of life sciences, medical ethics, human ecology, inheritance and innovation of TCM methodology.

*Module 6. Arts and Esthetics.* Courses in this module include music, Chinese operas, painting, sculpture, pottery, film, calligraphy, drama and recitation. Major courses are analysis on museum culture, appreciation and techniques of vocal art, the art of Peking opera, visual art and design, archeological appreciation and experience, introduction to music, appreciation and collection of Chinese ancient pottery.

Each student is required to take 12-24 credits (based on the major requirements) from more than 150 core courses curricula. In order to efficiently implement the core courses, Fudan Liberal Arts College established the PL (Principle Leader) system. PL and his/her team of instructors are in charge of teaching and optimizing courses. The responsibilities of a PL include

instructor selection, management and evaluation of the course, research funding application, instructor assessment and funding the budget. Each course is also supported with one or two master students or PhD students as a teaching assistant, recommended by instructors and then recruited by Fudan College. They assist teaching in class, and prepare presentations, update the course homepage, organize discussions and collect the teaching materials.

### **Life and culture of residential colleges (residential hall)**

In addition to core courses curricula, Fudan Liberal Arts College learned from the experience of world renowned universities in managing residential colleges and combined this knowledge with the characteristics of the traditional Chinese academy. Fudan Liberal Arts College founded four residential colleges as an important platform to realize liberal arts education.

The four residential colleges (halls) are named respectively after the first name of Ma Xiangbo, Li Denghui, Yan Fuqing and Chen Wangdao, who were the four most respected former presidents of Fudan University. Each residential college has its own logo, plaque, motto couplet, banner, anthem and symbolic color. Students are assigned dormitories unrelated to their major, nationality and ethnic identity in order to encourage communication between students with different backgrounds in hope that it will have a positive influence on their character, academic interests and values. These residential colleges also hold regular seminars or workshops on academic and social life, usually given by the residential college counselors. In addition, an integral part of residential college life is the Learn and Review Study club. In the Study meetings, students are expected to learn and review what they have learned so as to enhance their abilities. The Fudan College purposely organizes the Learn and Review Study to enable the students to



enrich their knowledge and develop themselves in a well-rounded fashion after class in the residential college. Mentors and residential college counselors who come from different disciplines with varied experience play a key role in the students' integral growth.

Fudan Liberal Arts College also develops and designs extracurricular activities centering on the concept of liberal arts education to expose students to liberal education after class. These activities are divided into 4 major areas:

*Orientation lecture series.* Through this program distinguished professors, scholars, outstanding alumni and mentors are invited to share their life experiences and those related to their academic field. It is meant to guide the students in their scientific outlook and values, and plan their university life and personal development.

*Academic vision broadening.* Through reading the classics, mentor advising, and academic vision broadening lecture series, this program helps students to talk with famous academicians, study the classics and get access to the latest research findings to broaden their academic vision and foster good learning attitudes.

*Citizenship nurturing.* This program helps students to understand the situation of the country, to clarify their ideals and social responsibilities, to learn to care and to develop a mature personality.

*Growth caring plan.* This program aims to instill in students confidence to enable them to attain well-rounded development by encouraging the students to care about the people around them and to solve problems related to academic disparity, poverty and psychological issues.

## **Conclusion**

In the last few years, following its century's long tradition and history of cultivating a student as whole person, Fudan University established its liberal arts college with the goal of educating students in critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning and innovative skills. The

implementation of reforming liberal arts education requires a change of curricula and extracurricular activities. With four residential colleges for freshmen, Fudan University has adopted the liberal arts as its core system and aims at curriculum reform and the development of extracurricular activity. In 2006 Fudan began classes of 20 students during freshman year in which a lecturer assigned books and led discussions, and the students presented reports. Due to lack of staff and faculty members, this program did not last long. In order to make liberal arts education more relevant and to educate students with critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, faculty members and administrators are trying to redesign the classrooms and encourage interaction in class so that students can learn about social issues and how to apply principles of morality and justice.

### **Shanghai Jiaotong University**

#### **Historical background**

Shanghai Jiaotong University has its origins in Nanyang College (Nanyang Gongxue or Nanyang Public Institute), which was founded by Sheng Xuanhuai, director-general of Imperial Chinese Telegraph and China Merchant's Steam Navigation Company in Shanghai in 1896 by an imperial edict issued by the Guangxu Emperor, to provide a commercial education for the children of merchants. Nanyang College was modeled on Beiyang College and only admitted those students who were proficient in Chinese writing and literature. In 1904, the Ministry of Commerce took over the school and one year later changed its name to Imperial Polytechnic College of the Commerce Ministry. In 1906, the college was placed under the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs, and its name was changed to Shanghai Industrial College of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs. When the Republic of China was founded in 1911, the college was run by

the Ministry of Communications and its name was once again changed, this time to the Government Institute of Technology of the Communications Ministry. In 1918 the republic government founded the School of Management and it became one of the oldest academic institutes. In 1921 Nanyang College came under the Ministry of Transportation and was renamed Nanyang College of Jiaotong University as a school specializing in transportation and communication studies. It focused on electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, railway engineering, and shipbuilding. Sheng Xuanhuai also suggested that the school should pay respect to Confucius and the classics by emphasizing the necessity for instruction in Confucian morality.

After the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the new Communist government adopted a policy of creating Soviet-style specialized schools. Under this policy some faculties of the university were incorporated into other universities. At the same time, engineering faculties from outside were absorbed to create a specialized engineering university. A greater rearrangement came in 1956 for the school when the national government decided to send a significant number of its faculties to Xi'an to help create another top engineering school, Xi'an Jiaotong University, in the western Chinese Shaanxi province. Afterwards, the school was officially renamed Shanghai Jiaotong University. Since the reform and opening policy in China in 1978, Shanghai Jiaotong has taken the lead in management reform of institutions for higher education, regaining its vigor and vitality with an unprecedented momentum of growth. A number of disciplines have been moving up towards the top echelon internationally, and burgeoning branches of learning have taken an important position domestically. Shanghai's Second Medical University was merged into Shanghai Jiaotong University on July 18, 2005 under the name Medical School of Shanghai Jiaotong University. Today Shanghai Jiaotong has 31 schools (departments), 63 undergraduate programs covering economics, law, the arts, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering,

agriculture, medicine, and management, 250 masters-degree programs, 203 Ph.D. programs, 28 post-doctoral programs, and 11 state key laboratories and national engineering research facilities. The enrollment of full-time students is over 38,000. There are 19,432 undergraduates, 13,628 candidates for Master's and Doctoral degrees and 2,080 foreign students (Shanghai Jiaotong University, 2012).

### **Liberal Arts Education in Shanghai Jiaotong University**

From its founding in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Shanghai Jiaotong University was an engineering-focused institute, specializing in transportation, post and telecommunications, print technologies, and national security and defense. Nurturing top engineering talents, Shanghai Jiaotong University was known as “the Eastern MIT” in the 1930s. In the 1950s, Shanghai Jiaotong was rearranged when the central government transferred the majority of its faculty member to Xi'an to build another Jiaotong university. As a traditional technical university, Shanghai Jiaotong aims to develop into a world-class research university by the mid-21st century. The individual schools and departments in Shanghai Jiaotong have been mandated to create their specific developmental programs and to become a comprehensive, research-oriented, internationalized higher educational institution.

In 2007, the university administration invited some experts and senior faculty members to discuss the development of liberal arts education and encouraged faulty members to be more creative in teaching in their classes (Shanghai Jiaotong University, 2007). This meeting was considered the first official endorsement from the university administration for liberal arts education. At the same time, Shanghai Jiaotong University was also aware that traditional professional and specialized education is not helpful to educate its students to become globally

competitive citizens, that many of its graduates lack critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning and innovative skills (Shanghai Jiaotong University, 2009). If the university wants to become a world-class university, it must educate students with liberal arts education. With this in mind and in accordance with the development project of the university, liberal arts education in Shanghai Jiaotong University officially began in 2009. Since then, Shanghai Jiaotong has developed in the areas of interdisciplinary development, teaching and research, science innovation, faculty quality, and curriculum reform to meet the need of liberal arts education.

In order to guide better the development and implementation of liberal arts education, Shanghai Jiaotong University established a commission for such, led by its president and other senior administrators. The major role of the commission for liberal arts education is to monitor the development and implementation of the liberal arts education program. According to the guideline of this commission, liberal arts education is to educate students to become responsible and well-rounded citizens with an integrated personality, and the capacity for moral reasoning and innovation. Hence, offering the core curriculum is an essential step for implementing liberal arts education at Shanghai Jiaotong. These courses, according to the commission, must lead students to an understanding and depth of knowledge in a variety of disciplines, to engagement in interdisciplinary studies and analytic skills, and guide students in value orientation and intellectual formation. The core courses are based on several criteria. They aim, for example, to help students understand basic analytic skills and basic knowledge, to improve students' grasp of humanities and their ability to be creative, to promote interdisciplinary studies and dialogue, to lead students to understand the cutting-edge development of research, to promote international exchange and collaboration, and to present the university's tradition and character of education.

## **Liberal arts education curriculum**

Unlike Fudan University, Shanghai Jiaotong University did not establish an independent college to implement liberal arts education but rather through a liberal arts education curriculum reform. As an academic requirement, all students must take the liberal arts curriculum. The core curriculum of Shanghai Jiaotong University's liberal arts education program is divided into 4 modules:

### *Humanities courses*

This module covers literature, history, arts and other related interdisciplinary studies. It aims at educating students interested in literature and art works and at teaching skills of critical thinking, creativity, innovation and communication. Main courses are Chinese Civilization and Environmental Transformation, Music Appreciation, American Culture and History, University Chinese, Classics of Chinese and Western Philosophy, Life Ethics, and Cross-border Exchange,

### *Social sciences courses*

This module includes politics, economics, law, management and other related disciplines. This module is to help students understand some basic and general conceptions and methodology. Main courses are Law and Morality, American Constitution and Society, Economics and Law, Public Policy and Citizenship, Contemporary Japanese Politics, History and Development of City Life, Government and Market, Evolution and the Perspective of Sino-Russian Relationships.

### *Natural sciences and engineering courses*

This module consists generally of physics, chemistry, biology and other engineering related disciplines. It expects students to understand the importance of natural sciences and engineering, and it endeavors to enhance in the students their capacity for science. It stresses the history of natural sciences and technology to foster interest in exploration and innovation. Main

courses are Humanity and Environment, Technology Practicum and Scientific Innovation, University Chemistry, Figure and Engineering Language, Innovative Thinking and Modern Design, Learning Chemistry in Practice, History of Life Science, Introduction to Life Science, Introduction to Engineering Technology, and Energy and Environment,

#### *Mathematics and logic course*

The focus of this module is to educate students to deal with mathematical concepts and thought and to understand the meaning of scientific and social development. It also emphasizes the intellectual history of mathematics. Logic discussion courses teach students how to argue and elaborate correctly, and how to analyze and debate effectively. As of now, there are only two courses offered for students in this module: General Theory of Statistics, and Reasoning and Thinking Training.

#### **Methods of implementation of liberal arts course**

Since 2009, liberal arts education curriculum has become a significant part of a new undergraduate program and is one of the most important curriculum reforms at Shanghai Jiaotong University. To guarantee the quality of liberal arts education, the university administration requests that senior faculty members teach the core courses. The administration also emphasizes that the essence of core courses are to guide students in problem analysis and strengthen their communication skills, but not to teach through transmission pedagogy or rote learning.

The selection of each core liberal arts course is based on two criteria: first, it is selected from common courses; second, each department submits a proposal of new core courses based on the requirements of liberal arts education program; then, the school organizes a committee to screen the new proposed courses. Shanghai Jiaotong decided to offer up to twenty core courses

in 2009 for all freshmen and will continue to increase more core courses every year. For those proposed core courses which are approved, the school grants nearly four thousand dollars for operating fees. After two semesters of experimentation, the proposed course will be evaluated by university experts. Once the proposed courses are approved, faculty members get continuing financial and policy support and other privileges based on the standard of the Shanghai Best Course Program (a scheme that evaluates the best courses) for another five years. After five years, if the courses pass the standards by the re-evaluation committee of the university, they can be called core courses of liberal arts education and continue to receive financial and policy support. For those core courses already entitled as the National or Shanghai Best Course Program, the school will no longer provide financial support. The evaluation standard of core courses offered by each department/school is equivalent to the Shanghai Best Course Program. According to the requirement of the liberal arts education commission, the 2009 class at Shanghai Jiaotong needs to complete at least 21 core courses of liberal education program.

Shanghai Jiaotong also requires several requirements to ensure the quality of liberal arts education. The statement of the University's liberal arts education states that liberal arts education has a significant role to play in strengthening quality education, and cultivating talented people with innovative skills. The main concern is to enhance students' capability in self-learning and creative knowledge so that students are able to learn new skills, and with critical thinking and creativity to face challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities in a globalized and pluralistic world.



## **Method of evaluating the quality of liberal arts courses**

To achieve the goal of educating students with critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills, the university requests that the implementation of core courses be in keeping with the following principles:

- a. Avoid traditional transmission pedagogy; make the students the center of learning, and make the learning a creative process.
- b. The teaching must guide students to think and reflect by teaching the key points of methodology and knowledge, cultivating students in the ability of discovering, analyzing, and solving problems. Students themselves should master the details of knowledge through the process of self-learning.
- c. The teaching process should include classroom lectures, outside class book reading, and classroom discussion. Teachers should provide sufficient reference books and assign to students a reasonable amount of reading. Teachers should evaluate students' learning ability and capacity through class discussion, reports, and thesis writing.
- d. Classroom discussion is one of the key factors in liberal arts education. A large class can be divided into several small groups with the help of a teaching assistant or teaching fellow.
- e. The final evaluation in the grade report must reflect different indicators of the entire learning process and students' self-learning. Each class should require students to write two major papers and reports with the help of teaching assistants.
- f. Teachers of core courses are encouraged to use advanced teaching methods, including virtual classroom, and social experiment.

## **Conclusion**

Since 2009, Shanghai Jiaotong University officially implemented a curriculum of core courses in the liberal arts education for all freshmen as a means to cultivate students with critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills. This is a great leap because Shanghai Jiaotong is traditionally a technical school. It also indicates that the university has realized that, given global challenge and competition, cultivating students as a whole person is integral to a university's mission.

## **East China Normal University**

### **Historical background**

East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai is the only 'normal', i.e., university offering education for the teaching profession, in this qualitative purposive sample study. This section includes a brief overview to understand ECNU's role as an institution for educating teachers in the move to expanding liberal arts education. Chinese society has a long tradition in teacher education from as early as the time of Confucius. The education of teachers has been also a key concern in modern China, with only a few normal schools established before 1911 to train teachers (Hayhoe, 2010). Several normal schools for men and women in Beijing and Nanjing were upgraded to university status in the 1920s and 1930s. During the Nationalist era, China had an outstanding system of faculty education which followed the model of the American 'normal' educational system. When the Chinese Communist Party took power in China in 1949, normal universities were playing important roles educating talented people for a new China in line with the Soviet model. Six national normal universities were established in the six major geographic regions of China (Hayhoe, 2010). East China Normal University in Shanghai was one of them

and the leading institution for teacher education in the East China region. Generally, the major courses in these normal universities are: mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, history, geography, literature and language, fine arts and music, educational theory, psychology and physical education. Students usually studied one major discipline for teaching at the secondary or tertiary level.

East China Normal University was established in 1951 on the basis of two private universities. In 1924 three hundred students and faculty at Xiamen University left the university in protest over its leadership and founded Utopia University in Shanghai. The name of Utopia (Daxia) indicated the dream of modernizing China. A few years later, Daxia University developed into a top private university with a strong college of education and two affiliated primary and secondary schools. Some renowned professors included Ma Junwu, Shao Lizi, Guo Moruo, and Zhu Jingnong.

In 1925 at the time of the May 30<sup>th</sup> event (The May Thirtieth Movement was a major labor and anti-imperialist movement during the middle-period of the Republic of China era. It began when Shanghai Municipal Police officers opened fire on Chinese protesters in Shanghai's International Settlement on May 30, 1925. The shootings sparked international censure and nation-wide anti-foreign demonstrations and riots), 553 students and 19 Chinese faculty members left the St. John's University, a renowned Christian university established by the American Episcopal Church in Shanghai. University authorities had refused to support student participation in the massive strikes and other protest actions against the Japanese and British imperialistic invasion in Shanghai. Three months later, with help from different social sectors, these same students and faculty established Guanghua University; its name means to enlighten China. This private university developed along a model similar to that of Utopia University and

with three major schools: liberal arts, business and education. The idea of the normal university first formed with the French Revolution, and the first Ecole Normale Supérieure opened in 1794. Later normal schools were founded in many places in France to train elementary teachers; eventually, this model influenced educational ideas globally.

The education of teachers had been a major concern in China's development of modern primary schools before the Revolution of 1911 (Hayhoe, Li & Zha, 2010). There were only a few normal schools in China prior to 1949. Six national normal universities were established in the six major geographic regions of China with a purpose to train teachers for Chinese schools at different levels. In October 1951, East China Normal University was established on the academic basis of Guanghua and Utopia universities as the only leading higher education institution for training teachers in the East China region. Other universities' educational departments and major disciplinary departments from Tongji University and Fudan University in Shanghai were also consolidated at East China Normal University, and it became the first socialist normal university in the new China with departments in all major subject areas taught in secondary schools—mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, history, geography, literature and language, fine arts and music, educational theory, psychology and physical education. In 1959 the central government designated it as one of the sixteen national key universities. Currently, there are about twenty major normal universities which focus on the education of teachers and on other fields of study.

In 1981 ECNU became one of the universities in China to grant master and doctoral degrees. In 1996 it became a Project 211 University which provided more financial support both from the central and the Shanghai municipal governments. ECNU also integrated three lower level educational institutions in 1997 and 1998: the Shanghai Early Childhood Teachers College, the

Shanghai Institute of Education, and the Shanghai Second Institute of Education. In 2006 ECNU entered project 985 as only the second normal university to gain that status. Today ECNU consists of 24 colleges and five other education related schools and it continues to be a high-level university with teacher education as its primary goal. On the university level ECNU divides its program into five core modules: educational history and theory, subject teaching and learning, student's development, teacher development, and school management. In 2005, ECNU had a total enrollment of 12,256 undergraduate students and 6898 graduate students (ECNU, 2008). It has 65 undergraduate programs including 21 in various fields of education and 44 in non-educational fields. Education has been one of the best programs in the country and is the key discipline for ECNU.

### **Liberal Arts Education in ECNU**

According to Meng Xiancheng, the founding president of ECNU, “a university is a school, and teachers and their students there should have a group life special to schools. Teachers and their students are traditionally regarded as the intellectual elites of the society; they are supposed to embody the most beautiful ideal of morality in the society” (Meng, 1932, p. 1). As a normal university focuses on teacher education, ECNU has been fulfilling its mission to provide future teachers, but it is also aware that traditional transmission pedagogy is not sufficient for educating teachers with critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills. But challenges due to mass higher education and competition with other key normal universities and comprehensive universities have influenced a tension between the university's goal from concentration on high quality graduates and its pursuit of being highly ranked.

Since 2007 ECNU has had the goal of educating students who are interested and dedicated to education. Its graduates must master the fundamentals and strive to possess a mature

personality, formed professionalism and capable teaching skills. The university seeks to train students with organizational and design skills, develop their talents for teaching and educate the students with critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning and innovative skills to be role models. To meet the need and goal of liberal arts education, ECNU issued a document in 2009 on liberal arts education and focused on two institutional development strategies: interdisciplinary studies and internationalization, which attracted high level scholars and professors to teach liberal arts courses. ECNU expanded its fields of study in teaching and research from the mid-1990s in line with the development strategy of Shanghai and the nation to cultivate the future talents with critical thinking and innovative skills. Its 24 colleges cover 9 fields of study which range from the humanities, social sciences, education to natural sciences, management and engineering with a goal “to possess several first-class disciplines, develop inter-disciplinary strengths and become a renowned research university that leads Chinese teacher education and educate teachers as whole person” (ECNU, 2010).

### **Liberal arts education curriculum**

Liberal arts education at ECNU covers two major areas: common electives and common core curriculum.

*Common elective courses include:* language, humanities and arts, social sciences, natural sciences, education and psychology.

*Common core curriculum courses consist of:* English, physical education, computer sciences and foundation, military training, introduction to employment, Mao Zedong thought/Deng Xiaoping theory and three representative ideas, modern Chinese history, morality and foundation of law, Marxism and Chinese.

The courses are divided into 7 modules: teacher's comprehensive quality, social sciences, humanities, arts and physical education, language, natural sciences, and information sciences.

Common elective courses in ECNU are taught through lectures in a large class hall so that teaches lecture while students take notes. There is little communication between students and faculty. Students usually do not finish their reading requirement because they are concerned with the score but not the subject itself. By 2010, there were 175 courses offered in the liberal arts education program with a focus on developing human skills, all freshmen are required to take up to 24 credit liberal arts course in any discipline. Courses related to humanities and Chinese civilization/tradition, however, are allotted only 12 subjects, 8% of the offerings in the program.

### **Meng Xiancheng liberal arts college**

In 2007, the Chinese government introduced a policy to waive the fees of all students in teacher education programs in the six national-level normal universities on conditions that they are willing to teach in rural areas for a certain number of years after graduation. In September 2007 ECNU established Meng Xiancheng College, named after the first president of ECNU and educator in China, to educate students in more comprehensive and holistic ways. This boarding college with over 1200 students following the pattern of traditional Chinese Shuyuan is a new group of teacher candidates whose fees have been waived under national policy but they are required to serve in remote areas for a specified number of years. According to its aims, this new college aims to integrate educational activities into students' lives and into the formation of their character and professional principles. The students are expected to become teachers with a strong sense of mission, service/commitment and responsibility as well as excellence in teaching (Hayhoe, 2010). The Meng Xiancheng College also aims to cultivate future teachers with critical

thinking, creativity and innovative skills. The establishment of Meng Xiancheng College shows that ECNU has sought balance in its identity as a normal university in order to cultivate the whole person as well as to meet the challenges of developing new disciplines within the educational program for teachers.

Through Meng Xiancheng College, ECNU also focuses on developing students' abilities and skills, professional dedication and career achievement. Meng Xiancheng College divided its eight semesters into eight modules, each module with a specific theme: ideals of a teacher, vitality of campus life, inspiration of new thoughts, teacher's life, talent development, serving society, practice and innovation, and career development. It also regularly invites excellent teachers from different primary and high schools to give lectures to students on special topics to help them understand the career of teaching. Based on its educational strategy and professional development, Meng Xiancheng College established three fundamental modules in the course system: Liberal arts education, professional education, and teacher education.

The liberal arts education module at Meng Xiancheng college includes two major parts:

*Subjects studied:* language, humanities and arts, social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, statistics and cultural tradition. Cultural tradition consists of college Chinese, Chinese classics, Chinese history, Confucianism and modern society. Mathematics consists of college mathematics, culture of mathematics, statistics and statistics software. English, computer science, college teaching methodology, physical education, military training, political thought and theory and college physics which are core courses.

*Meng Xiancheng Shuyuan liberal arts lecture series:* this series is specially offered free to normal college students. It aims at enhancing students' human qualities, presenting social and



natural science, opening up students' disciplinary vision, managing the front-line theory and knowledge of interdisciplinary studies. The lecture series consists of 32 subjects and covers literature, history, economics, society, global science, and life science disciplines, more than half of the subjects are taught by senior professors who are fellows of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering. The College plans to open more courses in the near future. Aside from these two major parts, Meng Xiancheng College also organizes different extracurricular activities, such as, listening to reports from experts on special topics, viewing a film, debates, and speech contests to enrich students' life.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter summarized the brief history and the implementation of liberal arts education programs in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU. Each university belongs to a different educational category and has its own educational goal. The implementation of liberal arts education varies. For example, Fudan University has established a well-developed liberal arts education program modeled after that of Yale University while Shanghai Jiaotong University and ECNU are still in the process to improve their liberal arts programs. This chapter has presented the historical background and curriculum development of Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU and emphasized the ways in which the reform in these three universities is influenced by Western ideas and models. However, there is a different approach in the Western tradition where there exists autonomy and freedom. Students are required to take responsibility for their learning and “make the decisions that will lead to a fuller understanding of themselves and the world around them; while in China, the emphasis is on the cultivation of students through highly articulated programs of study” (Stone, 2011, p. 83).

The core courses are also subject-based, such as the study of classical history, philosophy and literature. The reform and open door policy in China over the last three decades have succeeded and brought positive changes to higher education. While China has established numerous universities of international prominence and has shifted from elite education to mass education, these alterations have been at the cost of a declining quality of undergraduate education, and the undergraduate curriculum has not yet met the needs of China's globalized development. The initial motivation for liberal arts education in these three universities was to encourage students' development with character, independent thinking, creativity, innovative ideas, and moral reasoning. Since the specialized curriculum was duplicated from the Soviet Union model, it was not suitable to educate well-rounded talent and provide key skills for national development, such as leadership and critical thinking. As a key element to meet the need of market economy and globalization, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU all reformed their curricula to provide good quality education. The following chapter examines how policy makers, administrators and faculty members view curriculum reform and development of liberal arts education and other key findings from the research.

## **Chapter 6 Curriculum development of liberal arts in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU**

### **Introduction**

From 1949 to the late 1990s, the curriculum in Chinese schools (from primary to college level) was totally unified and the standard pedagogy was lecturing and memorization. A required common curriculum consisting of Marxist theories, a foreign language, and physical education had always been imposed for all Chinese college students regardless of the institutions. There was little room for creativity and analytical thinking. Since the late 1990s, much of the reform in Chinese education system and liberal arts education has been focusing on the curriculum; the utmost goal of this curriculum reform is to improve the quality of education for whole nation and to meet the new needs of global challenges and competition. The implementation of the liberal arts studies curriculum by universities moves in the direction from test-oriented to whole-person development in orientation. Major universities are expected to offer a series of liberal arts education courses outside the students' majors. Under the new curriculum, students are required to take a particular number of credits in each category: basic quality courses, liberal arts courses, distribution courses, concentration courses, and free electives.

Chapter 6 presents a study of liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU universities under two topics: (1) forces that shaped the curriculum development of liberal arts education. These influences are examined as they pertain to contemporary Chinese universities and, particular, in the three universities chosen as purposive sample cases; (2) themes derived from interview data. This chapter discusses the topic on curricula development of liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU universities, which includes the

factors that influence the curricula development: for example, teacher's role, core course development, the attitude of the students' and the administrators are distinct, and perhaps, varying within each group, and challenge of the labor market. These factors, according to many interviewees, are essentially important to the success of liberal arts curriculum in these purposive sample study universities in Shanghai. The analysis of these themes is significant in understanding the present situation of liberal arts education and its challenges in the three universities and, to a certain degree, the common problems of implementation of liberal arts education in other universities nationwide.

### **Historical view**

In the 1950s when the Chinese Communist Party took power in China, Chinese universities (public and private) were forced to reorganize and remerge as professional schools in the model of the Soviet Union. In CCP's view, the Soviet Union had taken great strides along the path of industrial modernization and, therefore, had much to offer China with their expertise and support. However, despite having the most direct and lasting impact on the Chinese higher education system from 1952 until the 1980s, the Soviet Union model had its limits and deficiencies when Chinese universities decided to build world-class comprehensive universities (combine humanities and sciences courses) and educate global citizens because the Soviet Union model does not provide students with comprehensive qualities to meet current needs. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in China affected Chinese higher education as well and caused the deterioration of the entire educational system for ten years.

As noted, in the past two decades, there was a tendency toward specialization in the undergraduate curriculum in the Chinese higher educational system. Those who studied science

or technology were not familiar with the name of Libai who was one of the most famous poets of the Tang dynasty in China. In the other hand, those who studied literature or humanities lacked knowledge of Newton. Hence, policy makers in China point out the need to broaden students' comprehensive knowledge in humanities and sciences. Liberal arts education, according to them, can provide students with an extension of knowledge beyond specialized major fields of concentration in relation to the market economy and the tradition of the Soviet Union model. Through the courses of liberal arts education, universities can provide students with more electives in social sciences, natural sciences, humanistic studies, and some applied sciences. These courses will broaden students' learning and skills, and cultivate students with critical thinking and innovative skills.

Reforms and the re-emergence of liberal arts education in some key universities in China were also a result of the reorientation of the economic system from a planning economy to a market economy in the mid-1980s (Gan, 2012). Hence, the market is an essential force or key factor in the ascendancy of general education. Some important questions need to be answered. What type of citizen does a university need to graduate? Is the curriculum or pedagogy developed to meet the students' and socioeconomic needs? In a globalized and internationalized world, how can graduates of universities be prepared for today's world?

In June 1995 the first meeting on “Cultural Quality Education” was held in Wuhan to discuss how Chinese universities could provide students with a broader intellectual spectrum and a more humanistic education. Cultural quality education required the university not only to impart knowledge but also to enhance competence, innovative and critical thinking, character, social and moral reasoning, and responsibility. Eventually, cultural quality education became the foundation of liberal arts education in contemporary Chinese universities.

## **Definition of liberal arts education from the perspective of the three purposive institutions**

In chapter four, I have provided several definitions of liberal arts from a universal perspective and also from the traditional Chinese background. It is worthwhile to mention here how policy makers, administrators and faculty members conceptualize a liberal arts education. Policy makers, administrators and faculty members I interviewed from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU expressed their own understanding of liberal arts. During the interview, several policymakers from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government expressed their interest in liberal arts education, without using the term “liberal arts education.” To this date they still prefer the term “cultural quality education” or “general education” as the latter is commonly used in the Chinese higher educational system. The members of different faculties define liberal arts education in a similar way. They all pointed out that liberal arts education is an important means to prepare students to live responsible and creative lives in a global world by developing intellectual skills and competency through engagement with ideas across a range of interdisciplinary studies. Many of them stated that liberal arts education (or general education as they called it) educates students to be responsible citizens of society, to have critical thinking, to acquire creative ability in problem solving and to possess moral reasoning. As the Chinese higher educational system has placed great weight on professional or specialized education in the last three decades, various faculties say that contemporary China needs more graduates who are not only excellent in their own fields but also have mastered the values of the humanities, and have enhanced their critical thinking and moral commitment for social and economic advancement.

Two senior professors from Fudan University pointed out that general education or liberal arts education is expected to develop the student into a well-rounded person who is

socially, morally, psychologically, academically and emotionally balanced and integrated, and who has critical thinking skills and a sense moral responsibility. In another words, liberal arts education is to form balanced citizens for the nation and the world. Administrators at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU have similar views on a liberal arts education. They define liberal arts education as multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary studies that enable students to have a liberal outlook in learning and thinking. It fosters critical thinking, social responsibility, and life-long learning. Administrators interviewed, such as deans, vice presidents and registrars, mentioned that the leaders in their universities, indeed, realize the importance of liberal arts education as an instrument to educate their students to be future leaders and global citizens. Fudan University, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU have recently established policies on building world class universities. According to these administrators, comprehensive knowledge in students acquired through liberal arts education is one of the key elements. During the interview, some people expressed that general education is just to provide more courses which students may elect to fulfill the requirement for graduation or for sampling various branches of disciplines. But some other interviewees said that general education is an education that builds a strong foundation for future leaders in their own field with innovative ideas, critical thinking, social responsibility and moral judgment.

A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government, states that the term liberal arts education is not familiar in the Chinese context; general education is employed instead. For him general education is a means to develop students' holistic formation and all-round potential and capacity to become well—qualified and responsible citizens. According to this officer, the aim of the university is to educate students with innovative ideas and critical thinking through curriculum development instead of graduating students exposed to a

narrower discipline of studies, such as in the 1950s. Since the mid-1990s many universities began the program called “cultural quality education” which the officer from the Shanghai municipal government thinks is just another name for general education or “liberal arts education” with Chinese features because there is no essential difference between cultural quality education and general education. The motivation of the Chinese government to promote general education, as this government officer sees it, stems from a decline in the comprehensive quality of university students. The government wants to stress intellectual competence over textbook mastery.

Many faculty members and administrators I interviewed stated that students should not only be learning in the classroom but should apply their knowledge in real life situations. A senior academic administrator from ECNU, pointed out that

Along with a lack of humanity, some students are missing a sense of social responsibility. Many of our studies are still limited within classrooms; we did not provide enough space for students to grow and apply their knowledge in a larger context. When they encounter problems, they just do not know how to deal with or how to solve it. Moreover, students should learn traditional values in morals, ethics and theories dealing with political studies (political study in China means study Communist theory, Marxism, Leninism, Mao’s thought and Deng Xiaoping’s theory.) Students should combine scientific disciplines with humanistic disciplines, either Chinese or Western, classical or modern. Students are expected to revive the great heritage of national culture as well as other cultures.

Although faculty members, administrators and policy makers held different interpretations of liberal arts education, they agreed that the conceptualization of liberal arts education reflects a shift in education philosophy from specialized education to training students with innovative talents and critical thinking skills.



## **Curriculum Development at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU**

### **Historical background**

Curriculum development is essential to the success of liberal arts education as well as for students' integral studies (Gan, 2006). Fu (1990) states: "to conceive the curriculum, we must avail ourselves of all possible resources, cross-cultural as well as interdisciplinary... We shall be able to help our students widen their scope of vision regarding humanity, morality, religion, philosophy, psychology, and the nature and direction of the sciences" (p.135).

Prior to 1949 most Chinese universities followed the US model of liberal arts education and the curriculum did cover humanities and social and natural sciences. At the beginning of the new China in 1949, the Chinese leader Mao Zedong's and the Chinese Communist Party's primary goal was the economic development, reconstruction and modernization of China along the Soviet Union's model. Influenced by the Soviet Union's ideology, the CCP also regarded education as a means to enhance socialist ideas in Chinese society. The state tightly controlled educational institutions at different levels and applied a centralized policy in the educational area. Due to political and historical problems, Mao and the CCP deliberately began to cut off links to the Western world, continued its close ties with the Soviet Union and duplicated the USSR model for many aspects of life: education, science, agriculture, industry, and vocational training. Many comprehensive universities, include Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, were reorganized into single-disciplinary universities, such as foreign language institutes, medicine institutes, railway institutes, etc. According to Ouyang (2004), the transitional period of higher education from 1949 to 1976 was characterized by two goals: first, a higher education system should have the right political ideology; it should belong to the new government led by the

Chinese Communist Party. Second, it should directly serve the needs of economic development rapidly taking place in the new country (p. 141)

Since the newly founded Chinese government lacked experience and manpower to manage education models, it depended on assistance from the Soviet Union. During the 1950s, Russia provided personnel, financial aid, and technical support to the new China and the CCP. By 1952 the Chinese higher education system duplicated the Soviet model in administration, teaching methods, textbooks, and classroom design of higher education institutions, and aimed at training more academically excellent technical and vocational experts with socialist political ideas. Within a centralized educational system and structure, the government played a dominant role and was responsible for policymaking, school planning, administration, personnel assignment, curricula arrangement, textbooks, funding and legislation.

In the early 1950s, all higher education institutions were brought under government control and leadership and the entire higher educational system was restructured in the form of the Soviet Union model. Every higher educational institution became a specialized institution that would serve the economic and social goals of the New China. The curricula, which had allowed for common courses in colleges and universities and the departments in the old system, were terminated in favor of uniform curricular requirements within one specialization for each student (Hayhoe, 1996). In such specialized higher educational institutions, the three foundational courses were politics, foreign languages, and physical education. Overspecialization in the Chinese higher educational system constrained students from living and thinking critically and independently. This was prevalent in Chinese higher educational institutions and supported by the convictions of educators in the 1980s, at which time reform of curricula development took place in many universities in the favor of general education.

## **Curriculum reform at Fudan University**

Fudan University was established by Ma Xiang-bo in 1905. In 1917 Fudan Public School began to offer undergraduate programs and officially renamed itself “Fudan University.” After being expanded to a full-fledged university, the University had an increasing enrollment. It had three schools: Arts, Sciences and Business, a prep school, and a section of secondary education. In 1929 Fudan University altered its educational system and opened four new departments: journalism, civil administration, law, and education. It consisted of seventeen departments, which comprised the four schools: Arts, Sciences, Law, and Business. By 1937 Fudan had established four schools (Arts, Sciences, Law, and Business), which were made up of sixteen departments, a secondary school, an experimental secondary school, and two elementary schools for compulsory education. It became one of the most important institutions of academic research and higher education in southeast China.

Since the beginning of New China in 1949, Fudan has seized four golden opportunities for further development and curricular reform. The first one came in 1952 when colleges and universities all over the country underwent a thorough readjustment and reshuffling. Fudan dropped its departments of applied disciplines for those of arts and sciences from other universities in East China region. In the late 1990s, Fudan University became more intellectually comprehensive by covering a wider range of academic disciplines: the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, technology, and management.

The third is the official merger with Shanghai Medical University on 27th, April, 2000, from which a brand new Fudan was born. For the first time the University had its own college of medical sciences. The fourth is the establishment at Fudan of the liberal arts education program

by establishing the liberal arts college in 2005. Its "Education Scheme for Arts and Sciences at Fudan University" seeks to transform its undergraduate program from traditional education to a liberal education through a credit-based system for the entire university. Fudan University divided its 70 majors into seven general categories. In addition, in order to encourage students to be more creative and actively involved in campus life, the number of required credits and class hours were decreased. The core curriculum, which focuses on more than 50 specially developed courses, requires that students take two courses in each of six categories: (1) Chinese Civilization and Literature; (2) Philosophy and Critical Thinking; (3) Dialogues of Civilization and World Outlook; (4) Processes of Science and Technology and Scientific Spirit; (5) Ecological Environment and Life Caring; and (6) Art and Aesthetics. The ideology courses are independent of these six categories and are mandatory courses for freshmen.

### **Curriculum reform at Shanghai Jiaotong University**

From its beginning to mid-20th century, Shanghai Jiaotong was an engineering-focused institute, specializing in transportation, post and telecommunications, print technologies, and national security and defense. In 1956 it merged again with other institutes when the central Chinese government followed the Soviet Union model. Since 1980s Shanghai Jiaotong's subject areas have been expanded and it has 21 academic schools and departments and 65 subject areas covering economics, law, the arts, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, agriculture, medicine, and management. The university supports 60 undergraduate programs, 152 master's programs, and 93 doctoral programs. In 1996, during its centennial, Shanghai Jiaotong put forward a "three-step" plan to develop into a world-class research university by the mid-21st century. The individual schools and departments were also required to create their specific developmental programs. Since 1998 Shanghai Jiaotong has progressively developed in the areas

of disciplinary development, teaching and research, science innovation, faculty quality, and financial resources. The following sections provide detailed analysis and evaluation of Shanghai Jiaotong's practices toward becoming a research university with world-class capacity. Since the early 21st century, Shanghai Jiaotong aims at developing into a comprehensive research university that covers 12 disciplinary fields: natural sciences, engineering, medicine, management, law, economics, agriculture, social sciences, humanities, education, history, and military studies.

To strengthen its academic dimension, Shanghai Jiaotong has taken various approaches to develop different subject areas. It merged with an agricultural university and a medical university in the region in 1999 and 2005, respectively, with the explicit goal of enriching its academic disciplines. These mergers enable the participating institutions to share teaching and research resources, consolidate academic capacity, and improve their international prestigious reputation. Since 2007, the university has proposed new goals and strategies for the development of its academic disciplines. The methods include sustaining the eminence of its flagship departments and their disciplinary development, strengthening its basic disciplinary programs and departments, providing its feature disciplines with special provisions, bolstering underperforming departments and their disciplinary development, and encouraging interdisciplinary research. The university has focused particularly on the strategy of bolstering underperforming departments and their disciplinary development, such as subjects in the social sciences. Following the goal of educating more comprehensive-oriented global citizens, the curriculum of Shanghai Jiaotong University's liberal arts education consists of four major areas: (1) Humanities courses; (2) Social sciences; (3) Natural sciences and engineering; (4) Mathematics and Logic. Students are required to take 4-6 courses from these four major areas.

## **Curriculum reform at East China Normal University**

Historically, under the Soviet model, universities in China recruited students by programs, and there were only two levels of administration: department and central government (Hayhoe & Li, 2011). Prior to the 1980s, ECNU as a normal university for teacher education followed the Soviet model to merge departments and educated professionals. Since the late 1980s, schools at ECNU have been established to group departments; there are currently 19 schools founded from the traditional departments which cover humanities, arts, sciences and natural sciences disciplines. With the drastic expansion and diversification of the curriculum the student percentage has changed also. To meet the market need and student-body mobility, many of the new curricular disciplines have been developed in response to new employment needs in Shanghai and other regions in China, and a strong emphasis is being placed on professional development and the nurturing of a sense of mission and social responsibility. As a normal university, the expansion and diversification of the curriculum shows that ECNU has sought to balance its normal university identity, but challenges indicate that many new curricular areas developed are unrelated to traditional teacher education. Hence, in the late 1990s, the administration at ECNU realized the importance of curricular diversification and the initial step was undertaken to provide a more comprehensive education of teachers and to enhance the teachers' quality at the national level. To fulfill this goal, the ECNU established its liberal arts program in 2007. The liberal arts education curriculum is divided into seven modules: teacher's comprehensive quality, social sciences, humanities, arts and physical education, language, natural sciences, and information sciences. Students in their first or second year are mandated to take up to 6 courses from these seven modules.

## **Conclusion**

The development of world-class research universities is one of the main goals of Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The development of new curriculum in liberal arts education provides undergraduate students in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU more opportunities to take courses in other disciplines outside their own field of concentration. Each university requires at least 16-20 credits in liberal arts courses, but implementation of these courses still face many obstacles. As a senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong expressed his concern: “I am not so sure how much liberal arts education my students need and how much will they learn from the program. It seems that the program is just a formality.” These obstacles pertain to four areas: teacher’s role, core courses development, student and administrator’s attitude. Each of these needs to be examined.

### **Faculty Member’s Views on Liberal Arts Curriculum**

As noted above, in order to meet the needs and demands of liberal arts education, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU revised their curricula and added more common and core courses. Each of these universities now offer more than 200 common courses in liberal arts education programs, and students are required to take at least 16-21 credits or more. In the case of some majors, there are courses not open to election by students outside the major. When asked how these courses reflect the spirit of liberal arts education, a senior administrator from Fudan Liberal Arts College presented to me a well-designed curriculum and pointed out that in the last few years, Fudan University has designed a unique curriculum based on the humanities and imparting conventional knowledge. Fudan University broke down the restriction of “major” or “field of study” and constructed 6 modules in hopes of fostering a new generation with humanistic

awareness and enlightenment. The administrator stated that “the liberal arts curriculum brings students from different majors together to learn something not in any of their major fields. Many students feel that they benefit from these interdisciplinary studies after their first year at liberal arts college at Fudan University.”

A senior professor at Shanghai Jiaotong added that “new courses transform the traditional program to liberal arts education, at least in theory,” but he thinks that too many superficial courses exist. Some do not relate to liberal arts education. The university administration wants more innovative courses and some teachers have developed them without comprehensive evaluation as to suitability. This professor is of the opinion that they are a waste of time and resources. He stated:

In my department, almost every teacher is invited to offer a liberal arts course, but some of the curricula, such as introduction to biology, biology and life, introduction to chemistry, are not really directly related to liberal arts curriculum. Faculty members in my department are just carrying out the requirement of the administration.

Teaching method is another key element that could affect the implementation of a liberal arts education curriculum. Because teacher education curricula have not changed fundamentally and professors are not trained to teach liberal arts courses, nearly every university faculty member is still lecturing using the same method by which they were taught. Teachers generally monopolize the entire class and leave no room for students’ reflection and interaction. A professor from Shanghai Jiaotong mentioned that when he was a university student, his teachers always stood in front of the blackboard to teach and wrote the key points on the blackboard. He quickly wrote down the points in case the teacher erased the board for the next points. All those points needed to be memorized for examinations. Now that he is a teacher, he would like to change that transmission method and have more interaction with students so that they can turn



out to be more widely educated citizens, but he cannot because of classroom setting and greater emphasis on tests. “It seems that the entire Chinese educational examination system is designed to test the memory rather than developing the capacity to comprehend and the ability to think critically.”

Even though ECNU is one of the top 6 normal universities in China devoted to educating qualified teachers for the future in primary, secondary and tertiary schools, a senior administrator at ECNU, indicated that ECNU is not ready for liberal arts education regardless of the encouragement of the university administration given to schools and departments to teach liberal arts programs. “I think that we are not ready to implement the LA curriculum for the entire university since teachers are not well-informed and educated about liberal arts and students in general are not interested in liberal arts because they believe that only specialized education can help them to find a good job.” The key courses, aside from major concentrations, are still focused on political theory, foreign languages and physical education, or are courses unrelated to the study of humanities or the social sciences.

The size of classes at ECNU is increasing and the seminars of fifteen to twenty students, common in the past, have given way to a typical size of fifty and even one hundred students. Teachers are not able to give proper attention to each student. Therefore, it is not surprising that at the end of the semester many teachers do not remember which students were in their classes. As a result, students are less serious about courses which are not in their major concentration, and they are more preoccupied with employment concerns or taking the TOEFL or GRE for advanced studies in the US and other developed countries. By contrast, some young faculty I interviewed at Fudan, Shanghai Jiatong and ECNU, particularly those who earned their doctoral degrees abroad, tend to change the traditional transmission method in teaching and to implement

innovative pedagogy. They actively engage with students and motivate them to interact with each other to order to develop creativity and critical and innovative thinking skills. But these young teachers encountered resistance at the start because most Chinese students who have grown up in the traditional transmission model are not used to the new practices, such as small group discussions, individual presentations, or group or individual projects. However, some students have given these new practices high commendation.

China's high school system usually divides its curriculum into two major areas: humanities (Wen Ke) and science (Li Ke). Consequently, when the students enter the university they tend to select courses related to their high school interests: science majors in high school prefer science courses, and humanity majors in high school prefer humanity courses. Some faculty members interviewed at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU also mentioned that as a consequence of prior studies in humanities or science in high school, the university courses were found to be less intense or difficult; this influenced the selection of courses.

When asked why there is no official document from the central government to promote curriculum development of liberal arts education, many interviewed faculty members and administrators do not know the reason. Neither did the Shanghai municipal government promulgate any regulation or policy to promote general education. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai Municipal government said that "most probably the central government still makes science and technology innovation the priority of the national strategy, so liberal arts education is not discussed by the central government." The policy on promoting cultural quality education of the 1990s is still followed.

Faculty members, administrators and policy makers I interviewed are of the opinion that the Chinese government or the ministry of education should issue a policy that can support and promote general education. A senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong is one of the strongest advocates supporting a national policy on liberal arts education. He stated that the “Chinese educational system is still centralized in terms of curriculum development, although some universities can freely add some courses. But if there is national policy to promote curriculum development of liberal arts education then everything can be easily solved.” As of now, many universities have offered general education or cultural quality education in their own way and the outcome is yet to be evaluated.

According to Ma (2009), as China strives to develop its economy in the hope of raising the standard of living for the Chinese people, it is important to educate students with knowledge sufficiently comprehensive to enable them to bear the responsibility and mission of the nation. Policy makers and administrators think that many universities and faculty misunderstand the purpose of general education. Every major university, at least in Shanghai, has started a general education program, but the implementation varies with each institution having its own priorities. As noted earlier, there is no national or local policy to promote general education in Chinese universities, so it is hard to evaluate the outcomes. It largely depends on how each university follows the model of American general education and how seriously university administrators and faculty members consider general education. A senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong stated that due to a lack of institutionalized support and corresponding policies for a university-wide liberal arts curriculum, students in his institution face difficulties in adjusting to studies in different program. He further pointed out that “all students, whatever their major concentrations are, need to be given an opportunity to think and discuss liberal arts education. The syllabuses

should be changed if students are to be interested in liberal arts education, the syllabuses should provide a framework addressing issues close to young people's concerns."

### **Faculty member's role**

The teacher's role in implementing liberal arts curriculum was frequently singled out by most interviewees. They state that if the liberal arts curriculum is to survive in contemporary Chinese universities, it will largely depend on the teacher's commitment to this program. Avalos (2006) states that no curriculum reform can succeed without teachers' input and their active participation and engagement. Curriculum reform does not merely involve a change of curricular content or pedagogical methods. It also involves teachers' modes of thinking, communicative approaches, and comprehension. It is noteworthy that many teachers have developed their own philosophy of teaching throughout their long teaching careers. Hence, one of the key elements in liberal arts curriculum reform is how teachers accept change, how they implement the curriculum; and how they guide students' activities (Huang, 2008). Although the Ministry of Education in China established a new initiative, "the quality assessment of undergraduate teaching" in 2007 to address undergraduate teaching and learning, faculty members from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU expressed several concerns regarding the teachers' role.

First, from my conversation with interviewees, many of them still do not fully or wholeheartedly support liberal arts education. They think such courses are unnecessary and unrelated to students' major concentrations. A faculty member from Shanghai Jiaotong said that "when administrators of a university planned to implement curricula reform in liberal arts education, they did not seek any feedback and suggestions from faculty members; they only asked a few senior faculty members and then announced that the university was going to begin a

liberal arts education program.” Many teachers I interviewed reacted passively to a call from the university administration to implement the liberal arts curriculum; they had other priorities in their own discipline or preferred research and publication.

Thus, as evident from my interviews with administrators and faculty members, it seems that poor communication discouraged faculty members from participating in the implementation of the liberal arts education program. An associate professor from ECNU mentioned that “administrators in my school rarely encourage faculty members to engage with liberal arts since I came here 6 years ago. What they ask for is published papers in major journals.” This phenomenon is also present at Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, while Fudan is doing relative well. A senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong expressed:

To tell you honestly, although I am a senior administrator, I rarely encourage faculty members to teach liberal arts program. I myself also realize that liberal arts education is good but the central government wants us to produce more research products. Society demands of us more employment-oriented courses. Families and parents also want their children to learn advanced skills and professions. Therefore, our focus is not centered on liberal arts.

Second, the three missions of the modern university—teaching, research and public service—produce a constant tension at different levels in the Chinese higher educational system. The academic profession in China is facing an increasingly differentiate labor market and career development. As Altbach (2010) points out, there is a tendency toward separate “teaching-only” and “research-only” positions compared with the traditional “teaching and research” position. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU are comprehensive research universities. When a teacher applies for promotion, for instance, from lecturer to assistant professor or from associate professor to full professor, the teacher’s performance in the classroom or his relationship with students are not the criteria, but, rather, it is the question of how many papers or books the

teacher has published in past years. This situation has become a fast trend in China. Moreover, in Chinese universities, including Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, quality in teaching has little to do with evaluation and promotion. The university focuses mainly on the number of articles published in the Social/Science Citation Index and in the national core journals. Among the three evaluating components in common practice —teaching, service, and research—only research is given priority consideration.

A senior professor in ENCNU added that teachers' focus has shifted from teaching to research because promotion depends on the number of papers and books published. Consequently, many teachers, not concerned about teaching, remain in their office or laboratory to work on papers and do research. They do not have time to direct students' learning. This professor also pointed out that a professor in Beijing who has 47 doctoral students to direct has no time even to help his doctoral students, even less time to help undergraduate students.

Average teachers in China, because they lack academic support or social network, often do not get research funding (Li, 2008). As a matter of fact, it is common practice that many core journals and the academic press in China require a publication fee. Many faculty members, especially young members, are so pressured for publications that they do not spend sufficient time and energy preparing liberal arts education courses to maintain excellence in teaching. A senior professor from Shanghai Jiaotong expressed the most common opinion of faculty members: "I really enjoy teaching and spending time with students, but my department demands each faculty member to publish two or more papers in core journals every year as part of the criteria for promotion and application for funding. Therefore, I cannot spend much time on teaching." For many faculty members I interviewed, their teaching pedagogy is still that of

transmission. There is almost no discussion or interaction between students and teachers. Faculty concerns regarding students appear to be decreasing.

Third, in addition to interest in their promotion, many faculty members are concerned about their income. For example, academic salaries in North America and Western Europe are eight times higher than in China (Altbach, Reisberg, Yudkevich & Androushchak, 2012). Although full-time senior academic staff can survive on their salaries (but for many junior staff the income is low and they are barely able to survive in a big city, such as in Shanghai), they do not earn much more than the average salary and they may earn less than their peers in business or IT areas. Many teachers take consulting jobs in industries, or take part-time teaching positions in other universities to earn more. Even if these teachers are assigned to teach liberal arts courses, a senior faculty member at Shanghai Jiaotong said, “their hearts and minds may be not set on teaching but on their income, so students would not often talk with them around the campus or in their office after class.”

Fourth, based on my interviews, many administrators at Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, unlike at Fudan, do not fully support liberal arts education reform or the implementation of core curriculum courses even though the university administration on several occasions, for example, at department meetings, mentioned that the university will implement liberal arts education. Several faculty members interviewed at Shanghai Jiaotong University all pointed out that administrators do not really fully support liberal arts education. Nothing that relates to liberal arts education or humanities often appears in their speeches or in university policy. A senior professor from Shanghai Jiaotong stated that:

University leaders want others (for example, parents, government, and industry) to think that their university has an interest in liberal arts education and humanities, but their

priority is still a focus on careerism, pragmatism, materialism, and utilitarianism. On the part of the administration, calling it liberal arts education or general education is just a formality.

Several interviewees noted that administrators do not grasp the purpose of liberal arts education. University leaders are concerned more about university ranking, projects and income, and, thus, do not support faculty who teach liberal arts education. A senior administrator and also a professor from ECNU stated:

I do not think that many administrators in my university understand the meaning or concept of liberal arts. During our administrator development meeting a few weeks ago, we invited an expert to give us a lecture on liberal arts development. I was surprised that my colleagues are so naïve about liberal arts and its concept. Therefore, you cannot expect them to be reliable guides. Furthermore, the curriculum should become more student-centered and less ideologically oriented.

Despite the problems mentioned above, all faculty and administrators I interviewed agreed that curriculum reform is necessary to cultivate students with critical thinking, creativity and social responsibility, that the teacher's role is essential and that curriculum reform is a process linked to teachers' professional development. While in Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU there are many challenges in regard to teachers' involvement and commitment, in Fudan the situation appears to be more promising. Still, there are problems. Since its establishment in 2005, the liberal arts college at Fudan University, with more support from the university administration and other departments, has regularly trained teachers on liberal arts education curriculum development. When the liberal arts college at Fudan University was established, liberal arts education was a serious topic (Fudan University, 2010). However, many teachers were not used to the new curriculum requirements at the outset and they still concentrated on their own disciplines. Fudan University then invested ten million Yuan (approximately one and a half million dollars) to train teachers and encourage them to develop core courses in line with the thrust of liberal arts education. Starting in first year, students are all required to take liberal arts



education courses, regardless of their concentration, as a foundation for their future career and personal development.

Despite some resistance from student groups, faculty members at the liberal arts college of Fudan are committed to liberal arts education. Concerning the role of teachers in implementing liberal arts education, a senior professor at the liberal arts college in Fudan University pointed out that many of his colleagues have a great desire to teach students liberal arts and humanities subjects. “Contemporary Chinese society needs more people with a sense of humanities and moral reasoning,” he noted. So they consider that teaching liberal arts and humanities courses is something more important and urgent to do. They know it is a difficult road to follow since it demands so much time and does not improve one's level of living, unlike research projects. But it is a worthwhile mission. Most college freshmen are unclear about their future profession or career, so teachers are in a position to be facilitators in a student-centered curriculum to help students in their development in selecting a profession or career, as he stated.

Another senior professor and administrator from Fudan indicated that the university is educating future global citizens and does not expect immediate outcomes but it forms students with a long-term plan in mind such as what it expects graduates to be in 20 or 30 years. This professor pointed out that “teachers are guides to students; the future world is full of challenge; and therefore, we need to be ready to go along with their development during their four years in college and to give our students a solid foundation.” The teachers’ influence on them is essentially important, not only academically, but socially, culturally, and morally. For example, as he said about the role of teachers:

Besides teaching them, they also help the students by making arrangements for many extracurricular activities, including social service programs, participation in which they

help students to understand that the value and purpose of education is not for obtaining money or material goods but for a higher goal, namely, to love and serve their country and people. Such a goal may seem out of reach but it is the aim of the educational program and teachers must be role models.

Villegas-Reimers (2003) states that educational reform will not succeed without teachers' involvement, their successful professional development, and policy and organizational support. The teachers' professional development is a key factor to ensure the success of educational reform at a university and will make a positive impact on curricula reform. Most of the faculty interviewed at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU expressed their concern about problems of policy and organizational support. Their view is that policymakers and university administrators did not make any policy to support liberal arts education curriculum in their institutions, and that faculty members do not have sufficient support from the university administration. For example, a senior professor from ECNU mentioned that their president and deans never asked them about the changes made and what support they required from the university administration regarding the implementation of a liberal arts education program. Nor was interest shown in any concrete actions taken for their professional development as educators. "I was very disappointed that the administration did not show enough support to teachers who are interested in liberal arts. Sometimes we need something for liberal arts program, but it takes too many procedures to get reimbursement compared to other disciplines," he pointed out. Many of his colleagues demonstrate a passion for education and for liberal arts education and curriculum development, but if they do not get support from leaders, even moral support, such passion may abate.

If the teachers' passion for a liberal arts education curriculum cools due to lack of organizational support and professional development, despite their qualities as good teachers (knowledge, morality, personality and pedagogy), they will experience frustration. With increased focus and emphasis only on research in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU, and

without a clear policy and organizational support, interest in student-centered liberal arts education courses could simply disappear. A senior professor from Shanghai Jiaotong, expressed his view that “as a senior professor here, I believe that many of our students need be re-cultivated through liberal arts curriculum as a way to prepare them for a more global and challenging world, but I do not see any positive support from the administration; therefore, after a few years of wait and struggle, I will give up my passion to teach liberal arts to my students.”

Altbach (2009) writes:

Higher education globally focuses on the 'hardware' - buildings, laboratories and the like - at the expense of 'software' - the people who make institutions successful. Look at the often-criticized university rankings. What do they measure? Key criteria include the numbers of Nobel prizewinners, the research productivity of professors, the grants obtained by faculty and the quality of the students. Facilities are less important... In the current environment, the media as well as some university administrators and many government officials are quick to identify the faculty as the root of academia's problems. In fact, the opposite is true - academics are the root of the unprecedented success of higher education. There is always room for improvement, but professor-bashing will lead to neither reform nor greater productivity (p. 1).

Hence, according to Altbach, one of the key elements of education is teacher's engagement in teaching, including teaching liberal arts education. During interviews, quite a few administrators and faculty from the three universities mentioned the importance of teaching in implementing liberal arts education and expressed their concern about teachers' commitments to educating fully developed citizens. Faculty members interviewed from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU all have similar opinions. A senior professor from Shanghai Jiaotong, related that compared to twenty years ago, despite the increase in number of teachers, it seems that teachers are hardly seen on campus. “Many students complained that when they want to see their subject teachers to discuss academic or even personal matters, they often do not find them. Teachers just lock themselves in their office or library to publish papers after class, and only squeeze out a

little time for their students,” he expressed. Another professor from ECNU said that he sought innovative teaching methods, but could not adopt them in practice because some students do not have background knowledge since the students are divided into humanities students and sciences students in high school.

Many people, including administrators and students, faulted teachers for lack of interest in teaching. “So where are they? They are staying in the offices or laboratories for research,” a senior administrator from ECNU complained. The primary mission of a university, however, is to educate through the activity of teaching, according to him. In opposition to this, however, is the fact that many teaching assignments are accompanied by research work. Universities undertake the tasks of teaching, of research, and of serving society. To meet market needs teachers are given increased work in research rather than an increase in teaching assignments. In the past many renowned professors taught a specified number of classes, but today even average teachers do not want to teach. This reluctance, however, cannot be attributed entirely to a lack of interest on the part of teachers.

The current evaluation and promotion system is one of the major reasons why teachers give less attention to their teaching assignments. For example, a teacher with a class of two hundred students may face a university or department evaluation which includes consideration of the number of research projects granted and the number papers published. “None of the evaluation indicators are related to teaching; although it consumed a lot of my time, it was not taken into account in my application for professorship,” an associate professor from Fudan explained. With such criteria teachers cannot be expected to commit themselves whole-heartedly to teaching. Worse still is that some teachers instead of being concerned about how to teach and

to do research well, attempt to obtain a position in the university administration with increased living status through power and influence. Several administrators from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU all mentioned that faculty members in their institutions are driven toward specialization out of concern for their career development and the “world-class university” project is another mandate for teachers to publish books and articles, therefore, not many professors take teaching seriously. As an administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong said that “a very few faculty members spends time on the liberal arts courses because they are not that important, faculty members lack sufficient enthusiasm to engage in the liberal arts courses, which are described as “appetizer” compared with the major concentration, although they hold positive attitude towards liberal arts education.”

### **Attitude of Students, Administrators and Policy Makers on Liberal Arts Curriculum Reform**

According to Gan Yang (2010), an expert on liberal arts education in China, except in the liberal arts college at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU’s liberal arts education courses are too general and most of them are intended only to broaden a student’s general knowledge, and they lack coherence, creativity, and critical or innovative thinking. A senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong, mentioned that compared to universities with a long and outstanding tradition in liberal arts education, such as Harvard, Yale and Chicago, the number of liberal arts courses in Chinese universities are four or five times greater. However, course structure is not well managed and core courses lack unifying framework of material and ideas to inspire students to reflect and think. Nevertheless, the university continues to add new courses, placing an extra burden on teachers and students. It appears that liberal arts education courses are just supplementary to education in specific professions. Furthermore, some senior professors who

have taught courses for many years are reluctant to change the curricular modules and pedagogical methods because “it is easier for them to teach the major courses since they are familiar with the topic and they do not have to spend a lot of time to prepare for the class”, as an officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government stated.

In addition, many undergraduate students have different reasons for their choice of courses in liberal arts education. The credit system allows students to take courses based on interest. If students do not realize the importance of selecting liberal arts courses, they may ignore them for courses in their field of interest, the field of major study. A senior administrator at the liberal arts college of Fudan pointed out that when general education reforms began to be implemented (as a foundational step towards liberal arts education) six years ago, students were confused about the nature and the reason studying liberal arts. In the first two years, the students were not interested in courses in liberal arts. Many parents complained that their sons or daughters were supposed to study chemistry, physics, literature, English, biology, etc. They wanted to know why the university did not provide such courses rather than Western and Eastern classics. Moreover, students complained about being assigned to the same dorm as students in other majors. They argued that there was a lack of common interests living with students in other majors. Some students skipped the classes in liberal arts education and relied on notes they copied from classmates. However, after two years the feedback from students and parents was very positive. Residential life, for example, was greatly enriched, and the students' knowledge and view of life deepened. Today, many students are serious about liberal arts education core courses and take advantage of the credit system to select courses that appeal to them, according to this administrator from Fudan. My informal conversation with the students at Fudan revealed

complaints that ideological-political theory was imposed on all students and it did not help for free thinking.

During my interview, a top senior administrator from Fudan University reported that many students told him that residential life helped them to see the world differently and they were very much enriched by sharing outlooks with students of different majors. He said that

Previously, students had been assigned to dorms according to major fields of study and, as a result, they did not have a chance to interact with students in different majors. But with a change in policy regarding residential assignments, the students, now more pleased, were able to get help with their interdisciplinary studies while, at the same time, had an opportunity to share thoughts from various perspectives. Moreover, the new curriculum helps students to reason and to discuss about the value of these studies in preparing them to become responsible global citizens.

This top senior administrator strongly believes that the courses are fundamentally important and, therefore, the faculty is encouraged to be involved and to guide students in deciding what they value and their priorities. At each residential hall at the liberal arts college of Fudan, mentors are assigned to assist student's academic, social, and personal development. According to the administrator, the residential hall system has significantly changed students' learning style and provided a new platform for their interdisciplinary development. He expressed the thought that residential hall life is an adjunct to the curriculum in development of students because the students have opportunities to broaden their knowledge beyond their major field of study in grasping a view of a pluralistic world. And he indicated that support to residential hall activities will continue to provide students with an atmosphere and situation where they can more easily reach an integrated maturity. This, however, is not the case in Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU as they assign students to residential halls according to their major fields of study.

Shanghai Jiaotong differs from the Fudan because the students in Shanghai Jiaotong, a university of science and technology, are not very familiar with liberal arts education. A senior

administrator and professor at Shanghai Jiaotong pointed out that “students often choose those courses that are easy to pass or they take courses merely to finish the credit requirements.” And, from his experience, students rarely engage in discussions on liberal arts education. Students are not encouraged to see teachers to discuss their problems about courses or about their personal and social life. For example, he has office hours but students seldom visit him to discuss academic or personal matters. There are more than eighty students in his class—students skip frequently enough and at times go unnoticed—and he found their reaction to liberal arts education courses to be very negative. According to him, many students in his class do not know what a liberal arts course is, and they think it is just a new name for the free elective course. They feel that they learned only a little bit of everything, but it is not substantial. By contrast, many students are eager to learn about their major.

At ECNU, a senior administrator mentioned that the students complained that although the curriculum reform was good and provided more opportunity for them to learn to reflect and think critically through an interdisciplinary presentation, there remained the problem that the faculty and academic supervisors did not guide them in selecting elective courses. “I often receive reports from students that academic supervisors and mentors are not familiar with the liberal arts courses; therefore, they are not able to provide students with needed information. Many students feel that the offerings of liberal arts course had not served the real purpose of interdisciplinary studies and integrating all knowledge,” this senior administrator mentioned. Many academic supervisors know the courses only in their academic field. According to him, students usually choose courses freely that total from 25 to 40 credits and are not clear as to which courses they should select. They think the academic supervisors should be familiar with



different courses in order to guide the students in first or second year. A senior professor from ECNU noted that

Many students like the freedom to select classes most interesting to them; but, also, think what is most important is not advice on course selections for freshman and sophomore years, but to make sure that they have opportunities to integrate what they learn as they advance. As future primary, middle and high school educators, they do not like traditional transmission or grade-only pedagogy and easily feel bored in non-major courses.

Hence, he concluded that teachers are the center of schools, they determine the quality of education and the well-rounded development of each student.

According to Pang (2009) and Miao (2007), education is not just about providing classes to pass on knowledge, but it is about educating the whole person. Universities today in China, however, aim at educating the nation's future political, social, and industrial leaders, mainly through the established curriculum, but whole person education and moral principles of ultimate value have been isolated within the curriculum or removed entirely. Faculty members are not able to motivate and inspire students to think critically and reflect on their social responsibility, according to several participants.

A senior administrator at Shanghai Jiaotong explained that when the Chinese government wants to make a sudden change in the field of education, for example, the expansion of enrollment, a merge of universities, the building a world-class university and so forth, a policy is issued or a meeting is called to disseminate the policy. Such proposals can be worthwhile, but time is needed for proposals to be accepted and for preparation. He stated:

For example, now that almost every major university offers liberal arts education or general education for freshmen, one can question to what degree liberal arts education is fully understood. University leaders say that they are educating students to be 21<sup>st</sup> century global citizens and provide more courses, but can such added courses truly help students become global citizens? There is concern about ranking, knowledge, resources, and projects, but forgotten is the development of the whole person which is crucial for each student's future. Teachers and the system lack care for a student as a person (human

being), viewing the student more as a project. If a student faces a crisis or encounters difficulties in college life or has family issues, does the institution display concern?

According to him, the curriculum should not be merely a list of courses but also it should contain direction on studies and methods that result in graduating students who possess correct moral values. When students are admitted into the university, attention is given only to their high scores. But there should be a focus on their overall ability. A system that accepts and turns out students swiftly in an assembly-line fashion will not impart an enduring education. A curriculum so designed is market-oriented and the courses do not develop well-rounded persons.

Curriculum development and implementation are affected also by other socioeconomic factors. An administrator from ECNU, for example, indicated that two main factors influence curriculum reform, especially the implementation of a liberal arts education curriculum. First is finding employment. China had over 6 million college graduates in 2010 and the number is increasing while 2 million students are unemployed. Because of high competition in the labor market, universities, including the normal university, tend to design some courses that can increase the qualifications of their graduates to meet the market needs. The second, and more relevant factor, is agreement on the purpose of education. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government stated that “is it to prepare students for the job market or is it to cultivate students with critical thinking, moral reasoning and social responsibility? Which is the priority of education?” He noted that

It is hard to balance the tension between the demands of employment and the curriculum development of liberal arts. While many administrators, teachers and students place employment as the priority, it is a dangerous step if the educational institutions neglect the general education program that cultivates students with critical thinking, innovative skills and moral reasoning.

Curriculum development to graduate well-rounded citizens for the nation and the world has a long history in Chinese universities. Since the 1980s, the Chinese higher education system

has largely adopted Western models of education, especially the U. S. higher education system as the leading model. However, due to different cultural, economic and social factors, many good academic practices and traditions are not yet well established in the Chinese higher educational system. Chinese educational institutions fail in their mission to educate global citizens if they focus only on job markets and economic needs as several interviewees pointed out.

### **Impact of the Labor Market on Implementing Liberal Arts Curriculum**

During my interview with policy makers, administrators and faculty members, many of them mentioned that the labor market demands in contemporary China has a significant impact on liberal arts education and its curriculum development. Since the reform and opening up policy began in 1978, economic development, a knowledge based economy, scientific and technological innovation, the growing demand of globalization and internationalization of higher education, and building world-class universities are major factors that have transformed the mission and role of higher education in China. Higher education in China has been under great pressure to respond to the country's need for economic reform in human resources. Since 1978 higher education in China has undergone a series of reforms in active response to the country's economic needs and has set up new strategies to improve the standard of living (Sun, 2009). From 1978 to 2005 many Chinese universities adopted reforms in the curriculum to achieve comprehensive quality education, but their implementation has not been successful due to social, cultural, political and economic reasons. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU are universities also affected by a nation-wide economic movement that has shifted from a labor-intensive to a knowledge-based economy.

This change requires universities, especially the leaders, to focus on imparting knowledge by a more complicated methodology and on scientific research in order to produce an increased and better labor force for market needs. An administrator at Shanghai Jiaotong pointed out that:

Shanghai Jiaotong is a comprehensive university of science and technology and the majority at the university, including many administrators, faculty members, and students, focus mainly on science and technology courses so graduates may find a good job. They do not realize the importance of liberal arts education for long-term development, ignoring social sciences and humanities. As a consequence, the university administration provides more resources to the disciplines of science and technology.

Hence, according to him, what is forgotten is the mission of educating students to become socially responsible and committed citizens. There is a great deal of conversation at all times about the market and the economy. Students are not attentive to developing critical thinking, moral reasoning and responsible citizenship but are focused on selecting a major that will lead to a good job and a higher salary.

A senior professor at Fudan University expressed a similar opinion. He said: “as a philosophy professor, I try to integrate interdisciplinary studies in my class but I strongly feel that students from natural science majors are not interested in humanities; what they want is to finish their study and find a good paying job”. He indicated that in 2005 Fudan began a liberal arts education program in the entire university system, in particular for freshmen and sophomore students. Five years have passed and still there is a struggle to integrate sciences and humanities studies. In point of fact, many students are concerned about their employment. Unlike many universities in the United States and American society in general, China and Chinese society are not ready to accept liberal arts as a mainstream education. Many parents make the decision for their children. For example, they tell their children what to study based on market needs. Thus, there is not only an educational problem, but a social problem as well. What should students be

taught? What preparation ought they receive and how can they prepare themselves to meet the needs of the labor market and society? These questions and others are of great concern, as the professor at Fudan pointed out. At the present time, many universities and, possibly society as a whole, emphasize education based on “knowledge-economy” but an education which is “student-based” should be equally emphasized, according to a professor from Fudan. The task of Chinese colleges and universities is not only to train professionals or meet the need of the labor market but also to educate students to be responsible citizens, an administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong noted.

Zhou (2010) states that moral values and social needs can never be market-oriented. Some courses in the study of the humanities relate to the formation of high quality citizens and to the greatness of the nation itself and even the endurance of a national spirit. The importance of these goals in no way relates to the economic market. Labor markets should not determine what the entire curriculum should be (Gan, 2009). Unfortunately, universities today, including Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, overemphasize the necessity of serving society and the labor market, which, eventually, will result in a diminution of culture and a loss of traditions. A senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong said that “the universities, including my own institution, often overemphasize academic results with the market needs. For example, courses in a MBA program are strongly supported by the administration.” But in long term development, liberal arts programs must play a key role in the formation of genuine leaders of society and the nation.

The challenge of the labor market demand has impacted the entire university including the evaluation of university ranking and faculty promotion. A senior professor at Fudan mentioned during an interview that labor markets, material needs, and money are some major concerns of students, but that the university and the faculty are also concerned with the labor

market. For instance, many Chinese universities are concerned about rankings. If a university's rank is high, the graduates may have an advantage in obtaining a good and high paying position. The building and rebuilding of infrastructures by many universities is one result of a desire to become world-class universities. Many university buildings, offices, and facilities are much better than many western world-class universities but the question about the quality of their graduates remains.

China's advance to world-class stage through science, technology and education has become of central importance to the Chinese government, universities, and the entire nation. The senior professor mentioned has worked at Fudan for the past 25 years and truly appreciates the fact that Fudan continues with some of its liberal arts education and humanities tradition even though the university has been affected by the labor market. A university trying to achieve world-class level may overlook the real needs in the proper education of students. Universities may have a role in solving social problems, such as unequal distribution of resources, social justice, corruption, increased social crimes, access to higher education for the rural poor and disadvantaged groups. These are more urgent concerns than the labor market, but they seem to be overlooked by universities and educators.

Dr. Qian Xuesen, one of the most famous and respected scientists and father of the Chinese missile program, who passed away in 2009, had spoken frequently with national leaders about Chinese education. His deep concern was that higher education in China was not fully developed, and he indicated, as one reason, that universities in China had not been managed in a way to educate creative and innovative talents for science, technology and humanities, and lacked the ingenuity to enable students to cultivate talent (Jin & Qi, 2009). Qian Xuesen's concern was accepted by premier Wen Jiabao as “the question of the life” and therefore he

gathered for discussion in Beijing some university presidents but no constructive solutions were proposed. Wen mentioned that Qian talked with him about five or six times and Wen understood that the outstanding talent to which Qian referred was not talented people in general, but those who could attain remarkable achievements like his own (Jin & Qi, 2009).

One of the most important ways to cultivate excellent talent is by focusing fundamentally on interdisciplinary knowledge, critical reasoning and innovative thinking through liberal arts education, a senior and top administrator from Fudan pointed out. Some leading universities have explored liberal arts education to enhance students' comprehensive knowledge and adjust their learning process in order to cultivate creative and talented students of high quality with vision and capability, but the result has not been what universities expected. A senior professor and also an administrator from ECNU, pointed out, "being instructors at a normal university to educate future qualified teachers, and one has to know the needs of the students. Certainly, it is not necessary to satisfy every student's needs but an attempt should be made to know the aim in life, the sense of values, and philosophy of each student." A Normal University differs from other comprehensive universities because its teachers are educating future teachers. There is an emphasis on liberal arts education, moral education, spiritual development, and, at least in theory, care for each person. These key elements of education are often forgotten. An officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government questions:

How much time does each faculty member spend each week conversing with students after class? Do they have office hours for students who come to seek help or discuss academic matters? It seems that everyone is so busy. Teachers are occupied with writing publications. Students are busy looking for a good job or pursuing courses to prepare themselves for market needs. The fact is the university fails to form high-quality graduates.

The labor market pushes a university and students to look for superficial achievement. Today many contemporary intellectuals ask, referring to Xi Nan Lian Da (Xi Nan: Southwest University had consisted of Peking University, Tsinghua University and Nan Kai University in Yun Nan during the anti-Japanese war period 1937-1945), why is it that the present-day university cannot train students with a sense of the humanities, with creativity, critical thinking and moral reasoning, given the fact that the infrastructures and condition of the university are more advanced than Xi Nan Lian Da (south-west university, this university has graduated top scholars, Nobel prize winners, and academicians with liberal arts ideas, innovative thinking and moral reasoning despite their hardship and living in a chaotic environment). The answer is an overemphasis on externals and a neglect of the university's interior mission. In addition, research is emphasized over teaching, and labor market needs dominate the orientation of higher education, as a senior administrator noted.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the liberal arts education curriculum development in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU universities. Curriculum reform and development must be a decision after careful research in the field of teaching and scholarship. Whatever is decided should be in line with the mission of the university, its vision and accepted standards regarding scholarship and the objectives of education. The development and reform of the curriculum in liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU provide a greater opportunity for undergraduates to choose courses of interest. Faculty members, administrators, and policy makers interviewed for this research study all expressed that the curriculum reform for educating the whole person through the liberal arts education program was necessary and important. Some of them were very positive about the future of Chinese higher education through liberal arts



education, while others thought that the reforms would not successfully achieve the intent of education unless the entire social, political, and economic system in China made progress. Otherwise, the educational reform would be just a propaganda movement.

There are some improvements in educational pedagogy. Unfortunately, the teaching method of most faculty members has remained one of transmission and indoctrination while there is a lack of teacher-training programs to prepare faculty to transform their traditional methodology while in preparation for liberal arts education. Hence, criteria for establishing the curriculum cannot be determined only by content or course work but, also, depend largely on external factors. Faculty members and administrators also stressed that education should not have just a utilitarian goal; rather, the university must also focus on educating students to possess innovative animation, critical and independent thinking, moral reasoning, care for others, and social responsibility and commitment.

Chinese universities need to develop a well-structured curriculum of liberal arts education and provide incentives to continuous discussion where varied disciplines in the university converge as well as in the academic community and society at large. The analysis here suggests that as Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU established a liberal arts college or program, there was intelligent coordination of the curricula content with the process of implementation. Administration policy, faculty engagement, and market economic impact will continue to be a challenge in implementing the curriculum of liberal arts education in these higher education institutions as well as in the entire Chinese higher education system if it intends to form qualified and integrated 21<sup>st</sup> century global citizens. More importantly, facing various social, moral, political and economic demands, universities in China, not merely Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, must make students the focal point through curriculum

development because they are the future leaders who will decide and sustain the social, economic, moral and educational development of the nation. Having discussed the curriculum development and reform of liberal arts education at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU to educating students with creativity and innovative skills, the next chapter will further explore another crucial topic of liberal arts education: critical thinking, which was repeatedly emphasized by interviewees.

**Introduction**

In the last decade or so, educating students with critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills has become a primary concern for many teachers, policy makers, administrators, and even parents in China (Gan, 2010). Almost every university's mission statement these days in China boasts broad goals related to critical thinking, innovation, and moral character (Yang, 2012). However, there is also a common saying among many Chinese teachers and administrators: everybody likes to talk and teach critical thinking and innovative skills, but nobody wants a university full of critical thinkers. This is a real case in China because of its political context. Current education reform in China indicates that policymakers are taking this seriously to some extent.

Critical thinking through liberal arts must offer criteria that allow students to distinguish social, moral, spiritual, political, and cultural perspectives, several interviewees stated. Three purposive sample study universities, as mentioned, have educational goals and visions related to critical thinking and innovative skills. Nevertheless, goals for the labor market, measures of accountability, and standardized testing have directed the educational goal to information, skills and producer and receiver technology. Educational policies and individual schools do not encourage students to examine important issues profoundly and meaningfully, such as fair wages, immigrant farmer's rights, religious freedom, human rights, support for the elderly, the Cultural Revolution, etc.

During my interviews, almost every policymaker, administrator, and faculty member thought that critical thinking and innovative skills through liberal arts education are crucial for

student development and educating future global leaders, but they also expressed that there are many challenges to transform from transmission pedagogy to critical thinking pedagogy. Despite extensive discussion on critical thinking (CT) by Chinese policy makers, administrators and faculty members, there are still debates over the question of why the Chinese higher educational system lacks (or rather does not demonstrate) CT skills. This chapter discusses the theme of critical thinking in the context of liberal arts education in three purposive sample Chinese universities in Shanghai. This chapter will be divided into several sections: definition of critical thinking, challenges within critical thinking education in Chinese context, tension for critical thinking: political education course requirement, mentorship program and conclusion.

### **Definition of Critical Thinking**

The concept of critical thinking can be traced back to the teaching of Socrates (Fasko, 2003). Socrates' teaching technique included probing questions that led students to think and to critique. Although the term critical thinking is widely used in Western countries, it is also difficult to define and explain. Since the period of Socrates and Aristotle, philosophers and educators have defined critical thinking differently. Ennis (1985) defined critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 45). Lipman (1988) stated that critical thinking is "skillful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgment because it (1) relies upon criteria, (2) is self-correcting, and (3) is sensitive to context" (p. 39). Halonen (1995) stated that critical thinking is the "propensity and skills to engage in activity with reflective skepticism focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 76). Paul (1993) defined critical thinking as "a systematic way to form and shape one's thinking. It functions purposefully and exactly. It is thought that is disciplined, comprehensive, based on intellectual standards, and, as a result, well-reasoned" (p. 20). Since the early 1980s, critical thinking has

been promoted as one of the main goals of education in the US (Fasko, 2003). While some people claimed that critical thinking is a Western product and conception and is unrelated to Asian traditions (Atkinson, 1997), Patton (2005) stated that Chinese students' lack of critical thinking is due to insufficient knowledge about the subject. Patton thought that training rather than culture is the key factor that affects Chinese students' critical thinking.

From his research, Patton (2005) concluded that in the past 2000 years in China, the idea and concept of critical thought existed in Chinese culture; for instance, the concept of cultivating students with critical thinking has already been discussed in ancient Confucian writings, but because Chinese culture, for example, does not encourage students to question authority, teachers and administrators, Chinese students are not well equipped with reflective thinking and innovative skills. Chinese students follow what the authority or teachers instruct them to do. Moreover, the Chinese educational system for centuries has not provided an opportunity for students to think and reflect. Traditionally, Chinese culture teaches its student that they should not tell their inner thoughts or feelings to others and never challenge authority. For example, in the Chinese hierarchical system, a lower official must be subservient to higher officials, a wife must be subordinate to her husband and a son to his father. Chinese policy makers, university leaders and faculty members are aware of this crucial issue in education. Hence, they repeatedly point out that the Chinese educational system must reform its traditional teaching pedagogy or practice and cultivate students with critical thinking and innovative skills to meet the global challenges.

## **Challenges within the Curriculum for Critical Thinking in Chinese Context**

### **Chinese high school system for critical thinking**

In 2005 the Ministry of Education issued curriculum standards for primary, high school and college students. On the agenda of major reform are: (1) changing the teaching and learning focus from “basic knowledge and skill” to the “capacity of students to engage in critical thinking, problem solving and creativity”; (2) changing teacher-centered teaching method to more student-centered; (3) cultivating a sense of social responsibility, sharing, cooperation and communication; (4) establishing an assessment system that promotes the development of the individual student as well as the total person; (5) developing a systematic and sustained form of teachers’ professional development (MoE, 2005). Despite the enthusiasm shown by the teachers, administrators and even policy makers in promoting critical thinking, faculty members struggle with changing their pedagogy and encouraging creativity and independent learning. School administration and policy makers typically fail to provide sufficient resources for faculty professional development and for their training in critical thinking, as many faculty members pointed out. More importantly, to emphasize pedagogy for critical thinking, the evaluation system at the university level must consider teaching performance for faculty promotion and awards rather than emphasizing research and publications.

Internationally, Chinese students are known to be superior at mathematics and other scientific subjects, for example, biology, chemistry, and physics. Chinese students were first in the Program for International Student Assessment, known as PISA in 2011, and students in Shanghai outscored their counterparts in dozens of other countries in reading, math and science in an approved examination (China News, 2011). But these are not outstanding achievements

because Chinese students are memorization-oriented learners. No critical thinking, creativity and innovation were involved. The entire educational system lacks promotion of critical thinking or creativity despite the fact that so many believe it is important. Teachers, administrators and policy makers expressed their concerns about lack of critical thinking among Chinese students during my interviews.

A senior professor from Fudan University pointed out:

The students today in China generally lack critical thinking and innovative talent. The old tradition of the transmission educational method from primary school through the university still exists. Overemphasizing standard assessments is one of the most key impediments to teaching critical thinking. For example, every student in high school is overwhelmed by a great amount of homework, tests and the need to study to prepare for the college entrance examination. Unless the examination score is sufficiently high, acceptance into a good university is not possible.

Consequently, high school students have only one goal: to obtain a high score. And high school teachers have only one goal: to improve the students' scores. Students spent almost the entire three years memorizing material for the entrance examination. As a result, in their freshman year in college they do not possess the cognitive development for critical thinking. The real problem, it seems, is the educational system, which should be examined and changed. In Confucian culture and tradition, academic success comes from academic performance and it is a common goal for both teachers and students to achieve high marks. In addition, teachers receive material awards if the school has an outstanding number of graduates accepted into leading universities. Consequently, there is little or no consideration about critical thinking in education. The professor from Fudan said that a university is not merely the system and structure. It is a moral power and animus, a social conscience capable of helping in the development of humanity and the promotion of the culture of a people and of dealing with crises that arise. Critical thinking

allows students to develop new assertions from different perspectives, therefore, is significant for student-centered formation.

A senior administrator from ECNU expressed a similar view:

Teaching and research are two sectors of education and need to coexist harmoniously; otherwise, teachers cannot teach well. And if teachers are not committed and serious about teaching, one cannot expect good results in critical thinking. There are three major concerns in the university: management, the quality of the teachers, and student issues. Many high schools are not involved in holistic education and as a result, some students have personality and emotional problems, despite their academic excellence.

Contemporary Chinese high schools focus only on academic performance and students are divided into the areas of Li Ke and Wen Ke (Science and humanities). This is not a good policy because students cannot obtain a broad foundation for their future studies, according to some interviewees. Overemphasizing sciences or humanities, therefore, is shortsighted and hinders creativity or critical and innovative thinking.

An officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government, states that high schools in general lack a way to train students in problem solving and reflective learning. There is little interest in putting critical thinking, moral and social responsibility in the curriculum and in teaching them, though required by the Ministry of Education. In high schools with the greatest number of graduates admitted into top universities, administrators and faculty members are rewarded or promoted and the school attracts more talented students. As a result, most Chinese high school students become excellent memorizers but know nothing about team work, class presentations, problem solving, creativity and innovative thinking. When these high school students are enrolled in higher educational institutions, the universities can encounter problems in teaching critical thinking and creativity.



## **Emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), IT (information technology) and business**

In recent years, China's policy makers and educators have criticized the educational system for being too test-oriented. China began to reduce rote learning, and gave students and universities more choice in the curricula which are still centered in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), Chinese students also increasingly want to study in fields like IT (information technology), business, management and finance (Xinhua News, 2010). However, humanities and liberal arts courses are usually not very popular among Chinese students. I asked a senior officer at the Department of Education in Shanghai Municipal government and a senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong why Chinese students prefer to study in STEM, IT and business rather than the humanities and liberal arts. They gave three similar reasons. First, many students in senior high school are misguided by their teachers who claim that STEM, IT, computer sciences and business can help them to find a better job with a better salary, causing students to be more employment and market oriented. Second, graduates with STEM, IT and business degrees enter STEM, IT and business careers and experience a lower unemployment rate than in other fields of work (Xinhua News, 2010). The number of first degrees awarded in natural sciences and engineering has risen sharply in China since 2002, with approximately one-third of bachelor's degrees in engineering and natural sciences. Third, and perhaps the most important reason, the Chinese government has invested billions of dollars in the past few years to develop STEM programs in order to build world-class universities and such financial incentives can greatly enhance STEM to the neglect of the humanities and the liberal arts programs (MoE, 2010).

While STEM, IT, finance and business programs are important and graduates from these disciplines still enjoy better pay and more-prestigious jobs, people interviewed in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU said that a student without a liberal arts education background will be limited in coping with changing demands and the challenges of life. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government said that if Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU and other colleges/universities in China want to educate students prepared to face the challenges of today's world, they have to educate students with a concern for humanities. The presidents, deans, and department chairs need to strategically implement changes, keeping in mind the purpose of the university is not to prepare students for a particular profession nor for excellence in STEM or finance, but to discipline their minds and to guide them to be well-rounded citizens.

### **Derailment of the purpose of education**

Peterson (2012) states that the implementation of general (liberal arts) education is viewed as an important aspect of Chinese universities' ability to be world class and to prepare their students to meet the demands of a fast-changing, increasingly competitive global environment and market needs. A senior professor from Shanghai Jiaotong believed that the primary mission of education is to educate well-rounded people but Chinese universities today focus mainly on research projects, publications, ranking and labor market. He said:

For example, teachers are required to publish certain papers every year as a condition for their promotion. Academic corruption permeates every corner of the university. Why? Because the milieu is too utilitarian-oriented and that has caused a decline in critical thinking. A society rests not only upon material things but largely on other perspectives. Despite its advances in science and technology, without critical thinking a society has little hope of survival. People educate people with critical thinking and innovation, not machines.

Therefore, according to this professor, the aim of education is the full development of humanities. Without this goal, education loses its traditional mission. Educating people is the role of a university but the Chinese Ministry of Education has promoted numerous educational projects and that means education is strongly controlled by the central or local government as was the plan of the economy from 1950 to early 1980s. Hence, educational reform is needed. In 2006, premier Wen called a meeting of six educators and university leaders to discuss Qian Xuesen's question of "why China has not cultivated creative talents," but no constructive answer from those experts. The lack of an innovative and creative solution in higher education is very serious. In May 2007, premier Wen delivered a speech at Tongji University in Shanghai in which he particularly stressed that a good university is not determined by its huge buildings, nor by famous people, but by affording independent thinking and free expression. Vital exchange and discussion between faculty and students form a unique academic environment which, when continued and enhanced, will enable the university to develop creative and innovative talents.

A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government said:

Lack of critical thinking in Chinese students in general is not a new phenomenon. The long tradition of memorization and recitation in the Chinese academic system is mostly due to a Chinese cultural tradition of respect for authority and advocacy of conformity. Students are expected to listen to teachers in class without raising any questions or engaging in interaction lest they dare to exchange with their teachers. Another challenge is that many teachers do not know what critical thinking is, so how can they teach student with critical thinking in mind?

He commented that many university students in his institution do not have a job waiting for them at graduation. As a result, the students spend time in search of work in addition to completing their class assignments. They simply do not have time for engaging in exercises and the study of critical thinking or creativity. For them, the real issues are to obtain a secure job and a good career.

Traditional Chinese writings, such as Confucian teaching, did mention critical thinking by emphasizing reflective and deep thinking by means of questioning between students and teachers. Confucius, in the *Analects*, regarded thinking as an important and inseparable part of learning: “Learning without thinking is a vain effort; thinking without learning is a dangerous effort” (*Analects*, II). Confucius also requested his disciples to be more open-minded and held that teachers do not always have to be more knowledgeable than their students. While independent thinking has a long history in Chinese thought, contemporary Chinese students are not strongly connected with critical thinking or creativity as a professor from ECNU stated. When asked about finding ways to help contemporary Chinese students to be nurtured with critical thinking, creativity and innovative ideas, those interviewed replied that it is a challenge.

A senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong, states that the term “critical thinking” is not commonly singled out in any government document or policy, nor it is often mentioned, he believes, at university meetings. According to him, the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government considered producing a document to encourage universities to educate students to possess critical thinking. But it is not an easy task for the universities. The Ministry of Education did not issue such a document on critical thinking. He stated:

If a document of this kind should be distributed, it might clash with the policy of the leading authority. Universities and government agencies are mostly concerned with labor-market needs and the GDP. It may be an open secret that the ministry of education is going to lower the number of liberal arts or humanities majors if half of the graduates cannot find a job.

Although the Ministry of Education issued an official document “the Outline for Reform and Development of Education in China” in 1993 to promote a transition from examination-oriented education to quality-oriented education, the measures to promote individual thinking and well-rounded education are not well developed. Individual thinking and active participation

is less valued, as a senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government pointed out. The universities and the Chinese government are still concerned about the employment rate and courses such as MBA, accounting and applied sciences; for example, computer sciences attract more students and bring in profit. Nurturing students with critical thinking is not an important concern for the university administration despite its importance. Furthermore, even if a policy on critical thinking were enacted, this officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government does not think critical thinking could be taught unless the faculty is sufficiently trained to teach it.

### **Teacher's role in educating students with critical thinking**

Faculty members have also expressed their concern on critical thinking. A professor at ECNU stated:

Critical thinking is very important and I believe that it was lacking in my past education. It was not required on exams as long as students passed the test. In regard to the reform many teachers were not concerned about critical thinking skills regardless of the high value they placed on it and despite the fact that they recognized the importance of educating the whole person.

He believes that one of the key elements for critical thinking is student-teacher interaction which is not easy to have because classroom design is not suited for such interaction (chairs mounted to the floors). Teachers are always the center of the classroom because increased enrollment in expanding the university results in a very large number of students at lectures - usually more than one hundred students - and there is almost no way for students to raise questions and interact with teachers and their peers. The teacher lectures and the students take notes.

Student-teacher interaction has not been commonly practiced in the Chinese higher education system since 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party adopted the Soviet Union

education model that was basically transmission pedagogy. Students do not major in many of the general education or (liberal arts education) courses offered by the institution. Many take the courses just to fulfill academic requirements for graduation. The teachers who teach general or liberal arts education courses are not fully engaged in critical thinking, several interviewees pointed out. A strong relationship with students is vital for teaching critical thinking and for classroom success. At the end of each semester, many teachers do not recognize the names of the students. Moreover, many teachers do not have office hours to discuss course work or other academic issues with the students.

Still, compared with many Western countries, Chinese universities pay more attention to teaching, especially at the undergraduate level, but it is more teacher-centered pedagogy, as an officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government pointed out. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU universities emphasize reform and innovation in undergraduate teaching as a core part of the university's research and service. Reform in teaching is directed to liberal arts education (general education), and innovation (which also includes critical thinking). A teacher often has connections with many people and can influence a large community to cultivate students with critical thinking. A senior administrator from Fudan said that an educational institution needs to be sure first that it is free from influences within itself that hinder its place in society. A real scholar will transcend secular achievement and reach the goal of pure truth, goodness and beauty and lead students to critical thinking. The beginning and end of education is service because at the deepest level it is student-centered and teachers are responsible to teach students to think and make critical decisions.

A senior administrator and professor from Shanghai Jiaotong University pointed out that “no curriculum/teaching reform or teaching of critical thinking can succeed without a teacher’s

input and active participation.” Every teacher, regardless of what subject he/she is teaching, required or an elective, is able to engage students to do reflective thinking on the course material or on social issues because in student-centered classes the teachers are facilitators and their teaching method involves creativity and innovation achieved through interaction with students; this is fundamental, according to him. He further notes that even an English teacher, for example, besides teaching grammar or literature, can guide students to find value and meaning through Western literature. But the Department of Education of Shanghai municipal government, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong University and ECNU do not have official standards for faculty education and development in critical thinking.

Educational institutions worldwide have introduced various teaching quality methods and teaching enhancement mechanisms for creativity and critical thinking (Kember, 2000). In 2002, the Ministry of Education advocated a new brief to foster creativity and critical thinking through the teacher’s interaction with students. It stated that

Classroom teaching should emphasize the student’s own thinking process...This requires the teacher to be good at creating an open classroom environment, fostering a positive and comfortable atmosphere and encouraging students’ expressions of new, different and unconventional ideas..., Teachers must work hard to promote students’ curiosity, desire for learning, and imagination...Learning arises out of questioning (MoE, 2002).

Hence, teachers’ role and professional development are crucial for a successful educational program in critical thinking. Klecka et al (2008) stated that there are four major relationships in a teacher's professional development: mentorship, scholarship, partnership and leadership. Hence, teachers teach reflectively, and facilitate students’ critical thinking; students as learners learn reflectively from readings and self-reflection, and from their teachers. When faculty members, however, were asked what concrete actions they had taken for their professional development in regard to implementing critical thinking in curriculum reform and

when administrators were asked what changes had been made in the professional development of teachers in respect to critical thinking and innovation, both groups responded in a similar manner.

A senior professor from Shanghai Jiaotong said that:

I tried to change my teaching method from a traditional lecturing, but at age 55, I doubt that the school will send me for professional development. The school provides resources for younger faculty and they receive greater attention. Some are required to go to abroad, either as a visiting fellow or visiting scholar, to learn from the West as part of their professional development.

He explained that when the school implemented general education, or liberal arts education, a few years ago, there was not a great deal of change. Many of his colleagues still follow the traditional lecture pedagogy with no opportunity for students to ask questions or reflect. The new curriculum, he added, is not really new. Some courses were added which he believes are not helpful to engage students in critical thinking.

A senior administrator from ECNU stated:

Teachers are the center of schools, which determines the quality of education and the whole person development of students, but our institution is not yet ready to train faculty members in regard to cultivating students with critical thinking and innovative skills. The university president has emphasized the importance and necessity of liberal arts education and education of students with critical thinking in speech and newsletters. I believe that one of the teacher's key roles is to impart correct social values to students.

But he indicated that there is no any official policy at the administrative level or any document to promote liberal arts education in the entire university. It is a fact that liberal arts courses have been offered but he does not think those courses can do much to instill critical thinking and creativity. Many so-called liberal arts courses, in a sense, are not like Western model courses. Many who teach them continue with the lecturing method without time to interact with students or guide them to think reflectively and critically. Many of these courses in the past few years targeted skills needed for the job market instead of directed to critical thinking and innovation.



Traditional employment concerns still dominate the direction of education. Many students want to receive an education for a better job with high income (Chang, 2011).

Challenges to educate students with critical thinking through liberal arts are many in China: building up world-class universities recognized in rankings, emphasizing professional training rather than values, and rewarding academic research and publications over teaching. Therefore, the question to be answered is, as a senior professor and administrator from Fudan pointed out, what is the purpose of education and what is the role of teachers? Should it prepare students merely for stable employment in the job market or prepare them to become lifelong learners with critical thinking, creativity and innovation? If the ultimate goal of a university education is to enlighten all to comprehend the human values all should accept, to transcend utilitarianism, and to make a better world in which to live, then a liberal arts program for educating students with critical thinking is an urgent need in Chinese universities.

A senior administrator from ECNU, shared his thought on critical thinking in his remarks about the teaching profession. He is an administrator in a normal university where most of the graduates will be future high school and college teachers. He was strong in his belief that the purpose of the university is to educate the whole person in five major categories: knowledge, morality, personality, spirituality and pedagogy. During the interview, he strongly and enthusiastically asserted that “teachers should maintain a passion for education which inspires students. Teachers should excel in character and scholarship which influences students’ integrity and independent thinking, and cultivates students with critical thinking and creativity.” As an administrator, he offers much support to faculty members who teach liberal arts education courses. Since few teachers, for example, wish to teach liberal arts courses, he has asked the vice president for academic affairs to allocate funds to support those who teach liberal arts

courses. It is a positive stimulation. The school and the university, unfortunately, do not have any formal mechanism of support for liberal arts education. There is no avenue to offer faculty members workshops or seminars on how to teach students with critical thinking or innovation. Such programs do not exist at all in the nation. He believes that it should be a goal to establish a research center that offers courses or seminars for teaching critical thinking and to engage students in critical thinking.

An administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong argued there is always a challenge to balance the course requirements of critical thinking education and the courses in the students' majors. Two reasons for this are: the quality and content of liberal arts education may not be very attractive; and the faculty members who teach critical thinking through liberal arts course are not well-known. As an administrator, he has considered assigning some well-known professors to teach liberal arts courses aimed at educating students with critical thinking. He said that "a teacher's mission is to teach and educate but this does not seem to be the case at my university and perhaps at other universities as well." Furthermore, he suspects that most university teachers still lecture in the transmission style as teachers have for decades. However, he also indicates that some young faculty in his school, especially those who received their Ph. D in Western countries, are making an effort to incorporate the values of liberal arts and have tried to cultivate students with critical thinking and innovative skills.

Historically, Chinese teachers usually dominate the class through lecturing and demanding that the students memorize what has been presented. Examinations are based mainly on a teacher's lecture and the textbook. Students are not encouraged to have their own ideas and do creative thinking and no time exists for reflection. Many students stop thinking independently or are afraid to criticize for fear of alienating authority. Some young faculty

members from the three purposive case universities are changing traditional pedagogy by encouraging and motivating students to interact with each other reflectively and gain critical thinking. These teachers also include active learning in their teaching. Active learning is to have students engage in an activity while thinking about what they are doing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). One of the purposes of active learning is to provide students an opportunity to move beyond traditional memorization to a higher level of cognition and to solve problems and make decisions through teamwork. But students are not always open to the faculty's innovative pedagogy because they are accustomed to the traditional method and many prefer it.

A professor from ECNU, for example, has 68 students in her 'Introduction to Chinese Philosophy' class which she divided into 6 small groups and they decided on group research projects for presentation in two weeks. However, after two weeks, according to her:

The students still did not know what to do, and some of them even opposed the idea. I wanted my students to have more interaction with each other and to work as a team to gain insights and opinions, going beyond their traditional thinking and pedagogy to become more independent and reflective thinkers. But I have not been successful.

Several faculty members at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU I interviewed also pointed out that mentors and workshops are lacking and regular meetings on how to teach in universities are lacking. Likewise, there is a lack of professional development activities related to issues such as active learning, classroom management, and critical thinking.

### **Evaluation for faculty promotion**

As noted in an earlier chapter, faculty members, administrators and policy makers interviewed all believe in the importance of educating students with critical thinking and innovative skills to meet the demand of a globalized society, but in this regard the university's evaluation system of faculty promotion does not provide any mechanism to help teachers.

Altbach (2009) stated that academic appointments and promotions were and still are, for the most part, made on the basis of research accomplishments, not teaching proficiency.

At the present, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU evaluate and promote their faculty members mostly on the basis of research and publications rather than on teaching. Those who have published more papers and articles are quickly promoted to professorship or university administrator which brings increased income, financial funding and prestige. Consequently, teachers spend more time on research and have less concern about the quality of teaching and accountability. Likewise, they lack serious interest in pre-defined learning outcomes or student achievement and critical thinking. The academic professions are becoming more utilitarian oriented. Faculty members interviewed also admitted that, even though they have full-time academic appointments, they have part-time jobs to increase their income.

An assistant professor who teaches a humanities course at Shanghai Jiaotong, said that “I have been at the university for seven years, enjoy being in the classroom and spend a great deal of time in an effort to improve my teaching. My lectures have been well received by students but I still remain an assistant professor.” Some who came after him have been promoted to associate professorship because they have published several articles. If he does not publish an article and the university does not change its promotion policy, he may never move beyond the position of assistant professor. The current university evaluation system in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU is not in keeping with present needs to educate students with critical thinking which is a crucial part of liberal arts education as many interviewees noted. If a university does not meet the needs and reasonable requests of the faculty, it is safe to assume that its faculty will not meet the needs of the students for critical thinking development. High quality in teaching is emphasized at

every level of the administration, but in the evaluation of faculty performance for promotion and awards quality of teaching for critical thinking and other factors is not equally considered.

The major factor in teacher performance for promotion and awards is the number of publications, especially in the Social/Science Citation Index or the national core journals, but the quality of the publications is not examined. Under such an evaluation system many teachers are frustrated and have gradually lost their passion to cultivate students with creativity and critical thinking. Also, their relationship and interaction with students are not as close as they were twenty years ago, as many interviewees mentioned.

The evaluation system of faculty promotion is common practice in universities across the country, and among the three major components - teaching, service and research - research prevails. According to a senior administrator from ECNU, if a teacher wants an article printed in core journals or academic publications and does not have a good relationship with the editors, the teacher must pay a fee. Moreover, some journals accept articles that may be low quality if someone pays a fee or has a good connection with the editors. Concern for the holistic formation of students also has decreased rapidly. As an officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government pointed out, unless the administration or faculty members in these three purposive sample study universities change this evaluation system, the specific goals of critical thinking, creativity, cultural awareness, problem solving and communication skills attained through general education or liberal arts will be difficult to achieve.

Altbach (2009) and Rosovsky (1992) note that one of the key elements of liberal arts education is the teacher's commitment. The teachers' role is not merely to pass on piecemeal knowledge but to be able to accompany students' growth and development. When teachers are

engaged fully and wholeheartedly in the development of students, they can cultivate talent which will contribute to the good of society and the nation. They should be involved in the lives of the students, take a personal interest in the intellectual, affective, moral and spiritual development of every student, and help each one to develop a sense of self-worth and to become a responsible individual within the community. Curriculum reform and development should be decisions within the larger context of teaching and scholarship for critical thinking. Whatever decisions are made, the curriculum should conform to the university's mission, its animating vision, and accepted standards regarding scholarship and the objectives of education to graduate students with critical thinking, creativity and innovative ability. Contemporary Chinese society and culture expect that students think critically and reflectively to meet the global need, as a professor from Fudan pointed out.

The new developments and reforms in the Chinese higher-education system have greatly increased access to higher education since the 1990s. In relation to a market economy and the ambition to build world-class universities, many leading Chinese colleges and universities have become more utilitarian-oriented and overemphasized research projects, university ranking, infrastructure construction, and advanced laboratories (Chen, 2008). Although the government and universities have made great efforts to promote liberal arts to educate students with critical thinking, creativity and innovative talent, policy reform, revision of teaching plans and curricula, and faculty involvement will continue to be challenging (Jiang, 2011). As noted earlier, the challenge to the nation raised by the eminent and famous scientist Qian Xuesen, father of the Chinese missile program, will continue to resound: "China is still not fully developed, and one reason is that no university in China has been operated in a way to educate creative and innovative talents with critical thinking skills for science, technology and humanity. The

universities have no unique qualities that enable students to cultivate talent. This is a big problem” (Jin & Qi, 2009, p. 1).

### **Tension for Critical Thinking: Ideological-Political Education Course Curriculum Requirement**

At universities throughout Mainland China, ideological-political courses (a typical term for teaching Communist theory, Marxism, Mao’s thought and Deng Xiaoping’s theory, etc.) are required to safeguard university students’ political loyalty to the Communist Party. These courses are compulsory from primary school to university. In 2005, the Ministry of Education and the Department of Propaganda of the Communist Party of China (a typical department for the Chinese Communist Party. It is an internal division of the Communist Party of China in charge of ideology-related work, and enforces media censorship and control in China) jointly promulgated the “Reform of an ideological-political in Higher Education,” a policy paper which stated that ideological-political education is essential to understand national development and to guide students in understanding socialism through Chinese culture. The content of ideological-political education is still about *Marxist-Leninist Theory, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and the Three Representatives*. The new curriculum requires students in every college and university to take between 16 to 21 units, which is about 8%-10% of the total hours in an undergraduate program. A new curriculum with student-centered learning using case studies has replaced the old method of teaching but the main purpose of this political curriculum is to educate students to remain faithful to the theories of the Communist Party and ideological-political courses in liberal arts education is a source of much frustration to faculty members.

A senior professor at Shanghai Jiaotong thinks that the ideological-political courses do not help to foster students with critical thinking. This professor said:

I do not know why the central government and the Ministry of Education should still force the teaching of political courses and theories. If you ask how many students still believe this, I can assure you that not many people today really believe the political teachings or theory of Communism. It is just another form of brainwashing and an unreasonable demand to uphold the Communist Party's leadership in China, but this does not help students' critical thinking and democratic education at all.

In fact, many of the students in her political class are not interested in what is taught. The university administration wants students to internalize the Communist Party's theory; but the students do not believe that the Communist theory or Mao Zedong's Thought, or Deng Xiaoping's Theory are practical for real life. The course content is so abstract that it does not help students with philosophical and reflective thinking or with a moral life. Students feel the political courses are very dry and unrelated to their employment after graduation, as this professor noted. Some interviewed faculty members in Fudan have a similar opinion.

Some who teach political courses thought that the courses should not be included among course requirements in liberal arts because of the differences in their orientation. Ideological-political courses do not stress critical thinking, creativity, and innovative skills nor do they help students' cognitive development. A professor at ECNU, explained that when he taught Deng Xiaoping Theory, one- third of the students were always absent from the class because they considered the content to be dry and useless for their future career. As the professor said:

In the first two weeks of my class, I noted that many students were absent. I did not know why in the beginning, but later on, I realized that most students do not like the political courses and theories. They thought that they should be given the right and freedom to choose, not be mandated by the university.

Consequently, this professor took up some contemporary social issues and integrated into the course other academic disciplines for the students to discuss and to analyze. It was not meant



to stimulate their interest in the class on Deng Xiaoping Theory, but for them to discuss serious issues, to consider remedies and to understand their responsibilities after graduation. The university administrators were not in agreement with his approach. They wanted the course to be only political in content. However, students often told him that it was the best ideological-political course they had attended. In addition, he did not require his students to take the usual tests in the political course. Rather, he asked the students to write a reflection and to write research papers, expressing their views and providing the students with an opportunity to analyze their lives by employing what they learned in class and discussions.

His view represented the point of view of a large group of the faculty. However, under the current governing Communist Party, political education serves as way of indoctrination in order to retain its leadership. Many faculty members and university administrators have to accept passively what the Chinese government imposes. An officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government noted:

The Chinese universities must teach students ideological and political theories as a means to love the government, the Communist Party, and the motherland, and to uphold the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. In addition, ideological-political education teaching and learning must conform to the requirement of the new Teaching Standard Assessment of Undergraduate Programs (TSAUP), and to prepare college-educated students future generations for national development and for social stability.

A senior professor and administrator said that the requirement of teaching ideological-political courses has led to many new challenges for teachers and that the university and the government should not standardize the teaching content of ideological-political course. With rapid development of high technology and economic changes in the past two decades, the Chinese Communist Party, according to him, feels insecure in its leadership and, therefore, endeavors to gain unification by imposing its political theory in education throughout the country.

But if teachers do not promote diverse points of view in the political course, students will fail to develop in critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. Faculty members and administrators I interviewed also pointed out that instead of wasting too many resources and too much energy to establish political courses, emphasis should be placed on the value of teaching and lifelong learning, and to encourage faculty members to educate students with critical thinking, innovative skills and moral judgment through incentives. A senior administrator from Fudan asked the question, if the basic purpose of education is to nurture and prepare young people for the future and to educate them to become responsible global citizens with critical thinking, is the present educational system and curriculum succeeding in attaining the goal? Do teachers and administrators know what these young university students will face when they graduate? Do teachers know what is happening outside of the school? Are teachers aware that the emphasis on specialization, narrow technical expertise, memorization, and lecture pedagogy will fail to produce college graduates with the creativity, critical thinking and cognitive complexity needed for national advancement in a global context? Hence, the ideological-political curriculum remains a big challenge for liberal arts education development in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU. As Peterson (2012) succinctly states:

A substantial number of required courses in political ideology and military science persist at China's universities. If such deeply integrated ideological views continue to pervade the curriculum and are presented for automatic acceptance, it will be virtually impossible for the spirit of liberal education to gain traction and flourish. What finally emerges from this reform effort will merit careful attention to determine where it fits in the spectrum of the global migration of liberal education.

### **Mentorship Program for Critical Thinking**

Rosovsky (1990) states that “curriculum is a skeleton. The flesh, blood, and heart have to come from the rather unpredictable interaction between teachers and students” (p. 130).

Interaction between students and teachers as mentors is an important element to achieve the goal of educating students with critical thinking and creativity, a professor from Fudan noted. This interaction can occur outside the classroom or during the teacher's office hours and within the residential mentorship program. The residential college system started in England, at Oxford and Cambridge, and later at Harvard, Yale and several other US universities took up the idea, creating their own residential colleges in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The traditional residential college is designed to be a microcosm of the university. Several hundred students of all ages live in a community with faculty and university staff who provide appropriate programming to promote intellectual, spiritual, moral and social growth, including lectures, seminars and community service.

Mentorship program in the residential hall is another way to help student's critical thinking development, an official from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government noted. In residential halls students have a place to live and, also, it is a place for their growth intellectually, in seriousness of purpose and personal qualities. The students in the residential hall are in different areas of study and with varying backgrounds. In 2005 Fudan University began its Mentor Advising program. The program consists of college counselors and mentors who are full-time, part-time or guest mentors. Students may turn to the full-time mentors for academic advice and personal development. Guest mentors hold lectures and workshops while professors and scholars from different departments and from other schools visit the residential hall as part-time mentors. At Fudan University residential college counselors are selected from candidates in the University Talent Program, graduate student assistants, and from young faculty members with diverse backgrounds and knowledge. With guidance from others,

students are able to engage in research, writing and other academic undertakings or social life activities.

A senior administrator at the liberal arts college of Fudan remarked that its mentorship program thus far is considered successful and welcomed by students. They feel that relationships and interactions are strengthened and are supported by mentors, counselors, faculty members and school administrators. Full-time and part-time mentors communicate with students whenever needed in a mentor's office or in the residential college. Interaction between teachers and students through the mentor program helps students to improve their critical thinking, and problem solving skills. He said:

When students majoring in different fields of study were first assigned to residential halls, they accepted the program passively. The parents expressed their concern about the policy of mixing students with majors. But after two years both students and parents realized the benefit of the arrangement.

The mentor program is very helpful in increasing the students' ability to do critical thinking, according to him. Advisors and counselors expressed similar conclusions during my interview. A full time mentor at liberal arts college of Fudan in the last 6 years mentioned that “the mentorship program provides a platform for students to express their idea, thought, and dreams freely; mentors or counselors can guide them to think and reflect more profoundly.” However, the mentor program is at an initial stage and there remains much to be done.

Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU also established mentor programs to assist students in their academic development and personal growth and they aim to cultivate students with critical thinking. However, their scale is rather small compared to Fudan's mentorship program. They provide counselors who often guide a few hundred students in addition to administrative work. It is evident that counselors lack an adequate amount of time to assist each student properly.

Professional counselors deal with the academic and personal needs of students by designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing a comprehensive school counseling program as adjunct to cultivate students with critical thinking and innovative skills. Most college counselors and mentors, however, at Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU are not professionally trained but are faculty members or staff appointed to be counselors by the school administration. A senior administrator at Shanghai Jiaotong noted: “My university is eager to strengthen the mentor program in liberal arts education as a way to develop students’ critical thinking and strengthen their power of reflection but I believe that the key obstacle is we lack the manpower.”

According to this professor, this is unfortunate because mentors should have a degree and be certified school or guidance counselors. They may be required to counsel individuals or groups, to consult with parents, teachers or other educators, to make referrals to other schools or to community resources, etc. They work with faculty members and school administrators to aid students in holistic education. However, it appears that counselors and mentors vary in their dedication to the holistic development of students, especially in regard to critical thinking in students. A senior professor, who also is a mentor for students from ECNU, reported that ECNU began a mentorship program in 2006, and even earlier in some departments such as history and language departments. According to him, “the interaction between students and teachers is limited in the classroom and even more so outside of class. Thus, the mentorship program provides more opportunities for students to seek advice and to receive help.” It is especially helpful for freshman who may need a couple of months to adjust to campus life. However, the professor senses that Chinese students have no desire to seek help from their mentors unless it is related to their major field of study. He thinks that the university administration has to do more to promote the program because the mentorship program can be very valuable in developing the

whole person. “I do think that the mentor program is a useful means to enhance teacher-student relationship. Teachers can guide students in their four years college life, and teachers can be lifelong guides for students,” he noted.

A top senior administrator from ECNU spoke about the mentorship started in 2006 for undergraduate students. Previously it was a privilege only for graduate students. One mentor was assigned for 6-8 students in the freshman and sophomore classes. These mentors included some renowned professors. Some professionals from industry also were invited as part-time mentors. The value of the mentorship program is determined by students' evaluation of courses and their evaluation of the mentors' performance. And the program seems to be helpful for the academic, social, personal and spiritual growth of the students. In addition, student representatives are invited to attend administration meetings regularly in order that the voice of the student body can be heard. He also mentioned that “at the end of each semester, the university would evaluate whether the mentorship program helped to develop students' critical thinking and social responsibility. The result reached expectations.” In addition to being an academic and personal advisor, mentors and counselors may be a friend and even a parent figure but, as indicated, many mentors and counselors are not professionally trained. Consequently, the schools need to develop a professionally trained mentorship program as soon as possible. Historically, mentorship programs in the Chinese higher educational system have been only for graduate students. The undergraduate students are assigned to class advisors. With the increase of enrollment in the past decade, the quality of undergraduates and graduates has deteriorated. The mentorship program aims to deepen teacher-student relationship and interaction resulting in undergraduates whose powers of critical thinking are enhanced so that they will graduate as well-rounded students and the future leaders in a globalized world.

## Conclusion

This chapter discussed educating Chinese students with critical thinking and innovative skills through liberal arts education at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU. Adler (1982) stated that educators must nurture in learners the values, skills, and attributes required for active and responsible participation as citizens in a democratic society, and that particular emphasis should be placed on instilling knowledge, critical thinking and civil responsibility.

The fact that the higher educational system in China is utilitarian-oriented and secularized, according to some interviewed, means that a university is not an ivy tower in which teachers who so desire can successfully implement an innovative curriculum. More to the point, there is need of some form of incentive to motivate teachers to educate students with critical thinking and creativity. It may be a long-term plan to educate students with critical thinking together with a just system of evaluation for promotion and awards. Any reform to graduate students with critical thinking and innovative skills will succeed only if teachers are actively involved. Swartz (2003) states that teaching the mental skills of clarification, creative and critical thinking without helping students to learn how to use them in decision making and problem solving accomplishes only part of the goal. The current practice of educating students with critical thinking through liberal arts to stimulate the economic development will require practice in decision making on the part of students. Merely providing selective courses or comprehensive programs is not sufficient. There must be concrete changes in the curriculum and in pedagogy.

Faculty members, administrators and policy makers who were interviewed mentioned that the goal for critical thinking through liberal arts education is not very clear in their universities. Quite a few core curricula are not based on students' need but on academic authority

and political teachings. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU invested vast resources and capital for liberal arts education to achieve academic excellence, in particular, to foster creative minds and tried to follow the US liberal arts education model. Many faculty and even administrators still need to understand that the US and the British liberal arts education structure might not be a good model for the Chinese educational setting. Thus, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU need to search out the most effective way to educate creative and critical minds. Another issue of importance is the college admission procedure which depends completely on test scores in the national college entrance examination. Many scholars, researchers and even some policy makers strongly suggest changing the current college policy because it is not helpful in admitting students with creativity, critical thinking and innovative skills.

While higher educational institutions stress the importance of social, civic, physical, moral, and spiritual development of students, in primary and secondary schools there is a need to emphasize the cognitive development of students if they are to succeed in a pluralistic society and global economy. For the improvement of students in China today and into the future, a concerted effort is necessary on the part of policy makers, administrators and faculty to reform the curriculum in primary and secondary schools to include critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills. The next chapter will continue to explore another theme of liberal arts education emphasized by interviewees: moral reasoning, as emphasized by interviewees.



## **Chapter 8**

## **Moral Reasoning in the Context of Liberal Arts Education**

### **Introduction**

Contemporary Chinese colleges and universities, regardless of regional or cultural context and academic status (top research universities or regular colleges), face a similar challenge of moral reasoning education (Yang, 2011). Chapter 8 discusses moral reasoning in the context of liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU. It is divided into several sections: moral education vs. character education, aim of moral reasoning, moral reasoning formation in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, religious dimension in moral reasoning education, and the impact of corruption on moral reasoning education.

In the last three decades, the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education have repeatedly emphasized the importance of education and the connection between quality education and moral development, as a senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government noted. Throughout the history of China, education has been a means to promote moral, social and political education of youth under guidelines established by the government (Turner & Acker, 2002). Recently, the government has realized that, although schools have incorporated political, economic and social elements into the curriculum, they have fewer and fewer well-rounded graduates with moral reasoning (i.e., ability to reason with moral principles) (Xu, 2011). Through his field survey and interviews with 850 students from 15 colleges and universities in China from 2009 to 2010, Chang (2010) discovered that the juvenile crime rate has also been increasing and the moral responsibility of youth has decreased. Yang (2001) notes that globalization and an under-developed economic market in China have brought about moral confusion, and an unhealthy worship of utilitarianism has lured young people away from their moral tradition and culture. During my interviews with policy makers, administrators

and faculty members, many of them asked these questions: What is wrong with the educational program and the schools in contemporary China? What is missing in family tradition and in cultural formation? Is there any education in values or morals in contemporary Chinese colleges and universities to prevent juvenile crime, enhance moral reasoning among youth and a concern for others? How does liberal arts education instill in college students and contemporary youth moral reasoning and responsible decision making?

Wiest (2006) argues that contemporary Chinese youth are frustrated with the prevailing values of their society and their education. The search for meaning in life and their own identity is expressed widely and intensely within youth groups (Sun, Xi, & Xiao, 2006). Stillion (1996) gives an explanation:

Human beings are in the process of growth and continuously seek the meaning and purpose of life. This search is especially prominent during adolescence. Young people are heavily involved in preparation for their adult lives and in setting goals and dreaming of lifetime accomplishments (p. 98).

China's educational reform since the 1980's is not meeting the country's need for teaching moral principles in education as many interviewees mentioned. Contemporary Chinese youth is less concerned with social commitment and has become more selfish and overindulged. Feng (2002) points out that contemporary Chinese college students face many moral and emotional challenges; they do not know how to care for others or make just and moral decisions. Many Chinese parents, families, and schools are focused only on the academic performance of students and the material needs of their children to the neglect of the psycho-emotional and moral dimensions as integral parts of education (Liu, 2003).

### **Moral Education vs. Character Education**

While there is no substantial difference between moral education, character education, value education or quality education in the Chinese context (Cheng, 2004), some Western

educators and psychologists (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Kohlberg, 1971; Lickona, 2003) argue that there are a few key differences between moral and character education. Garrod (1992) states that character education focuses on teaching what is right and wrong and emphasizes the moral achievements of the society and culture as a seedbed for moral education. Moral education focuses on how to decide what is right and what is wrong and emphasizes the moral principles that have been established to guide one's moral deliberations in action. For someone, moral education is "theory based," while character education is "theoretical" (Kohlberg, 1976; Piaget, 1965). Others, such as Berkowitz and Bier (2005), state that moral education has a narrow range of pedagogical strategies and character education has a broad and variable range of strategies. Moral education comes from a liberal, social science tradition, and character education from a classical, traditional and philosophical tradition.

But Lickona and Davidson (2005) argue that both approaches are equal in status since both set their goals for responsible citizen formation. Others, such as Halstead (1996), encompass both moral and character formation in their definition of value education. Halstead (1996) states that "values refer to principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behavior" (p. 5). Although Halstead seems to combine two major schools of moral development-- moral and character or value education—both approaches to education share the same goal: to educate moral and responsible global citizens. For all writers, this is the ultimate goal of education. Berkowitz (2000) notes that the goal of good character and moral education is to form a good person. For him, a good person is someone with moral values, behavior, personality, emotion, identity and reasoning.

### **Moral Reasoning Education in China: Historical Approach**

While some argue that Confucian educational traditions instill moral values, Chinese society did not systematically develop a curriculum of moral education until almost 50 years ago (Zhan & Ning, 2004). This curriculum is related more to politics, law and political ideology than to moral discipline (Lee & Ho, 2005). Because of its ideological-political nature, moral education in China became another name for political socialization. Lee and Ho (2005) note that there have been three major movements in moral education since the founding of a new China in 1949: “(1) ideologically-politically oriented moral education (1949-1978); (2) moral education independent from politics (1978-1993); (3) depoliticized moral education since 1993 to now” (p. 419).

The Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping declared that “education is to contribute towards economic development rather than to the achievement of political purity alone” (Kam, 1994, p. 33). In 1994, the Chinese government issued a document entitled “Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving Moral Education Work in Schools” (PRCMOE, 1994). This document offers some concrete content to moral education and spiritual development, for example, the curriculum reform and social services programs. But for many students, this type of moral education lacks a solid foundation and does not help them to be persons of good character with moral principles. Li (1993) states that while the concept is one of a spiritual civilization focused on moral and cultural advancement, correct lifestyle and discipline, it is still largely grounded in the language of Chinese socialist ideology. A senior administrator from Fudan notes that traditional moral values—such as honesty, responsibility, protection of environment, thoughtfulness, filial piety, love of the community, respect for other’s rights—are missing. These

values disappeared partly because of China's One-Child policy began in 1978 and partly because of an unbalanced moral/character education in the schools (Yang, 2007).

### **Contemporary concern about moral reasoning through liberal arts education in China**

According to Lee (2003), many Chinese educational leaders are concerned with education as a means to provide a foundation for moral development, to increase the sense of individual responsibility, and to help people practice moral cultivation for a collectivistic cause. In the last two decades, economic development and globalization have made a great impact on Chinese students. The constantly growing gap between the rich and the poor, between developed and under-developed regions in China has also changed students' value orientation (Wang, 2004b). The worship of money and utilitarianism has become a new fashion among university students. Qi and Tang (2004) argue that personal interests and values are more emphasized than community interests. Money, not morality, plays an important role in many college students' lives. Materialism has led to a deterioration of traditional values at the college level and moral education has been abandoned (Zhu & Liu, 2004). This has produced great challenges for young university students, their parents and moral educators. Many university students are misguided as several interviewees pointed out. Numerous scholars have called morality China's core problem. Tradition has been destroyed. Normative answers cannot be found in the new market economy. Not many Chinese would like to admit it, but Taiwan and Hong Kong today may be better examples of Chinese civilization and moral development than mainland China itself (Tang, 2011).

According to Fu (2011), the Ministry of Education and the Chinese government have not met the challenge of moral deterioration in Chinese universities because the entire nation is focused instead, on social and economic reformation, and education is more related to utilitarian

orientation. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government suggested that the present moral education in colleges is no longer suitable for rapid social change and moral education should play a key role in the school curriculum. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, the Chinese government, and the university systems must work out new and concrete plans for moral education in China. A senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong mentioned:

I really worry about the moral reasoning formation of our students; it seems that the education today is focusing merely and entirely on economic development and market need. We no longer teach our students to serve others and to help the poor; we no longer educate our students to become honest people, good leaders, and responsible citizens. What we always hear about is how to make more money through any means, even illegal and immoral means; this is not new and strange anymore. If we do not reflect on these social and personal problems seriously and educate our students with more reasoning through education, particularly through liberal arts education, I really do not have any hope for our country and for our educational institutions.

In addition, Chinese university students no longer appreciate traditional moral values as some of them blindly follow the cultures, traditions and customs of western countries, according to this administrator in Shanghai Jiaotong. Several interviewees from Fudan suggest that university students and moral educators together must seek and create a new body of knowledge in their own society. They must respect their own cultures and traditions and they must come to appreciate diversity in cultures and traditions through moral education. With the collaboration of family, society and parents, schools will be able to educate students to be responsible citizens.

In the past decade, some moral issues have emerged as crucial concerns for Chinese society. Counterfeited products, such as drugs, cigarette, liquor and personal items, environmental destruction, poor quality infrastructure, hazardous products such as milk that contain poisonous ingredients and re-use of unsanitary oil are prevalent throughout China today. Incidents of student's violence are also on the rise, a professor from ECNU stated. The October

21, 2011 death of a two-year old girl in the city of Foshan in Guangdong province raised an unprecedented internal debate on morality. The two-year old girl died of internal injuries sustained after being run-over not once, but twice in a local market. But what made little Wang Yue's death a matter for intense public discussion was the fact that nearly 20 people simply walked by and ignored her plight as she lay bleeding in the gutter. Hundreds of Chinese websites, twitters, newspapers and even state media outlets are asking, what does this say about Chinese society and education? Have the Chinese people lost all concern for others in the scramble for wealth unleashed by China's effort for economic development? In contemporary China the lack of moral standards in society is a serious crisis (Chen, 2011). Chinese colleges and universities must constantly reflect on the importance of meeting this challenge by educating students with moral reasoning through liberal arts education, many interviewees directly and indirectly expressed.

Moral reasoning is practical reasoning about what one is obliged to do or not do. Rosovsky (1990) states that one of the goals in education is to help students to understand and to practice solving moral problems, “the most significant quality in educated persons is the informed judgment that enables them to make discriminating moral choices” (p. 107). Rosovsky (1990) further states that one of the six groups of core courses for liberal arts education is moral reasoning. Moral reasoning in liberal arts education should not teach or preach a specific morality or philosophy from any religious tradition but discuss significant and recurrent questions of choice and value that arise in human experience. Matters such as justice, poverty, obligation, citizenship, and personal responsibility are fundamental topics in a course of moral reasoning.

Student suicide has escalated in the last decade. Statistics from the China Psychology Association (2009) show that some 30 million of China's 340 million young adults between the ages of 17-22 are not in a state of sound psychological health and 28 percent of them are morally unbalanced. Experts have attributed widespread adolescent anxiety and moral imbalance to heavy schoolwork, employment pressure, and a monotonous life. In 2002, Liu Haiyang, a student of prestigious Tsinghua University, burnt several bears with vitriol fluid just "for fun." Increasing violence in schools has aroused great concern. A few years ago, Ma Jiajue, a student of Yunnan University in southwest China, killed four persons on the campus. Some analysts see the young generation becomes generally vulnerable. A senior professor from ECNU said that "there is nothing we can blame but our moral reasoning education which has been absent in Chinese higher education in the last decade. I really do not know what our policy makers, administrators are thinking about. They just mention the idea of whole person education but never do anything about it, a liberal arts education should talk about it." Realizing the urgent problems of morality in Chinese society and among the Chinese youth, the Chinese government tries to strengthen the moral education of youngsters to help them attain a positive attitude toward life and to enhance their ability of moral reasoning. Chinese colleges and universities, including Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU are also thinking about the importance of educating students with moral reasoning.

### **Aim of Moral Reasoning**

Moral reasoning is a set of principles by which one conducts him/herself as a person in regard to one's own life or interacting with other persons and in regard to the world in which we live (Gendron, 2011, personal communication). Can a liberal arts program influence the moral growth of a student? How should a college or university take an active role in the moral



reasoning education of young people? Traditionally, the family is the important place for moral growth. Parents are the first teachers to educate their children in moral behavior. Parents are the final moral authority fostering moral habits, rules, or ideas in their children. Colleges and universities are also responsible to instill in students virtues of morality, such as honesty, generosity, justice, friendship, and integrity. The aim of moral reasoning is to develop right-minded character in young people (Haste, 2004). It entails on the part of parents, teachers and institutions the creation of an environment in which the moral development of youth can take place as they grow in self-understanding and absorb moral values which will guide them throughout life.

A senior administrator who is also a professor from ECNU stated that the most important issue of moral reasoning is cultivating a critical moral faculty in the minds of the students. Through literature, history, art, and philosophy, a young person who immerses his mind in these courses learns what is right and just to do things and discovers the purpose or meaning of one's life. According to him, "traditionally, moral cultivation aimed to foster good personal ethics, a sense of responsibility for society, and love for the community; universities should educate students to reach maturity as social, moral, intellectual and artistic persons. Many students come to college expecting to be successful in their courses by memorization. They should be taught to reflect on moral issues or on any issues that relate to their lives." He further indicates that when he teaches political philosophy, he raises the question of corruption among government officers and guides students to discuss it with respect to a moral standard. Often he finds it difficult to convince students that something is immoral, for instance, cheating or bribery. Because society as a whole believes that bribery (in either large or small amounts) makes it easier to do business;

it is a common practice even among students. He thinks that the entire society is ill and that educating students with moral reasoning through liberal arts is not successful.

A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government expressed a similar view. He said:

Morality or moral reasoning is very crucial to educate students to become responsible social and global citizens. A direct way to the moral growth of our students is the study of liberal arts which can provide material that deal with the moral issues of importance to men and women as individuals and as a community; this is a task that the universities must seriously consider.

The tradition of “five-virtues” had influenced Chinese society for more than 2000 years until the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949 and abandoned all Confucian teaching on morality, ethics and virtues. For more than fifty years since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, communist teachings have been advocated to encourage people to devote themselves to the state and society. The 10 years of “the Great Cultural Revolution” from 1966-1976 further destroyed traditional moral values and teachings. In the past decade, along with the transformation to a market economy in China, moral issues have become one of the biggest challenges for the Chinese Communist government in addition to educating students and citizens with moral reasoning and acceptable moral principles. But the impact of a market economy, an orientation to money-worship and concern for social status has dominated the life of most Chinese people as many interviewees noted. The thinking and behavior of many Chinese are contrary to traditional Chinese mores and to common standards as well because the Chinese Communist Party is so corrupt. As a professor from Fudan said, “many of our students lost a standard of morality and there is an urgent need for colleges and universities to teach them moral reasoning and values. I think that liberal arts education can make a big difference in this regard.”

## **Education for moral reasoning through liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU**

According to many interviewees, Chinese educators generally realize the importance of moral reasoning through liberal arts education. Administrators, faculty members and policy makers interviewed in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU also expressed their concern about moral reasoning in their institutions. However, in China, moral reasoning education is closely related to ideological-political education in two elements: first, the social need, for example, the need to educate students to be loyal and to serve the homeland and the people; second, the requirement to satisfy students' needs for personal development and happiness, a professor from ECNU pointed out. The problem is that the Chinese Communist Party mandates a program of moral education centered on a commitment to nationalism, patriotism, and community through ideological-political courses which are at variance with personal development and integration. Students are required to be self-disciplined and devoted to the political party while expanding their professional knowledge. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU also offer moral education courses through their liberal arts education curriculum. However, moral educational courses are just about one per cent of total course requirements based on the curriculum in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU. These "moral educational" courses include Marxist-Leninist Theory, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the Three Representatives. More recently, moral education (which is called Deyu in Chinese) and the curriculum emphasize harmony as an ideological-political aim for building society while traditional values, such as filial piety, social justice, honesty, personal loyalty, fairness and responsibility, are neglected.

The moral orientation that Chinese students receive from their families and the quality and moral education they receive in schools both deserve some thorough exploration and

research through liberal arts education, as several senior professors from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU mentioned. In addition to the traditional educational focus on reading, mathematics, literature and art, contemporary Chinese university students face the challenge of education of the whole person and moral formation (Wang, 2004a). A rapidly changing Chinese society and the phenomenon of globalization demand that the universities should pay more attention to youth and their holistic formation by drawing upon resources from its own and Western traditions: academic, moral and societal (MoE, 2009).

A top senior administrator from Fudan stated that the Chinese higher educational system needs to ask the following: How do the perceptions of responsible behavior by Chinese university students and their sense of commitment relate to their moral development? How can education support and nurture healthy development in college students, particularly in regard to morality? Many interviewees made it clear that one of liberal arts education's roles is to cultivate Chinese college students' moral reasoning so that they can make just and moral decisions in their lives. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai Municipal government elaborately stated that "by cultivating college students with moral reasoning through liberal arts education, we can train the future leaders with a strong foundation in morality so there would be a reduction in corruption cases."

### **Moral reasoning education at Fudan**

In Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China, ideological-political courses are required courses while moral education courses are electives. Except for political study courses and those in the major field of study, students are free to select their courses. Interviewees all agree that moral reasoning education through liberal arts education should receive greater consideration than political education because it pertains to educating the whole person and one's social

behavior. Moral reasoning learned through liberal arts is lifetime learning. It cannot be acquired through superficial course work; students need to engage in discussion and practice. Although Fudan offers more moral education courses than Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, it still encounters problems of how to best implement the course. To implement the teaching and training of moral reasoning, quite a few interviewees stated that the content of the course is a key factor.

A senior professor and administrator from Fudan liberal arts college, expressed concern that a review of the text books and course requirements for moral reasoning education indicates that the course content is rather weak and superficial. “We do not have many good books on moral reasoning education; I think it is a big challenge for us,” according to him. Another drawback is the lack of interest in teaching the subject because it pays less than other fields, such as MBA programs, and it is not as helpful for academic promotions. Also, moral reasoning education courses are largely theoretical in content and students need practice under guidance to prepare to solve problems in daily life. His view was expressed by other interviewees. Very important is the participation of the teacher in moral reasoning education. Through questioning, eliciting view points, posing examples, reflecting on current social issues and other activities the teacher can guide students in moral reasoning and the teacher can also act as a moral mentor to the students in their development, a professor pointed out.

A top senior administrator from Fudan University argued that moral reasoning education should not relate to ideological-political theories; these are two different disciplines. He stated:

Moral reasoning should teach students to love their neighbor, to respect others and nature, to make just decisions and to deal with current social issues. For example, this year there was the case of steam bread produced in Shanghai which had poisoned many people nationwide. One can question what has been done by schools to discuss this tragedy in order to teach students respect for life, human dignity and honesty. And how can traditional moral values be brought back into a society driven by money and social-status? These are serious challenges that moral education needs to face today.

## **Moral reasoning education at Shanghai Jiaotong**

Interviewees from Shanghai Jiaotong expressed strong disagreement with the replacement of moral education by an ideological-political curriculum. A senior professor from Shanghai Jiaotong clearly expressed disagreement in stating he believes that “the content of moral education in the schools does not make much sense. Students are still forced to take ideological-political courses as a core requirement instead of traditional Chinese moral values or learning from a Western moral perspective. The goal is to graduate a morally educated person, not a politically educated person.” Another senior administrator in Shanghai Jiaotong also bravely stated:

Ideological-political includes courses in political theory, history and doctrine. The Chinese Communist Party lays great stress on ideological-political education instead of on moral reasoning cultivation. The Party forces students to learn Communist theories and similar material. They (the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education) simply state what is to be taught. I believe that it is a means to keep the Chinese Communist Party in charge.

He thinks that students today, unlike students 30 or 40 years ago, do not really enjoy these ideological-political studies. The students think such courses are a way of controlling their minds, according to him. Many other interviewees also view such studies as merely serving the Party, not serving to help a student grow as a moral person.

A senior professor from Shanghai Jiaotong mentioned:

Teachers and students should be allowed to make their own selection of classes. Why should the Party and the Ministry of Education mandate them to study ideological-political theory instead of offering more moral reasoning courses? I think our future teachers (the graduates) from Shanghai Jiaotong should be benefited from the courses of moral reasoning through liberal arts education, so that they can be good role models for their students. We really need to draw inspiration from Confucianism for moral education.

His opinion speaks of a common phenomenon: in Chinese educational institutions from primary to tertiary level there are ideological-political educational courses that must be taught. Also,

education in morality is closely related to ideological-political education, patriotism and loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party. Respect for life, human dignity, social justice and environmental protection are rarely topics for study in Chinese moral reasoning formation. Currently, there are only two courses in the liberal arts program related to moral education in Shanghai Jiaotong. An administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong, explained:

Many administrators in our institute often emphasize cultivating students with critical thinking and innovative skills but somehow neglect to form students' moral reasoning, which I think has the same importance as critical thinking and innovative skills. But because the administration does not realize this, moral reasoning formation through liberal arts education is not well implemented.

### **Moral reasoning education at ECNU**

Compared to Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU offers more courses on moral reasoning or moral education. However, according to a senior administrator from ECNU, the mixture of political education and moral education is a serious problem. According to him, these courses should be two separate courses. Students sometimes reject the material in moral education because it is a repetition of what they studied in high school. It was also noted that many students did not attend ideological-political lectures and copied the notes of classmates in preparation for tests. He relates that he rarely has observed a teacher in a moral education class deal with such topics as human dignity and respect for life or discusses social issues with students, such as contaminated milk or counterfeit drugs. Social issues can be good topics to use in teaching students to make moral judgments and the teachers' participation is crucial for success in teaching moral reasoning. "Our teachers really should provide more moral issues to discuss with students. Students then can learn what is right, what is wrong and what is the just and moral thing to do," he pointed out.

A professor from ECNU states that as a philosophy teacher his main point is to teach students to analyze and to reflect on their lives. He is flexible and open to discuss diverse viewpoints in the class. He teaches political philosophy, western philosophy and Communist or Marxist theory, but he does not force students to accept it. He also asks students to discuss how the political thoughts presented in class relate to current issues in society.

A senior administrator from ECNU said that as far as he knows, there is no mechanism to help teachers in implementing moral reasoning courses. The task depends almost entirely on each teacher's individual commitment and engagement. Some teachers teach solely by the books designated from the government and the results are not positive. Other teachers integrate current social issues into the moral education course discussion. Despite the need, he thinks that teachers, administrators, and policy makers do not understand how to more effectively teach moral education through liberal arts education. In addition, under the pressure to publish and adhere to academic requirements, teachers assigned to teach moral education courses complain that they are at a disadvantage compared to colleagues in the natural and social sciences because science teachers may obtain national and provincial funding for research that can result in an opportunity to be promoted. Consequently, in teaching moral education only what is required is completed, without serious interest in the results.

Most teachers, policy makers and administrators interviewed emphasized that relating the moral course to current social issues was a key way to obtain student interest and to apply the content of moral education. As one senior administrator from ECNU stated, "students are expected to apply moral reasoning in daily life and assimilate the moral concepts into their intrinsic values. With the understanding of these intrinsic values, students can learn how to make rational decisions against market economy influence." After questioning administrators and



policy makers about the existence of policy or development programs that can help teachers and students relate moral reasoning to current issues, it is clear that they are not available in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU.

### **Religious Dimension in Moral Reasoning Education**

Traditionally, religion played a significant role in educating moral persons in Western countries. Many of the first universities in the United States and England were founded with a religious purpose, although they may not have a religious connection today (O'Malley, 2008). Still, religious education and values are a part of liberal arts education in Western universities. The traditional teaching of religion continues to have influence on moral education in the US and other European countries. One of the goals of religious education is to teach principles of morality and prepare people to resolve moral problems. Can educational institutions help students attain the virtues that individuals, communities, and society as a whole should possess? The teaching of religion can be a very an important factor in achieving this goal.

Prior to 1949 when the Chinese Communist took over power in China, there were top universities operated by religious groups or by administrators with a religious background, such as Yenching, Furen, St. John's, and West China. Despite many hardships, their staff and students spent the war years endeavoring to continue as models of higher education. Based mainly on American and the German models, they tried to preserve liberal arts education with a focus on educating students with morality and social responsibility (Hayhoe, 1996). After the founding of the People's Republic of China, however, all educational institutions with a religious background were closed. Eventually, they merged with Communist-run schools where it was forbidden to believe in religion or to mention it. The Communist Party still bans any topic that relates to

religious issues in schools from kindergarten to the tertiary level. This discrimination on the part of the Chinese Communist Party against religion exists because of the tenets of communism.

Despite the fact that religion and religious education are forbidden in the Chinese educational system, faculty members interviewed expressed an interest and enthusiasm in teaching religious values. A professor from ECNU, who received his Ph. D from overseas, pointed out that after the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, almost all traditional values were destroyed in this unprecedented disaster in Chinese history. The entire society was in chaos. Filial piety, love for one another, respect for life and dignity, and care for neighbors were gone. According to him, Chinese people today no longer pay much attention to the Communist Party and its doctrine compared to thirty or forty years ago. Many people take advantage of joining the Chinese Communist Party with an intention to further their own careers. But people seek something more meaningful, and many youth feel that emptiness dominates their hearts and minds as they search for meaning. Everyone sets the goal to make more and more money.

The professor thinks that healthy religious values should be included in the curriculum of liberal arts, but to do this is very difficult as long as the Communist Party controls education and its curriculum development. Chinese people today do not seriously believe that students can acquire moral reasoning and its values from ideological-political teaching. The Chinese Communist Party still clings to the cold-war mentality and views religion negatively. At Fudan, faculty members and administrators interviewed also expressed the same concern about religious educational courses in the curriculum, such as Christian values from the Western tradition or some key values from Buddhism. Fudan is the only university that was founded by a religious person in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is the only school that offers the course “history of Christian civilization” in the liberal arts program.

A senior administrator from Fudan Liberal Arts College said that although China has a long tradition of Confucian values, it appears that the current educational system does not value it, particular after the Cultural Revolution and the Opening Door policy. After the 1978 economic reform, too much energy and resources were dedicated to the economy and there was too great a focus on professional training and specialized courses in pursuit of wealth. Concern for the education of the whole person is now lacking. According to him, “religious values can and should be introduced into the curriculum. Ideological-political courses need not be replaced but can be supplemented by courses on religious values.” However, a few of the faculty I interviewed expressed disagreement. An associate professor from Shanghai Jiaotong expressed his opposition to the introduction of religious values into a liberal arts program for moral reasoning education. He questions the reason for introducing religious educational courses because the students are there to study different fields of knowledge, not to study religious doctrine. “Religious study does not fit into the program of secular studies and it runs counter to the Communist Party’s teaching,” he said.

Quite a few people I interviewed from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU stated clearly that since traditional Chinese values are largely ignored by many contemporary Chinese people, a secularized Chinese society (an interviewee who has a strong religious background with a Western educational background even used the term, faithless Chinese society) today encounters the serious problem of moral decline. Lack of moral and social responsibility, respect for life and human dignity, concern for the environment, honesty, and the existence of corruption at all levels in the Chinese government are signs that moral reasoning is greatly lacking in Chinese society and that many people face moral crisis. A senior administrator from Fudan courageously states that “despite the fact that the Communist government forbids religious

values and subject matter in schools, teachers can inculcate religious values in their teaching and can help students to accept them.” It is important that across the curriculum teachers address issues that relate to religious values. Some risk may be involved but “it is an urgent matter that calls for immediate action to provide holistic education and to nurture students with moral reasoning, given the rapid decline of morality in Chinese society” as expressed by a senior professor from ECNU.

A few faculty members and administrators also noted that in today's pluralistic and global world, education in China should focus on students' whole development and not merely on teaching ideological-political ideas or training in skills. Chinese traditional values and Western religious values can have great influence on students' moral reasoning. Chinese colleges and universities will not be successful in teaching moral reasoning if they are prevented from including religious values, traditional and moral principles in the liberal arts curriculum, expressed a professor from Fudan, and “the Chinese Communist Party must change their education policy and be more tolerant of religious values and teachings.” However, most policy makers I interviewed were not interested in the topic of religious values in moral education.

### **Challenges of High School and Family Education for Moral Reasoning**

Much information below has been mentioned elsewhere but is properly reiterated under specific topics that follow. There are many ways in which diverse liberal arts courses can influence students to become moral citizens. However, moral reasoning through liberal arts should start in high school, as a senior professor from ECNU stated, “we must teach our students with moral reasoning from their early years; it is too late if it starts in college years when students have already decided on their own world values.” In 1978 China adopted a one-child policy due to overpopulation. The generation under the one-child policy has become self-

centered, selfish and over-indulged citizens (Fan, 2007). Within the family the one child is usually treated like a prince or princess. This generation of the one-child policy can be described as a generation with a deep feeling of loneliness and with feelings of inadequacy and helplessness when faced with difficulties. They lack strength to cope with the vicissitudes of daily life and they possess few social skills. Few children help with the housework. In contrast with Western tradition, many parents and families generally are not interested in their children's moral development as long as the children are succeeding well academically. They do their best to satisfy their children's material needs while ignoring their spiritual and moral development.

Historically, Chinese society has a tradition of strong emphasis on moral education. Students were educated to become responsible citizens who carry out their duty for the country and their family's future. Confucianism stressed the use of education to change customs and to develop an upright and strong character for the good of the family, the country and the entire world: "everybody has an obligation for the common good under heaven and every human being is able to become a sage-king" (Mencius, 12.2). The first president of Peking University Cai Yuanpei and other educators during the Republican period (1911-1949) emphasized strongly that citizenship and moral education was the foundation for education of the Republic (Li, 2011). Unfortunately, many contemporary Chinese people came to see education as a means to achieve higher social status and honors. Parents are eager to give their children a good education so that they can achieve a higher social status and be successful in life and they place on their children unreasonable expectations. Many, for example, force their children to take extra classes, such as a piano class, the study of a foreign language, a class in painting or a class in swimming. If their children win awards in these activities, they may attain a higher status when they submit an application to the better schools. Studying to obtain high scores becomes the main concern for

almost all Chinese students. Many students lack basic skills for life and an ability to be self-sufficient as several interviewees expressed this view. On the college level, parents may ask or force their children to major in business management, accounting, computer science, and engineering or finance because a fine position with a high salary is obtainable in these fields.

Family values influence students to become utilitarian and money oriented in order to achieve a higher social status and to obtain honors. Hence, they are not inclined to reflect on the purpose of education or devote much time to reflection on their personal lives. A senior officer from Fudan expressed his worry that “parents are the first teachers of students but if the parents pass on the wrong values of education to their children, the school will have many difficulties in educating children in the values of humanities or liberal arts.” Contemporary Chinese society is becoming more competitive in terms of employment, so parents are pressured to make sure that their children survive the competition and become winners “winners”. An administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong said:

Parents should be concerned about their children's ability to make moral decisions. They ought to be asking themselves how to give their children the values that teach them to have care for others and to pursue spiritual development in an environment dominated by materialism and utilitarianism. It should be clear to parents that real success and happiness cannot depend on material goods and social status.

Parents today spend less and less time interacting with their children according to several interviewees from Fudan. After school most children spend their time watching TV, using computers and other electronic devices. A professor at Fudan expressed her concern about the moral formation of youth. She said that “today people always complain that our educational system is wrong on the college level. But I believe that something is seriously wrong with the effort to educate students with moral reasoning. I also believe that family education has taken the wrong direction in regard to moral education.” According to her, parents are supposed to be

morally good examples for their children. She conducted a survey of 580 students' family education and found that moral values and respect for human life and dignity are the topics least discussed in the family while making money, finding a good job, buying a luxurious car and house are the values that parents pass on to their children.

Many parents, however, do wonder why their children are so self-centered, have poor manners, lack self-discipline, are unwilling to work hard and lack a sense of social responsibility (Yang, 2012). It is evident that many Chinese parents are concerned mainly about academic grades and access to top universities. A senior professor from ECNU also noted that children are poorly taught and learn little from their parents about moral reasoning and values. He further points out:

Children ought to learn at home the lessons on how to love and care for themselves, their parents, other family members, their teachers, classmates, school, their neighborhood, community, country, people the world over, regard for the environment, the value of knowledge, the meaning of truth, unity, social justice, fairness, and compassion.

An administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong said that "if we want to educate students with good moral reasoning and family education about love, care and compassion are some foundations that cannot be skipped." Other interviewees also indicated that Chinese society has very high expectations of colleges and universities to educate professionals who fulfill market needs and attain employment, but often ignore moral values and whole person development. And there are complaints that many colleges and universities have become diploma mills driven by economic profit and fail to educate the whole person. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government expressed his agreement with many parents who complain about education in college but he says that "there is also a need to consider the high school educational program in regard to what students study, how they learn and the resources available

for teaching moral reasoning and education in moral principles from Confucian tradition. Do teachers and parents pay sufficient attention to the needs of students?”

A senior professor and administrator from Fudan stated that “the values and lifestyles of Chinese people have been greatly influenced by globalization and the information age in the past decade. People have fantasies and are interested in new things.” Young people who have not yet developed mature values may be influenced by many different modern sources in sex, violence, relativism, moral nihilists, etc. and may lack independence in thinking and critical decisions, a professor at ECNU noted. High schools need to be concerned about moral education in the curriculum and moral reasoning in teachers and students. A similar opinion was expressed by a senior officer at the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government. According to him, “the Department of Education many times has emphasized interest in moral education and reasoning in high school, but as a policy making body we have not done well. Sometimes an individual school does not follow what the policy requires.” He noted that there is a crisis of faith and conflict of values in general and specifically in regard to socialism and its values in contemporary Chinese society. Values such as health, friendship, happiness, honesty, diligence, self-realization, responsibility and love for one another are not rated highly by students and among society at large. One deterrent is the fact that students are pressured into concentrating on obtaining high academic marks in order to be accepted into the best colleges while the teachers are also focused on students’ scores and are less concerned about the whole development of students including moral reasoning.

Although government policies by the Ministry of Education and other agencies, such as the Education Commission of State of Council exist to promote moral reasoning education at various educational levels, nearly every high school in China continues to focus on the college



entrance examination (Xiong, 2011). All three years in senior high school are dedicated to academic study, and moral reasoning education is not seriously considered. Moreover, what is called moral education has been replaced by a required course in ideological-political education which includes political economics and patriotism as mentioned above. A senior professor from Fudan supports the views of an officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government. He pointed out that in the past five years he has conducted research and several surveys in the areas of moral reasoning and formation among students in eight high schools in Shanghai and a nearby city. The result was disappointing because none of the schools is well prepared for moral reasoning education. There is a lack of qualified moral education teachers or a lack of sufficient time in the schedule for classes in moral teaching or teachers only teach political or Chinese Communist theories which, he believed, cannot be considered moral reasoning education. The entire school emphasizes high scores on the college entrance examination. “Students study from 6:30 am until 11pm, and there is no break on Sundays and holidays, except for the seven days to celebrate the Chinese New Year,” he stated. “The Chinese college entrance examination system is a major barrier to educating high school students with moral reasoning, or even to lay a foundation for moral reasoning education,” he added.

As noted, Chinese High school students are divided into two majors: Li Ke (science) and Wen Ke (humanities). The students’ goal is to fulfill endless course requirements and tests, and to achieve high scores in their college entrance examination. When these high schools students start their college life without a solid foundation in moral reasoning, four years of college life may not result in a better understanding of moral reasoning through liberal arts education. A senior professor and administrator from ECNU expressed:

If schools are to provide a form of moral reasoning, school authorities, teachers and policy makers must change the present academic system which is dominated by the

college entrance examination. Otherwise, the goal to educate students with moral reasoning through liberal arts education in Chinese colleges and universities is an impossible mission.

An associate professor from Shanghai Jiaotong also pointed out that high school students are at a stage in their growth when they should be educated as whole persons with moral reasoning but under the present system they lose out on valuable opportunities for moral reasoning education. She said that “under the pressure of the college entrance test, those non-major classes in high school are all cancelled; it seems that there is no one who cares about moral reasoning education as long as the students’ academic performance is very good.”

Very recently, China’s Ministry of Education published its official 10-year plan to improve the country’s education system: “Outline of China’s National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)”, which covers every level of schooling from kindergarten to the university. In higher education, the plan calls for the creation of world-class universities as well as improved teaching and research, more professional administration, and greater freedom for universities to set their academic goals. Hence, it may be a chance to change the college entrance examination to the US model and allow for the inclusion of moral reasoning education.

### **Impact of corruption on moral reasoning education**

In addition to family education, high school education, and college education, some social factors have an impact on the formation of students’ moral reasoning. One such factor is corruption in society, according to a senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government. A study recently conducted by the Carnegie Endowment (2011) stated that failure to curtail endemic corruption among Chinese officials poses one of the most serious threats to the nation’s future economic and political stability. Corruption not only

threatens social and political stability but, also, causes rapid moral decline. One of the major questions for Chinese leadership is how to put the rule of law into effect. “When the legal system is not transparent and does not protect victims, how can we expect the government to act according to principles of morality?” a senior professor from Fudan University questioned. An administrator and professor from Shanghai Jiaotong strongly agreed with the professor from Fudan, as he stated:

We must reform the legal system to be more transparent and to decrease corruption. It is ironic that while we teach our students to be morally good people in society, it appears that society as a whole is filled with corruption. How can students accept what their teachers have taught them when they see cases of illegality happening around them in daily life? How do we teach students with moral reasoning if we adults are not following the moral standards?

Corruption is like a cancer that threatens the nation’s future and is wide-spread at every level in the Chinese government and Chinese society, many interviewees expressed. A senior professor from ECNU expressed his worries. He states that “presently, academic corruption in teaching and research is itself a challenge. If teachers do not abide by professional ethics, how can students be taught to accept ethical principles and moral reasoning?” Most faculty members, administrators, and policy makers interviewed expressed that lack of professional ethics is an obstacle to educating college students in moral reasoning through liberal arts education. Corruption has been prevalent in the Chinese academic community since the 1990s and has affected commitment to teaching, research and service within the universities, a senior administrator from Fudan stated. Misuse of grants, abuse of power, and lack of academic honesty are forms of corruption, according to him.

A senior professor and administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong said that because of the lack of a serious accountability system, faculty members fail to comply with professional ethics when applying for a research grant and they pocket the money if it is awarded. According to her,

“almost everything, for example, promotion, grants, employment, is decided from above or negotiated in the dark or in favor of those with inside connections; you never know what is really going on until the final decision comes. There is no transparency.” To get a national project a bribe (or relying on relationship) is often common practice in most Chinese universities. Interviewees expressed that thirty or forty years ago most faculty members were devoted to teaching students to be educated responsible citizens with moral reasoning but today many teachers are driven by profit and self-interest.

A senior professor from ECNU stated that many teachers commit most of their time to research and publications which often requires a bribe to the editors of academic journals unless there is a personal relationship. He said that “when a system is corrupt in a university and in the larger Chinese society, and when corruption becomes the norm, educating students with moral reasoning becomes an irony; faculty members do not know whether they are really abiding by professional ethics.” Many interviewees complained that as academic corruption increases in universities, educating students with moral reasoning becomes of less interest to many teachers and educators. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government reported that the academic environment today is not what it was in the past. He said:

Faculty members seek administrative posts because of the power, reputation, resources, rewards and profits that can be acquired in such appointments. In positions of leadership they can control resources and obtain many financial benefits. This is really a dangerous situation in higher educational institutions. The Ministry of Education and the local government have issued outlines to prevent academic corruption; it still faces many challenges.

In the past few years, the Chinese government and the Ministry of Education have invested billions of dollars in higher education institutes to build world-class universities and to improve teaching and research; but if there is no improvement in accountability, academic

corruption may never be curtailed. Likewise, if teachers are not models in morality for students, there is reason to question whether graduates will be morally good citizens, as a senior administrator from Fudan stated. Moreover, the current emphasis on specialization, narrow technical expertise, memorization, and lecture pedagogy will contribute to graduating students without the moral reasoning and cognitive ability needed for national advancement in a global context. Under the pressure to do research and publish, teaching moral education and moral reasoning is no longer a primary concern for teachers and administrators. And faculty, administrators and policy makers must work to eliminate individual and collective corruption in planning to develop students with creativity, critical thinking skills and moral reasoning.

According to a senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government, China faces a moral dilemma today: while its economy continues to grow and the government gets rich, the standard of living for the Chinese people is low. Migrant workers who seek employment in the city are treated as second-class citizens with limited access to health care and education. Growing corruption is causing fury. These problems, a senior administrator and professor from Shanghai Jiaotong pointed out, will directly or indirectly have a negative impact on students' moral reasoning. He said, "many social issues we face today deserve some careful and serious consideration if we educators and educational institutions have the task of forming citizens with moral reasoning and social responsibility. Otherwise, the goal and value of education is derailed." Hence, according to him, moral reasoning, particularly through liberal arts education, must go hand in hand with educational reform. It is essential that relevant laws be established and enforced, and that educators and policy makers become exemplary models. Moral reasoning education should be included in any educational reform plan. Several professors and administrators from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU also expressed the view that the

political and economic development of society and the building of numerous world-class universities will not succeed in reforming higher education unless there is also development of moral reasoning in students.

### **Teacher training for moral reasoning education**

Traditionally, Chinese society and education have put much emphasis on moral education, administrators from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU pointed out. Yet, after years of moral teaching, problems in morality remain a serious challenge in Chinese society. Since the 1978 open-door policy and economic reform, the main concern of the Chinese government is that moral reasoning education and the legal system did not develop together with economic reform. Since the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, traditional Chinese culture and its ethical theories, such as Confucianism, were criticized as an imperialistic intrusion. This attitude led to moral relativism and indifference, and became one of the major reasons for the lapse of morality and the present day problem in China. "My generation did not receive any moral reasoning education in the school, so when we became teachers, we did not know what to tell our students," expressed a professor from ECNU. His view underscores the need to educate teachers in the field of moral reasoning education. As noted above, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU do not offer any formal program to train teachers for moral reasoning education.

A senior administrator from ECNU, complained that ECNU is a normal university that educates future teachers, yet, it does not have a well-designed program to train moral education teachers. The moral education training program sets the goals and the content in the curriculum but it also prescribes the teaching methods and the amount of material to be covered. This is not good because teachers ought to be allowed to teach as they see best and be given the opportunity

to be creative. The university or the policy making body in ECNU, as in the past, tells teachers what to teach and teachers, for the most part, present only Communism or political theories to the students in their moral education course.

This is likewise the case in Fudan and Shanghai Jiaotong. But moral reasoning education, according to some administrators from Fudan, should be based on a student's age-related development and Communist theories on morality should not dominate the material studied. According to a professor from Shanghai Jiaotong, "other sources should be presented, for instance, Christian values and morality, traditional Confucianism." A senior professor from Fudan noted that many teachers of moral education do not take up problems existing in society; they try to avoid them. Problems of social justice, care of marginalized groups and environmental issues, for example, have never been taught in the classroom due to their sensitivity in China.

A top senior administrator from Fudan pointed out that higher education in China is taking the risk of going too far in responding to market needs and therefore marginalizing moral reasoning education. Even though the Ministry of Education and university administration realize the importance of reforming the traditional teaching pedagogy for moral reasoning education, interviewed faculty members, administrators and policy makers all mentioned that classroom pedagogy is still teacher-centered. A transformation in teaching pedagogy requires much effort from faculty members because most of them are educated in traditional methods.

An associate professor from ECNU mentioned that many of his colleagues fear that they could not deal appropriately with controversial or sensitive social problems, such as corruption, democracy, social justice, fairness and respect for human dignity. To be safe, they usually teach the material approved by the school. The students, in turn, may conclude that the course taught is

not relevant or helpful in daily living. “I understand the feeling of fear of my colleagues but I just do not think that we are doing right in terms of educating students with moral reasoning. Hence, the teachers in the classroom will not effectively teach moral reasoning to their students” he stated. An officer from the government also stated that “to train teachers for teaching principles of morality the study of social issues is an important basis. If teacher training continues to remain on a theoretical level and teachers are not competent to deal with social issues in class, the students will not get to the stage of internalizing moral reasoning nor put moral values into their lives,” he expressed. Hence, in order to revive and develop traditional Chinese culture and morality more effectively, it is not enough for teachers or students to only discuss theory.

Many people, especially the younger generation, are not familiar with traditional moral values, many interviewees stated. If colleges and universities do not do their utmost to train teachers to teach moral reasoning properly, the plans to revitalize spiritual civilization in China will become meaningless pages of directions, a senior administrator and professor from ECNU pointed out. According to him, Chinese colleges and universities, in order to train teachers for moral education properly, must include courses, such as mental health, emotional and psychological formation, and Western traditions of morality and values. As a current example, in preparing college students to be teachers of moral reasoning education in senior high schools and colleges, ECNU offers the following specialized courses through liberal arts education: Fundamentals of Ideology and Political Education, Teaching Theories of Ideology and Politics, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, Economics, Ethics, Administration, Public Policy, Administrative Psychology, World Politics and Economics, Contemporary Western Political



Thought, Domestic and World History of Politics and Ideology, Deng Xiaoping's Theory, Introduction to Law, Administrative Law, Education Law, Logic, Social Surveys.

Fudan and Shanghai Jiaotong also offer a few similar moral reasoning courses in their liberal arts. These courses, however, are not related to moral reasoning education but, rather, to ideological- political education, according to interviewees from Fudan and Shanghai Jiaotong. When asked about the inclusion of social issues, a professor from ECNU, admitted that in her course she does not cover social issues and that she only presents theories to be memorized. Social issues are important because they are concrete cases in daily life that students can discuss and examine but they are also very sensitive since China is a one-party political system. Teachers' commitment to participate fully in these discussions, as well as their personal ethical and moral example, is of great importance to success in teaching and guiding students to acquire moral reasoning.

## **Conclusion**

In 2004, the Chinese government issued “Views on further strengthening and improving ideological and political education for students in higher education.” This document required universities to prepare administrators to develop students’ values, beliefs, and moral reasoning and action. With respect to moral reasoning development, it is unlikely that the Chinese government will change the content or cancel the courses as long as the Chinese Communist Party does not proceed to political reform because of their indoctrinating nature of ideological- political courses. On the one hand, the government and the Ministry of Education realized the importance of educating students to be creative and innovative. On the other hand, the focus on political courses as core curriculum in liberal arts education has constrained faculty members to introduce diverse views. As several interviewees pointed out, corruption is prevalent in every

level of Chinese government making it difficult for them to discuss real educational and social problems for moral reasoning education. The tension between the ideal and reality still persists.

In liberal arts courses, teachers can raise important moral questions. For example, in philosophy, political science, law, biology, psychology, etc., introducing one or more moral questions in the middle or at the end of a class would not affect negatively the use of class time. The questions could pertain to justice, peace, honesty, fairness, etc. Students today will be the leaders of tomorrow and they need to understand and acknowledge the moral worth of every single human being regardless of gender, age, economic and social status, health, religion, or ethnic identity of the person. The basic teaching of "five virtues" (*Ren* or human-heartedness, *Yi* or righteousness, *Li* or justice, *Zhi* or wisdom, and *Xin* or trustworthiness) in Confucian moral values teach people to act rightly. *Ren* teaches people to work selflessly and to love others. *Yi* requires people to act according to a social standard of right and wrong and teaches them to be open, honest, brave and candid, and to use *yi* to overcome profit and perform the law according to *Yi*. *Li* demands that people have an attitude of modesty and respect towards others and to have regard for each person's individuality. *Zhi* calls for respect for knowledge and ability, and to be a criterion in associating with others. *Xin* demands that people be honest in words and actions and to adhere to their word in dealing with others. Despite their value and importance, the teaching in the "five-virtues" does not resonate with contemporary Chinese higher education. A professor from Shanghai Jiaotong stated that:

It is really a big loss that we no longer value these precious traditions in the contemporary educational system. In a country like China where religious values have greatly disappeared, if we do not keep these traditional values, we cannot educate our students with moral reasoning who can bear social responsibility. Overall, I am not very optimistic about our future if we do not realize its importance.

As noted above, the basic spirit of "the five virtues" (*ren* or human-heartedness, *yi* or righteousness, *li* or justice, *zhi* or wisdom, and *xin* or trustworthiness) advocated by Confucian

moral doctrine is largely ignored in Chinese society due to the Communist Party's discrimination and ideological-political centered education that began with the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In the past five years, Chinese colleges and universities tried to add more courses on traditional Confucian values and his moral teaching but no fundamental change has taken place because corruption exists throughout the entire system (Li, 2011). Based on the interview data, this chapter analyzed moral reasoning education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, and the factors that have caused the decline of moral development in contemporary China.

With regard to moral reasoning education through a liberal arts program, a student can enhance his creative imagination to deal with moral problems and can develop his power to think through principles of ethics to solve them. Education within the family, guidance by parents, education in general and a reform of the current college entrance examination are crucial to the success of developing moral reasoning in students. Interviewees from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, and policy makers from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government, all agree that educating students with moral reasoning through liberal arts education should be one of the priorities for education in contemporary China and in their own institutions if Chinese society is to educate competent citizens in a globalized world. The aim of the course is to help students reason on their own when faced with moral problems. In the light of the fact that in China the focus in universities is mainly on becoming world-class with specialized education, the fact that traditional moral values are ignored in society as a whole, and the fact that the Communist government values ideological-political education over education in morality and moral reasoning, for universities to achieve the goal of graduating students educated with moral reasoning a huge gap must be bridged to move from theory to practice. Chapter 8 discussed

cultivating students with moral reasoning through liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU. It is clear that Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU realize the importance of moral reasoning education in liberal arts education, but they face various challenges that need to be overcome. The next chapter will turn to another theme: the role of spirituality in the context of liberal arts education.

**Introduction**

Since the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949, the Chinese government and the Chinese themselves, politically speaking, do not focus on spirituality due to historical and political reasons. China is officially an atheist state with an anti-religious and anti-spiritual bias. However, in the last two decades, the ongoing economic reform and development continues to foster the quest for the meaning of life beyond the historically ideology of achieving honor, success, glory and wealth. During my interviews, many interviewees discussed the spiritual dimension of their universities as a key part of liberal arts education and thought that spiritual integration through the liberal arts can enrich education, society, and personal development. Historically, spirituality has been an important part of liberal arts education in the Western educational tradition (Astin, 2011). Therefore, it is important to know how faculty members, administrators and policy makers view spirituality if the Chinese higher educational system aims to educate students in critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning and social engagement.

Spirituality has been a crucial factor in liberal arts education in the Western tradition, particularly in the US. Many early colleges in the US, for example, Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Princeton, emphasized spirituality in their liberal arts courses. Astin (2004) pointed out that each of us has the capacity to observe our thoughts and feelings as they arise within us. Shouldn't fostering the ability to observe one's own mind in action, to be more conscious of one's self, be one of the central purposes of education? In the last two decades, Chinese society and its higher education system focused more on scientific and economic development. The Chinese government also invested billions of dollars to build world-class universities in Beijing and

Shanghai: science, technology, finance and business are among the most popular courses. While Chinese universities have advanced in science and technology and many Chinese students far surpass American students in math and sciences test scores. Chinese higher educational institutions have neglected the growth of students in areas such as values and beliefs, emotional maturity, psychological health, moral development, and spirituality. Astin (2004) observed that “spirituality touches directly on our sense of community...It will serve to strengthen our sense of connectedness with each other, our students, and our institutions; it will also help our students to lead more meaningful lives as engaged citizens, loving partners and parents, and caring neighbors.” Many Chinese educators also realized the importance of spiritual development of students. For example, Huang (2010) noted that during his interview with Chinese university presidents most of them spoke about the values of spirituality and spiritual transformation—Chinese society is too secular, materialistic, and utilitarian-oriented. Consequently, as Chinese universities implement the content and concept of liberal arts education, spirituality should be an important component in the process of cultivating students to be well-rounded citizens. It would be helpful to know to what degree Chinese policy makers and educational administrators value spirituality in liberal arts education for educating future leaders with social, intellectual and moral integration. The term “spirituality” has religious connotations and Chinese policy makers and administrators are not receptive to it, but it should be pointed out that the Chinese translation encompasses much more than the concept in Western religious tradition.

This chapter discusses the importance of spirituality in liberal arts education and how it helps Chinese students to develop and to achieve interior integration. It also includes the views of Chinese educators and policy makers on the role of spirituality in liberal arts education, although Chinese society and its educational system have long ignored spirituality. This chapter

stresses the need to integrate spirituality courses and conceptions into higher education through liberal arts in order to educate future global and competent citizens in China. The chapter is divided into several sections: the definition of spirituality, historical perspective, spirituality development in Fudan, Shanghai Jiao tong and ECNU, and policy concern for spirituality development.

The search for meaning and purpose through spirituality is a timely subject in social, political, and educational discourse in China. Every interviewee emphasized that the issue of spiritual development is essentially to contemporary Chinese society and the educational field. According to Satin et al. (2011), spirituality contributes significantly to understanding human beings, their values, and aspirations. Spiritual integration through liberal arts can enrich education, society, and personal development. The spiritual growth of students can positively affect their education and enable them to become more responsible citizens. It can also empower them to understand personal and collective experiences that can influence their life-long education and integration. As an important element of liberal arts education, the study and practice of spirituality have partially shaped the field of higher education, particularly in the US. Most interviewees mentioned that Chinese society and the Chinese educational system face a spiritual crisis of thirst and emptiness—some of their understanding of spirituality is not related to religion. They also stated that liberal arts education can make a significant contribution to cultivate students' spiritual development.

### **Definition of Spirituality**

Traditionally, the terms spirituality and religion have been often used interchangeably because of the close relationship between the two. Spirituality, however, is not the same as religion. Walton (1996) contrasts the two. Religion, he points, may or may not play a role in an

individual's spirituality and is quite distinct from spirituality. Religion is described as a framework of beliefs, values, traditions, doctrine, conduct, and rituals whereas spirituality is a much more encompassing term. A spiritual individual may or may not be religious. Spiritual relationships are defined as relationships to self, others, a higher power, or the environment that brings forth a sense of inner strength, peace, harmonious, interconnectedness, and meaning to life.

Spirituality is a broader concept than religion. Satin et al. (2011) says that “spirituality points to our inner, subjective life; spirituality has to do with the values we hold dear, our sense of who we are and where we come from, our belief of why we are here—the meaning and purpose we see in our work and our life—and our sense of connectedness to one another and to the world around us—that a highly ‘spiritual’ people tend to exemplify certain personal attributes such as love, compassion, and equanimity” (p. 4). Canda (1990) defined spirituality as the “person’s search for a sense of meaning and morally fulfilling relationships between oneself, other people, the encompassing universe, and the ontological group toward the universe” (p. 13), whereas, religion he defined, as “the patterning of spiritual beliefs and practices into social institutions, with community support and traditions maintained over time” (Canda, 1997, p. 173). Spirituality also encompasses feelings of hope, love, connection, inner peace, comfort and support; it searches for meaning, purpose and truth in life, and the beliefs and values by which an individual lives and brings about love, compassion, joy, humility, and interrelationship (Sulfas, 1999).

Spirituality is an internal force that guides people’s lives and encompasses people’s upbringing, values, traditions, beliefs, and unique experiences. It gives meaning and fullness to people’s lives and their relationships with the Divine or God. Dei (2002) pointed out spiritual



education embraces humility, respect, compassion and gentleness that will strengthen self-growth and integration. Spirituality also embodies differences and knowledge from various perspectives. It helps each person to grow, develop and learn the right way in his or her life-long quest of learning. Tassel (2003) argues that spirituality is a key element in understanding how students make meaning and connect knowledge with a life's purpose, meaning, and values. The quest for meaning and purpose in life through spirituality leads them to go beyond themselves to discover their authentic self and become responsible global citizens.

### **Spirituality in Chinese context**

Chinese culture has been influenced by Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Traditionally, spirituality in Chinese society is understood as interchangeable with religion. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism all started with people, not God (Jib, 1991). The core of spirituality is to maintain harmony or balance in Chinese society with the human being, the earth and the heaven. To have a good and integrated life, it is important to maintain harmony with all spiritual forces and the universe, and to find one's true identity: who I am. In the Confucian tradition, to be a spiritual person is to be an ethical or moral person. In Chinese culture, spirituality is an integration of mind and spirit (Jensen). It is the spirit that enables and motivates an individual's search for life's meaning (Germander, 2011).

Contemporary Chinese philosophers, such as Tu Wei Ming, defined Chinese spirituality as a response to the transcendent. Others, like Julia Ching, defined spirituality as Jinshenxing (the dualistic combination of spirit and body). Still others, for instance Wu Jiang (2002), defined spirituality as Jingjie (a degree of sphere or world or horizon). Feng (1990) stated that there were four different grades of Jingjie: (1) the innocent sphere: people in this sphere behave according

to their instinct or the custom of their society without any reflection; this is the lowest spiritual stage; (2) the utilitarian sphere: at this state, people's main focus is their self-interest as the goal prior to other motives; (3) the moral sphere: people at this realm act according to the principle of benevolence and righteousness, as they recognized that the self is part of the large society and human beings by nature are social beings; (4) the transcendent sphere: a person who reaches this stage is the sage who has achieved the highest understanding and self-consciousness (Wu, 2002).

Vermader (2011) wrote that the term "Chinese spirituality" can be understood in different ways. It refers to the Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist traditions in their explicitly religious aspects. It also refers to a moral relationship among persons and a harmony between humankind and a transcendent principle. After the Chinese Communists took power in 1949, discussing religion and spirituality were prohibited and spirituality was politicized as a term to embrace the Communist political ideology. The Marxist and Leninist theories replaced the traditional meaning of spirituality and still permeate contemporary Chinese society.

In general, the definition of spirituality in Western traditions is related to a search for a deeper meaning of life, values, authenticity and a deep relationship with God. In the Chinese tradition of spirituality, however, it is more related to a harmonious relationship between heaven, earth, and human beings.

### **Historical perspective**

American colleges and universities have a variety of approaches to help students grow intellectually, socially, and spiritually. Historically, religion and spirituality have a place in American higher education because many colonial colleges and universities in the United States and Europe were founded with the purpose of transmitting and preserving the religious values,

beliefs, and traditions of the first founding fathers. Harvard, Yale, and Oxford universities are examples (O'Malley, 2008). As part of a general or liberal arts education, the Bible, religion, ethics, morality, and philosophy courses were mandatory. These courses were eventually considered unimportant and replaced by vocational and professional training. In the past two decades, however, courses on spirituality have been reintroduced into the curriculum as part of a general or liberal arts education, partly because educators are concerned with whole-person education. They view spirituality as a help to prepare students to become morally good and responsible citizens (Sikula, 2005).

Blaich et al. (2004) states that the search for meaning—including reflecting on one's spiritual beliefs—is consistent with a liberal arts education. Contemporary students are searching for a deeper meaning in their lives (Astin, 2011). It is believed that spirituality is important and that spiritual experiences enhance self-understanding, prepare students for responsible citizenship, and support emotional and moral development. Although students express interest in spiritual matters, colleges and universities are not well prepared to help them (Astin, 2011). Faculty members are less and less inclined to discuss the meaning of life with students in or outside of class due to the impact of professional education and secularism that ignores humanity and spiritual matters. There has been a hunger for spiritual growth in schools as well as in the society at large (Lindholm, 2007). Religious beliefs and their impact have roots in American social, political, and educational life. Stamm (2006) writes that without reference to the profound impact of formal religious institutions and religiously defined morality on the development of American culture and society, people cannot fully understand the history of United States. Hence, colleges and universities need to focus on efforts to promote interest in personal meaning and each individual's search for religious and spiritual values. To promote each student's spiritual

integration, it is important that colleges and universities provide educational experiences that value spirituality and encourage students to search for spiritual values through courses, extra-curricular activities, social services and discussions with faculty.

### **Spiritual perspective in Confucian tradition**

Confucius's central teaching is *Ren*, that is, goodness, benevolence, or humanity. Confucius defines *Ren* as personal integrity and as loving others. The impact of Confucian traditions, especially Confucius' teaching on benevolence, sincerity, spirit, harmony and faithfulness, has influenced Chinese society for the past two thousand years. According to Ching (2003), Confucius' philosophy is grounded in religion—the religion of the Lord on High or Heaven. Confucius believed that human beings are accountable to a supreme being (*Analects* 3:13). One of the five virtues stressed by Confucius '*Li* (ritual)' is related to the words "worship" and "sacrifice." Thus *Li* in Confucian teaching also included religious meanings and factors. As a spiritual philosopher, Confucius wrote about his own spiritual development: "At fifteen I set my heart on learning; at age thirty I became a grown up; at forty I had no more doubt; at fifty I understood Heaven's will; at sixty my ear was attuned to truth; at seventy I could follow my heart's desires, without overstepping the line" (*Analects* 2:4).

Confucius' description of his self-cultivation indicated his search for meaning and interior integration and his appreciation of the things of the spirit. But Confucius's words still focused fundamentally on personal moral integration and a process of achieving "sageliness within and kingliness without" (Feng, 1990). The quest for sagehood and wisdom is the heart of Confucianism. Confucian spirituality is more a life of interior contemplation. Christian or Jewish spirituality depends on a belief in God as the source of life's meaning and on love of God and others not in word only but in actions. Ching (2003) wrote that Confucius' spiritual journey of

integrating moral values, culture, and life and his emphasis on social responsibility would help people to become more human persons. Tu (2002) expressed the view that “Confucian teachings have great significance for China’s spiritual self-definition, for it urges China to return to its home base and rediscover its own soul” (p. 485).

Confucius teaches that the purpose of education is for personal fulfillment through learning in order to find meaning in the world. Lee (2000) states that the intrinsic value of education for personal development and moral perfection remained the most important idea in the Confucian tradition. The early Chinese academies owed much to Buddhist and Taoist influences because their monasteries were the common places offering education through Shuyuan (academies).

Ding and Liu (1992) write:

From the process of development of traditional education Confucian culture was always the main current. Due to certain factors of the times, its ability to revitalize itself enabled it, in the process of struggles and contentions with Buddhist, Daoism, and other educational traditions, to absorb valuable experience from them and renew itself. Thus, it always succeeded in meeting the challenges and attacks from Buddhism and Daoism on its supremacy as the orthodox tradition. The academies were the product of this process of struggle between Confucian education, and Buddhist, and Daoist education (p. 19).

Hence, one cannot ignore that Buddhist and Daoist religious groups have played important roles in Shuyuan and Chinese education. Buddhist and Taoist emphasis on monastic retreats as a means to achieve enlightenment had a major impact on Chinese society in the first eight centuries. Nevertheless, in the search for separation from the secular world for inner peace, Buddhist and Daoist teachings never became a mainstream of the Chinese educational system. A prominent Confucian thinker, Zhuxi, having established academies that were greatly influenced by Buddhism, believed that the pursuit of knowledge was not for the utilitarian goal of passing the civil service examinations but, ultimately, for personal moral perfection. Zhuxi’s thoughts on

seeking moral perfection and personal integration became an influential theme in Chinese educational development (Hayhoe, 1996). The three traditions, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, continued to influence Chinese educational development and became important to proper personal integration. Confucian teaching held that social harmony is possible only if each individual has attained moral integrity. This has some similarity with Western Christian tradition that does stress individual moral perfection, but also focuses on compassion for others. Confucian teaching on education, though influenced by Buddhism and Daoism, still emphasizes learning for its intrinsic value (Lee, 2000). Confucius and Confucian thinkers viewed education as a means for personal moral cultivation and integration, and the state also realized that education could help develop good civil servants. Thus, the government created a comprehensive examination system for students to access schools and eventually to work as civil servants. The civil examination system was intended to recruit educated and talented people for government service.

For Confucius and his followers, education is concerned with personal moral integration but it has social implications. Hence, they emphasize the moral over the utilitarian approach to education. Although Buddhism and Daoism provided instructions for enlightenment and moral integrity, they did not address social structure and social justice as Western spirituality did. When modern Western schools were introduced to China in the early twentieth century, the academies, (Shuyuan), faced enormous challenges and eventually closed or collapsed. Western ideas of education, including the liberal arts, were added to the new curriculum. Colleges and universities run by missionaries or religious groups also provided religious and spiritual courses through liberal arts education. Confucian thought and teachings were still considered valuable

and were integrated with Western humanity studies. At the same time, China witnessed a new cultural movement that arose from disillusionment with traditional Chinese culture.

### **Spiritual perspective in modern China**

The development of the New Cultural Movement in 1919 promoted the questioning of old Chinese values and advocated the creation of a new Chinese culture based on Western standards, especially democracy and science. The Movement also stressed the re-examining of Confucian texts and classics by using modern critical methods. Cai Yuanpei, then the president of Peking University, called repeatedly to replace “religion with aesthetic education,” which signaled the end of religious and spiritual education in China. Public colleges and universities placed no value on religion and spirituality in the formation of college students as a whole person. The call to replace religion and spirituality with secular culture and the vision to preserve religion in the realm of aesthetics were influenced by Cai Yuanpei (Zhang, 2011). Tian Han, one of the core members of the New Culture Movement, came to the aid of religion because he believed that the Bible as literature, especially the biblical accounts of Jesus, could provide much-needed spiritual inspiration and sustenance for the moral regeneration of the Chinese nation (Zhang, 2011).

Religion and spirituality both focus on the inner core of human experience. However, after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, due to political reasoning, particularly during the period of the Cultural Revolution from 1966-1976, integration and social concern were ignored. Religious beliefs were prohibited; all schools were prohibited to teach any course related to religion and spirituality. All schools affiliated with religious groups or missionaries were merged with the public schools. Furthermore, because of the Communist atheistic education and discrimination, religion and spirituality were not valued. Politically-oriented

curriculum that stressed loving the country and loving the Communist Party replaced the spiritual dimension. Religious and spiritual topics were labeled as imperialistic invasion and became a sensitive issue in the Chinese educational system.

Because education is an essential part of the ideological and political propaganda of the Chinese Communist government, government-sponsored ideological-political educational aims systematically to implant specific ideologies into students, and, hence, brings about conformity or loyalty to the nation and the party leadership. Schools at all levels must offer ideological-political classes as core courses. Despite the Chinese Communist Party's stress on ideological-political education and political study as a regular part of university life, it has not succeeded in the last two decades, as several interviewees pointed out. But the Chinese educational system still follows the Soviet Union model to control students' ideological development. Thus, education is an instrument of the Party (Lai & Lo, 2011).

Tse and Lee (2003) underscore that ideological-political education is basically political indoctrination. It can only benefit the stability of Chinese Communist government leadership and not the enlightenment and integration of individual students. Many students no longer believe the Party's propaganda and are searching for meaning from other sources, including religious groups (Jiang, 2008). The Chinese Communist Party, the colleges and universities must consider the meaning and role of spirituality in relation to current ideological-political education, moral education, and traditional Chinese values if they want educated and integrated citizens who are developed socially, intellectually and spiritually. Michael Novak, a prominent economist, theologian, and historian, provides a good reason for including the study of religion and spirituality in the college and university curriculum: "Religion is not outside of life, or above it, but within it, at the heart of everyday activities" (1996, p. 99).



### **Spirituality Development at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU.**

Findings from professor Yang (2011) at People's University in Beijing indicate that contemporary college students or the colleges and universities in China never thought about the spiritual aspect of education. Although a few universities offer courses in Christianity, Buddhism, Daoism and other religious traditions, these courses are meant only to provide basic knowledge or for research. They are not taught primarily to educate students in spiritual integration. In an atheistic Communist nation, colleges and universities are under the direct leadership and control of the central government and the Ministry of Education. Any curricula reform must be approved by the Ministry of Education or the provincial Department of Education. Due to an atheistic oriented education since 1949, administrators, policy makers, faculty members and students have largely ignored the spiritual dimension in education. During interviews, participants either ignored the spiritual aspect or simply confused it with religion. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government, said:

What is spirituality? I do not really understand it. We are an atheistic country, so according to the constitution, no religious or spiritual courses are allowed to be taught at any level (of education). Education and religion should be separated. We are not educating students as religious believers. Religion or spirituality just mentioned does not help students to develop intellectually and professionally, so why bother to associate with spirituality?

Another officer observed that three key factors that have hindered the teaching of religion or spirituality. First, the leaders in the Chinese educational system, influenced by Communist atheistic propaganda, do not appreciate the unique role spirituality can play in nurturing students' wholeness of development. Second, unlike science or professional training courses, courses on religion or spirituality are not beneficial for students' employment. Third, although the Chinese government allows religious freedom, it still controls students' ideological development and it views spirituality and religion as threats to Communist leadership in colleges and universities. A

senior professor from Fudan University, however, does not agree with the government officer.

According to him, religion or spirituality can help students to achieve wholeness. He maintained:

The students today are encountering not only a moral crisis, but, more so, a spiritual crisis. Chinese education does not deal with students as whole persons, but often times as instruments or machines. Too much political education is given to students which is not at all helpful. Faculty, administrators and students today must consider serious spiritual issues. There will be more problems for the Chinese people and society if they are spiritually empty. Life in China today in all sectors is too materialistic and utilitarian; spirituality can help students to find meaning in their lives. A spiritual education can help to transcend ongoing utility and immediate interests and help to correct the deformation of values and moral concepts in the Chinese society.

His view stresses that spirituality is important to students' wholeness development. The current thinking and teaching in Chinese higher education does not take spirituality into consideration and students are brainwashed by the Chinese Communist Party's ideology (Li, 2006). Indeed, Parks (2000) contends that spirituality empowers students to find meaning in life's complexity. Through spiritual engagement, students can eventually understand themselves, others, the world, and their responsibility to others.

### **Curriculum development and teacher's role**

At Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, courses on spiritual formation are rare. None of these three universities offer courses or programs on spirituality, except for a few courses on Daoist or Buddhist studies, but these courses are not engaged in the deep dimension of spirituality, according to a professor from ECNU who teaches Daoism. Fudan Liberal Arts College has a course on Christian civilization. The reason for not offering courses on spirituality is obvious. It is prohibited by the Chinese government and college administrators, as many interviewees pointed out. Teachers are not allowed to talk about religious or spiritual matters with their students inside the classroom. Textbooks or readings related to religion and spirituality are not allowed. Teachers often simply do not understand the meaning and purpose of spirituality,

as interviewees mentioned repeatedly. Since 1949, the education of teachers has been atheistic and spiritual ideas were not integrated into their education and formation. Thus, the system for teacher education is not able to move teachers to reflect on their own experiences of life.

Currently, teacher education views education narrowly as an instrument to achieve honor, money, position and other material rewards, which, according to a professor at ECNU, is just superficial personal achievement. This professor stated:

Teachers play an important role in students' development in spirituality, in addition to course work they received at a normal university. Teachers should ask two basic questions: What am I going to teach? And how shall I do so? Furthermore, teachers should ask themselves: What impact do I want to have on students in nurturing their whole person development? How can teachers find spiritual meaning and depth in their role as educators? I strongly disagree with a professor from Shanghai Jiaotong University who said last month that students are unworthy to live if they do not earn two million Chinese dollars a year like him. This is a scandal, how can a teacher talk to students like that? We are supposed to teach students some good values and guide them to make a correct choice of life.

As noted, if teachers themselves are not aware of spirituality, they will be unable to help and accompany students to grow spiritually. Teachers do not have to be religious believers, but they can encourage students to search for a deeper meaning in their own lives. The interest of college students in spirituality has grown in the past two decades because of Western influence, government corruption, and moral decline (Yang, 2011). Teachers and schools, however, are not ready to face this new phenomenon. College students typically need time for reflection and exploring moral and spiritual commitment, according to a professor from Fudan. Students are attracted to Christianity and spirituality because of their struggle to find answers to great questions, for example, on understanding personal identity, on the meaning of relationships, and on the purpose of life. Writings of professor Yang at People's University in Beijing also indicate that more and more college students are searching for understanding from Christianity (Yang, 2011). These spiritual questions are an integral part of the students' development in liberal arts

education. Teachers must find ways to engage students with spiritual questions and to direct them in their search for meaning and success throughout life.

It is instructive that faculty members who have had overseas study or research experience are more enthusiastic about spirituality. A professor from Fudan University, who was a visiting scholar overseas a few years ago, expressed his interest in spirituality:

It seems that something is missing in our education in contemporary China. From primary school we instruct students to become good boys and girls. We teach students to study hard in order to attain good social status and enjoy material life. But we ignore teaching our students the meaning of life, and our relationship with others, with the world and with the divine. Our educational system focuses too much on material and secular matters. We need to provide some educational experiences that value and respect spirituality and the concern for students' spiritual needs.

Others interviewed from Shanghai Jiaotong and East China Normal University who had overseas experience also shared similar views. A senior professor from ECNU, stressed that “Chinese colleges and universities must educate students with spirituality. I don’t see our education successful if we do not teach our students questions on spirituality. I believe that we have much to learn from the Western countries, especially from the US where they integrate spirituality into education.”

Although these professors value spirituality as a means to nurture students' full development, the political situation, the educational system, and society at large are not willing to accept spirituality as important in education and in student development. Spiritual search and fulfillment are simply not topics of interest in contemporary Chinese culture as several interviewees stated. Faculty members and administrators who had no overseas experience were more reluctant concerning spirituality. An administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong, stated:

Spirituality is just another term for religion. We should not teach students these things. Students are very busy with study; they have no time to think about these issues. We have Youth League (a typical youth union for prospective Communist Party members and administered by the Party) and Party committee in our college, so we do not allow students to study or engage in spiritual and religious matters.

This administrator's view is representative of some faculty and administrators I interviewed in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU who still have a negative attitude toward religion and spirituality. When asked if it is possible to have topics on spirituality in their curriculum, a professor from ECNU said that "it is impossible; do you think that we are a religious school? We are a normal university to educate future teachers. We should not teach our future teachers spirituality. Rather, our students should be educated professionally." An administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong pointed out: "I understand that Western universities offer spirituality courses, but this does not mean that spirituality is important. I do not think their graduates are better than ours. If they are spiritually educated, why are they not concerned about those people who suffer a great deal in underdeveloped countries?"

However, a senior administrator from Fudan stated that many faculty members and administrators in Chinese colleges and universities misunderstand the meaning and importance of spirituality. Human beings are made of body, mind and spirit, according to him, hence college and universities need to cultivate students intellectually, socially, and spiritually. The spiritual dimension of education refers to one's interior acceptance of the truth concerning the fullness of the human condition (Ching, 2003). According to this senior administrator from Fudan, teachers and administrators' thorough understanding of spirituality is of fundamental importance for nurturing students' holistic development, he said that "spiritual development refers to one's personal quality, building spiritual value is intrinsically important for young people in their development because their intrinsic values determine the directions of their development, and

help young people to develop a reflective personality as well as critical thinking”. Hence, spirituality is a fundamental dimension of education that educators and policy makers ought to establish as one of the goals in the formation of future teachers. Spirituality is an ongoing process in the development and growth within each person. Colleges and universities should be a learning environment in which students can find and engage the spiritual dimension in their lives (Tong, 2012). Although religion is forbidden and people are prevented from practicing religion in colleges and universities, teachers can encourage students to reflect on themselves in relation to others, the environment, and the ultimate goal of life. A professor from Fudan, expressed her concern on teachers’ spiritual development:

Most of my colleagues are not religious believers, so our conversations never deal with religious or spiritual topics. I feel that my colleagues are too secularized and driven by material issues. For example, they repeatedly talk in the faculty lounge about who has a brand new car, who bought a new house, who earns a big salary, whose children study in top universities or abroad, who travel to Europe and bought LV and Chanel bags and clothes. I am not against material things, but we cannot simply let our lives be dominated by material things. We need to have spiritual values; otherwise, how do we teach our students? Furthermore, I believe that we as teachers must resume the mission of being a guide in the spiritual homes of students.

Her words underscore an interesting phenomenon: many Chinese colleges and universities are materialistic and secularized; teachers no longer see the importance of spirituality in their professional development and teaching. Due to the social, political, cultural influences, and the rise of secularization in Chinese society, faculty members, administrators and policy makers interviewed do not see the value of spirituality for life-long education in colleges and universities. However, a senior administrator of Fudan holds the opinion that “education should not be materialistic and secularized; it should focus on students' holistic and spiritual development.” At one time in Chinese history, the teaching profession was described as the engineers of human souls. For contemporary society, the Chinese teaching profession is merely a job for making a

living. By choosing to be a teacher or administrator at colleges and universities, such individuals should be concerned about the inner lives of their students. However, contemporary Chinese teachers, including those at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, do not look upon the profession of teaching as a vocation but only as an ordinary job, as interviewees expressed. A senior administrator from ECNU, aware that Chinese colleges and universities and Chinese society at large lack a spiritual dimension, said that “it may be unfair to blame our teachers who do not have a sense of spirituality; I think it is a social problem. Society is like a sick person that needs to be cured by change.” But during my interview this administrator did not indicate whether there is a way to solve the problems in Chinese society.

Conti (2002) states that spirituality is at the root of insight that transforms education into a sacred act. Spirituality in education challenges teachers to follow a new paradigm of thinking or a new awareness of their personal professional development, thinking, values, beliefs, and daily experiences. Spirituality in education leads to a vision of how to live a fully human life. Postlethwaite (2003) maintains out that a teacher is a healer, mentor, and a gardener, and teaching is a process that acknowledges, in addition to intellectual development, the wholeness, love, care for others, compassion, and the value of humanity in each individual student. Gendron (2011, personal communication) states that through a spiritual dimension in education, teachers can guide students to engage in activities to know themselves and the world around them. In every course it is possible to deepen the spiritual and holistic development of students, regardless of the teachers’ religious and spiritual background. A professor from Shanghai Jiaotong pointed out:

Contemporary pluralistic society is a challenging educational environment. Internationalization and globalization, also, profoundly affect family life, educational values and society in China. Hence, teachers must understand the broader meaning of

spirituality in any educational setting. The liberal arts program in my institute should focus on this aspect.

However, the primary obstacle in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU is the reluctance of the faculty to talk openly and candidly about spirituality. They may not be willing to accept the fact that the curricula and lectures should help students to reflect profoundly upon the meaning of life, and that they should lead students to build a society with compassion and justice. Unfortunately, administrators and policy makers in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU lack the ability and the power to assist in making a just and compassionate society reality.

### **Policy concern for spirituality development**

Although some faculty members and administrators during the interviews expressed their interest in the topic of spirituality, they also emphasized their uneasiness. At a certain point, they were reluctant and uncomfortable to speak about spirituality in education. They rarely talked about spirituality with students, parents, and their colleagues. A renowned professor from ECNU mentioned that “it is not because spirituality is a bad or negative issue, but I lack experience, training, and knowledge to share with students. I just do not know where I start. My colleagues also do not know.” This suggests that teachers should be provided with opportunities to experience or learn spirituality during their professional training. However, given the situation in China, this would be a challenging question or impossible expectation. A senior administrator from Fudan University, said:

Even the Chinese government is a little bit open on religious study and research. For example, the philosophy department at Fudan recently launched the Xu-Ricci Dialogue Institute to promote religious, spiritual, historical and cultural dialogue between China and the West, but the government is still very sensitive about courses on religion and spirituality. Hence, the government or the university administration may not support student development in spirituality at this stage.



The lack of interest in spirituality in Fudan is also evident in Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU. In continuing to put much energy, resources, and emphasis on test scores, credits, degrees, university ranking, and publications, these three universities have increasingly neglected students' development in regard to values and beliefs, emotional and psychological maturity and spirituality, several administrators and professors from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU pointed out. Stemming from the 1990s, Fudan Liberal Arts College is one of the earliest liberal arts colleges but still does not include students' spiritual development nor has the university administration explicitly expressed its support. Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU have given even less attention to the spiritual development of their students. A senior administrator at Shanghai Jiaotong pointed out:

The university administrators have not realized the positive value of spirituality in students' wholeness development, and the government policy makers are also short-sighted in this regard. This is because of their own education and training did not have any spirituality development. The central government and the Communist Party are not totally out from the shadow of the Western military invasion from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in which Western religion was involved in some unfair treaties. But the key issue is that the Communist Party wants to retain in its leadership position, so they purposely reject the value of spirituality; it's really very complicated. If higher education institutions want to survive, they must be in line with the central policy.

This administrator's words from Shanghai Jiaotong reveal that blame, perhaps, should not be placed on the university, administrators or faculty members because government policy is decisive. Although universities and colleges have some degree of autonomy to decide about courses and programs, courses related to religion and spirituality are still restricted by government policy. His view was also expressed by a senior officer at the Department of Education in Shanghai Municipal government:

The Chinese government and the Communist Party simply see religion as an instrument for building a stable or harmonious society. Otherwise, religion is just useless in the view

of the Chinese government. The Party and its leadership will not consider spirituality as necessary for student development, not that they have never thought about it.

If the mentality of the Chinese Communist Party and government towards religion and spirituality do not change, it is unlikely that Chinese colleges and universities, such as Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China, will offer spirituality in education. They cannot acknowledge that the role of higher education is to graduate balanced individuals who are integrated socially, intellectually and spiritually to be future leaders. As one senior administrator from Fudan expressed:

Perhaps the Chinese policy makers should ask these fundamental questions: What kinds of people will the Chinese and the global society need? How does Chinese higher education educate students to be compassionate, thoughtful, loving and caring for others, particularly for disadvantaged and marginalized groups? How do Chinese colleges and universities educate students in social justice and fairness?

Although scientific knowledge and technical skills have become increasingly important for students, colleges and universities in contemporary China, Astin et al. (2011) state that technical and scientific knowledge alone will not be adequate for dealing with some of society's most pressing problems, such as violence, poverty, crime, divorce, substance abuse, and religious, national, and ethnic conflicts. At root, these are problems of the spirit, problems that call for greater empathy and concern for others.

Contemporary Chinese society faces an increasing number of social problems, such as corruption, injustice, resource inequality, disrespect for human life and dignity, lack of care for others, selfishness, as many interviewees stated. These are crucial problems and the Chinese government and people must urgently deal with them. They cannot be solved by a simple system change or by policy making. The solution depends on the spiritual transformation of each individual person. A professor from Fudan noted that "spirituality in education in Chinese

colleges and universities can contribute greatly to help future citizens understand their role and responsibility to each other and to a world which is more pluralistic and global.”

Spirituality is an essential part of educating students with compassion, love, care, and in continuing the search for meaning and purpose in life. It is important that policy makers and university administrators realize the spiritual needs of students. They ought to discuss the answers to the following questions. What is the goal of education? What are the objectives? What outcomes are expected? In a study of the answers they should recognize that spirituality lies at the very heart of education because it deals with the essence of being a human person. The Chinese government is in a unique position to decide the basic values to be communicated to future generations that can sustain them in their search for meaning and the purpose of life which is a never ending effort to learn, to grow and to attain personal fulfillment.

### **Service Learning and Spirituality**

Service learning and spirituality are interrelated in liberal arts education for students’ holistic development (Astin et al, 2011). Jacoby (2005) defined service-learning as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote students’ learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning” (p. 5).

Through service-learning programs students reach out to encounter the “otherness” of those who are struggling to make a better life. Levinas (1996) designated those of the “otherness” as the poor, lower-class, orphans, marginalized, the sick, and powerless. Astin et al. (2011) state that there are several types of critical experiences that help to promote students’ spiritual development: study abroad, interdisciplinary studies, service learning, philanthropic giving,

interracial interaction, leadership training, and contemplative practices. These all help to nurture the inner, emotional lives of students, develop personal identity and values, increase connectedness to others, and deepen compassion, love, and equanimity. Although the authors of the study note that promotes spiritual growth, the holistic approach involved in service learning is especially powerful. Astin et al. (2011) also pointed out “service learning offers students an opportunity to test an otherwise abstract theory in the 'real world' and provide community service with an intellectual underpinning” (p. 146). Service learning also helps students to relate larger social issues to their own lives, to find just and fair solutions to problems, and to develop a strong sense of solidarity with the people they are serving. Through the process of reflection and reciprocity, students can eventually integrate service-learning experiences into their lives and make their life style and career decisions based upon the internalized values of justice, love, compassion, fairness, and respect for human life and dignity.

Contemporary Chinese higher education institutions have often focused exclusively on professional training and preparing for the market labor force. Service-learning programs are already being developed in Hong Kong and Taiwan, but the concept is relatively new to mainland universities in the past three decades and colleges and universities have not yet worked out service learning programs (Jiang, 2011). Many faculty members, administrators and policy makers interviewed are unclear about establishing service learning programs in their institutions. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government points out that the Ministry of Education in Beijing does not require a service learning program and there is no policy about it from the above. Consequently, colleges and universities receive no request to initiate such programs. Policy decides the programs in colleges and universities.

While government policy determines the educational development and course work in China, a professor from Fudan University did not agree with the opinion of this government officer that it is up to the government or policy makers to make the decision about service learning programs in colleges. He said:

Western universities have a good tradition in service learning programs, so Chinese universities should have autonomy in regard to establishing service learning programs. Administrators must begin to draw up a good plan because service-learning is a holistic approach to education that enables students to think, judge, reflect, care and act responsibly in an ever-evolving global village. Chinese society is facing many serious problems, such as the poverty gap, an aging population, and corruption. We hope that service-learning programs will be a good help.

His comment indicates that service-learning has an impact upon students' self-knowledge, helping others, and getting to know the real world. Service-learning relates to spiritual emphasis on care for others along with personal development, and integration. Students can apply what they have learned in class to concrete situations and add to their knowledge through real life experience. Service learning programs include critical reflection and thoughtful introspection that help students to relate personal experiences to their environment. The program enables students to move beyond the campus and are helped to see the world as their home as they strive to become leaders and to spread love, justice, compassion, and care while performing activities that assist people in need.

This requires that students reflect profoundly on what are they doing and why. Reflection is critical to personal, social, and spiritual development. However, Chinese students are not always taught how to reflect. A senior professor from ECNU said:

Contemporary Chinese college students really lack an understanding of reflection. Most students I taught in the past few years did not care about reflection. ECNU has a summer service program to help rural students, but many students take this program just to fulfill the school's requirement or because this program will help with getting employment when they graduate. They did not reflect upon what they learned through this service nor

do they consider what more they can do for the rural poor students. What they always expressed was thanks to the university, to the Party, and to the government for providing the opportunity to make the summer service trip. However, faculty, staff, and the university administration did not create a dynamic environment that encourages love, compassion, caring for others, social justice, respect for human dignity. It is the great loss of an educational value.

Despite the fact that service learning as an essential part of spirituality in liberal arts education as it could be claimed at most institutions of higher education in the United States, Chinese administrators are always greatly concerned about the university's image, ranking, marketability, and government funding but little concerned about students' service learning. Students who do not participate in a service learning program as part of their spiritual development may lack actual experience in care about others, respect for human dignity and never reflect upon the meaning and purpose of life. Respecting life, being fair and just to others, caring for powerless and marginalized groups in Chinese society may never come to exist if there are no effective service learning programs. In most institutions of higher education at this period of time no effort is being made to include them in the curricula.

Genuine education develops the whole person – mind, body, and spirit - and pertains to students, faculty, and staff alike. Caring for a person means knowing the student much more than merely the student's grades. It means an effort by faculty and administrators to know students personally, which requires conversations that can aid students to understand what is of most importance in their lives and to form deep convictions with hope to fulfill themselves.

Unfortunately, faculty and administrators interviewed did not manifest much interest because they, along with policy makers, are more market-oriented, a top senior administrator from Fudan stated. Their concern is with publication and promotions. One senior administrator from ECNU stated that “the role of faculty members, administrators and policy makers is crucial to nurturing students ‘spiritual development and connecting spirituality through service learning directly with

higher education is still a new area that universities need to explore in depth.” Sikula and Sikula (2005) point out that through service learning students put spirituality to work in the workplace, providing personal support and making ethical decisions. This is a much needed program in Chinese society which has already become secular and utilitarian.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter looked at definitions of spirituality in Western and Chinese traditions and practices, and also discussed the role of spirituality in contemporary Chinese colleges and universities and the role of the teacher in students’ spiritual development. This chapter also suggested that there is a great need to have a policy on spiritual development. Also discussed is the relationship between service learning and spirituality development through liberal arts education programs. Contemporary Chinese society, families, schools, parents, and faculty members constantly emphasize the importance of grades, honor, success, social status, material things and the job market; but they ignore the personal inner development of students. Chinese politics since 1949 has made it dangerous for schools to address the question of spiritual development. Contemporary Chinese society is facing a serious spiritual crisis and is a society at risk (Jiang, 2011). The lack of spiritual influences and guidance in the lives of the Chinese people is still rarely recognized, which contributes to moral decline and criminal behavior to the detriment of the nation. Nationwide corruption, injustice, dishonesty, disrespect for human life and dignity, neglecting the poor, unaccountability, excessive income inequality, crony capitalism, unfair resource distribution, and wide spread nepotism have increased rapidly in the past two decades. This is a spiritual crisis as well as a legal and moral one.

Dewey (1957) stated that “the supreme task of all political institutions...shall be the contribution they make to the all-round growth of every member of society” (p. 186). If the Chinese colleges and universities are educating for wholeness, citizenship, and moral reasoning, then spirituality must be included in the curriculum. Educators and policy makers must develop a methodology and a curriculum to address this essential need of human integration, and should provide students with a program that encourages them to search for meaning, purpose, and integrity and may enable them to discover the sacred in their lives and to use these sacred gifts to nourish the world around them.

A professor from Fudan stated that Chinese government policy makers, college administrators, and faculty members should be aware that students are not Communist ideological-political pawns, but are truly human beings with desires that go beyond the narrow world view of science and technology. As one senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong challenged with these questions: Do the curriculum and extra-curricular activities effectively teach students not only basic academic and vocational skills but, also, the life skills required to become competent and caring citizens? Do colleges and universities teach young people to be responsible, kind, just, fair, and loving citizens?” While striving to build world-class universities, Chinese colleges and universities, including Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU, must also think about how they guide students to reflect upon the social problems in contemporary society. Koetting and Combs (2005) write that “until society values justice and integrity for all citizens, society will continue to shape schools and the curriculum in meaningless ways, ways that leave educators and their students spiritually (philosophically) malnourished” (p. 90).

Educators ought to realize that spirituality is important for their own lives as well as being an essential aspect of liberal arts education. This may mean that teachers need to cultivate



their own compassion, loving attitude, and responsibility for others as well as constantly searching for meaning and purpose in their lives. Chickering (2006) pointed out that “higher education professionals need to be knowledgeable about—and to appreciate—our religious and spiritual historical antecedents and social perspectives” (p. 11). Chickering also wrote that rational analysis and scientific research should be balanced with effective authenticity and spiritual growth. In this regard, faculty members and administrators at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China are greatly lacking. A senior professor from Fudan contends that contemporary Chinese teachers have gone astray because they are concerned mostly about publications, promotion, and applying for grants and funding; they lack spiritual thought and commitment. Higher educational institutions and professionals need to create an environment in which fundamental existential questions can be addressed.

It is important to understand how the decisions of the administration, faculty members, and policy makers affect the spiritual development of students. Huang Daren (2010) wrote that a university should focus on academics with scientific spirit at the core while adhering to an absolute spiritual pursuit. In addition to cultivating excellent talent, it should also look to the future and serve society and should impart to the students specific accumulated spiritual knowledge. While contemporary Chinese universities are driven by profit and utilitarianism, every university should have its own clearly defined objective purpose as it constantly moves forward. This purpose relates to the students’ future development and bears upon their entire life. The concept of a university should include knowledge united with action. Students should apply learning to actual needs. The university should be fully aware of what happens in society and the community and the livelihood of its members as it endeavors to cultivate students with a sense of

social responsibility, compassion, love, and caring for others through spiritual development in liberal arts education. Apple (1995) wrote:

The denial of basic human rights, the destruction of the environment, the deadly conditions under which people (barely) survive, the lack of a meaningful future for the thousands of children I noted in my story...this is a reality that millions of people experience in their bodies every day. Educational work that is not connected deeply to a powerful understanding of these realities is in danger of losing its soul. The lives of our children demand no less (pp. 526-530).

To achieve the goal of nurturing students with a spiritual dimension, educators and administrators at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China need to embrace the spirituality movement as, at least, one solution to educational and social problems and to the moral crisis that permeates every corner of Chinese society today. Having discussed the fourth theme of my research in this chapter, the next chapter will turn to the discussion of the interview findings.

**Introduction**

Over the past decade, educational reform in China has examined many aspects of education, one of them being the emergence of liberal arts education in some top research universities. This study examines the context, contents, and implications of liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU in Shanghai. Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 of my study focus on several factors that shaped the development of liberal art education in the three qualitative purposive samples of case universities, as well as the Chinese higher education system in general. Several themes from interview data are grouped under the major categories of curriculum reform, critical thinking, moral reasoning, and spirituality. These four themes are essentially related to cultivating a broadly informed intellect, critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning and spirituality through a liberal arts education, as understood by many interviewees. The earlier chapters report my findings on the interviewed faculty members, administrators, and policy makers' view on liberal arts education. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss in more detail the findings that are presented in the earlier chapters.

People who work in these three universities have a unique role in helping students to define internal change and reform. Since the year 2000, enrollment, buildings, and facilities have expanded tremendously, but the goal of Chinese higher education is becoming increasingly commercialized and utilitarian (Yang, 2012). Higher education institutions have a central role in the education of future leaders in civil services and other social sectors. They should be taught to think critically, morally, creatively, and compassionately, as the interviewees stated. As discussed in previous chapters, these four major objectives are not well developed in the Chinese higher educational system.

A primary goal of education is to graduate creative, critical, and innovative students. A liberal arts curriculum is widely believed to be a valuable academic path to achieving this goal and is available to students in colleges and universities throughout the world (Peterson, 2012). Current thinking about a liberal arts education in China is a new phenomenon in its higher educational system. But there are serious challenges to the development, implementation, and the effectiveness of liberal arts, such as faculty commitment, policy making, pedagogy, access, mass building of colleges, and efforts to create world class universities. Generally, all faculty members, administrators, and policy makers interviewed expressed concerns about the importance of educating students to think critically, creatively, innovatively, spiritually, and morally through a liberal arts education and the central government and the Shanghai municipal government should be aware of the strategic plan of education . They also talked about the challenges to implement the program. Although administrators and faculty members at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU and policy makers in Shanghai municipal government supported in general liberal arts education, they lacked a common understanding of what a liberal arts course should look like and how it should be taught. The reality was that many of them still linked themselves in highly specialized departments and the idea of liberal arts education was easy to embrace in theoretical form.

Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecology model looks at environments as the foundation for discussion. This model helps to focus on specific aspects of individual demography, the development of students, family status, population, political situation, communism, globalization, and other overall social and historical contexts that can affect the implications and outcome of a liberal arts education. Although this chapter does not apply Bronfenbrenner's model, the model does provide some guide to see the context in which a liberal arts education is embedded. In

Bronfenbrenner's view, human development is affected by the immediate environment—for example, family, friends, parents, and teachers. However, these environments are also affected by a larger social and global context. Hence, this model is relevant for analyzing how different environments affect the development of liberal arts education in China.

### **Curriculum Development for Critical Thinking Cultivation**

Curriculum development is essential for the success of a liberal arts education as well as for the development of critical thinking and creativity. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU have repeatedly emphasized educating students with critical thinking and creativity, yet, in many cases, the syllabi of faculty members for liberal arts courses are still following transmission and test-oriented pedagogy. Interviewed administrators from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU all mentioned that there should be a movement away from test to student-orientation in order to cultivate students with critical thinking and creativity, but teachers are either reluctant or not ready to change. Despite extensive discussion on critical thinking by policy makers, administrators and faculty members, there are still debates over the question of why the Chinese higher educational system lacks (or rather does not demonstrate) critical thinking skills. The current curricula are no longer relevant to the goal of cultivating students with critical thinking, creativity, and moral reasoning.

In general, the administrators and faculty members I interviewed argued that there are two main reasons impeding the development of student critical thinking. First, many students have been trained as memorizers from elementary and secondary education. They are accustomed to transmission pedagogy and a college admission system that depends entirely on a student's college entrance test score. They spent almost the entire three years memorizing

material for the entrance examination. As a result, in their freshman year in college they do not possess the cognitive development for critical thinking. Many interviewees also questioned how much a university can do to cultivate students with the ability of critical thinking. Second, teachers who teach liberal arts courses are not fully engaged in critical thinking since they also were not trained as critical thinkers. Hence, a teacher's professional development is crucial for a successful educational program in critical thinking. Generally, most interviewed faculty members and administrators pointed out that teachers play different roles that can influence students to think reflectively and critically. When faculty members, however, were asked what concrete actions they had taken for their professional development in regard to implementing critical thinking in curriculum reform, and when administrators were asked what changes had been made in the professional development of teachers in respect to critical thinking and innovation, both groups responded that they did not pay much attention in practice to the idea of critical thinking.

Many faculty members still follow the traditional lecture pedagogy with no opportunity for student questions or reflection. Some administrators also mentioned that Chinese culture leads to the lack of critical elements in the academic work of students. However, most faculty members interviewed pointed out that in the past two thousand years, the key element of critical thinking did exist in Chinese culture. Also, China's political environment does not encourage students to question authority. Interviewees all emphasized the need to teach critical thinking, but nobody wants a school full of critical thinkers. Critical thinking, in their view, must be in line with central political guidelines. Hence, for Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU, how critical thinking fits into their context is still a challenge.

Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, according to some interviewees, follow more closely the “quality education” movement and mandate, although these two institutions offer some elite experimental programs that in some cases have led to the formation of liberal arts education. The first year students of Fudan liberal arts college are not assigned to a major discipline, they are enrolled in one of two general tracks: humanities or science. After the first year’s general education, students are assigned to their major studies. In contrast, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU assign students to the majors in the first year. However, as interviewees from Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU said, once students are assigned to their majors, they are no longer interested in liberal arts education and simply fulfill the requirements.

Since the late 1990s, the common courses program in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, like most research or major universities in China, require credits in both the Ministry of Education compulsory courses (i.e., common English series, ideological-political series, military science series) and in *Wenhua Suzhi Jiaoyu* (cultural quality education, referred to as a general or liberal arts education program). These non-major courses in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU account for 18 percent to 23 percent of a typical undergraduate program, which usually covers mathematics, the natural sciences, social sciences, history, language, arts, and literature, philosophy, and technology. Despite the development of a liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU, there is no significant reform or education policy that includes student-centered curricular development and pedagogy. For the most part, priority is given to memorization and specialization with less emphasis on innovation, creativity, and critical thinking. Hence, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU now face the challenge to develop a university-wide policy that ensures quality curriculum development for critical thinking and innovative skill cultivation.

Liberal arts education curriculum has not been seriously accepted and implemented in higher educational institutions despite the attention devoted to it by many educators, administrators, and policy makers, and despite the repeated emphasis on its value by the academic staff. The faculty members, university administrators in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU, and policy makers in the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government that I interviewed all strongly believe that a liberal arts education should be fully implemented. But many do not seem to realize the need to make liberal arts courses the object of concentration as the core courses of the academic program. For example, several interviewees from Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU said that their universities merely add liberal arts to the curriculum to augment the number of courses available.

Because liberal arts is not a major field of study for many students, faculty members are not interested in teaching or willing to devote time to liberal arts even when assigned to teach them. As many interviewees pointed out, liberal arts education will be just a subject of conversation unless there is a change in policy. However, there has been some shift from specialized to liberal arts education in what can be considered a trial stage and to cultivate students with critical thinking, teacher-student interactions are more helpful. Nevertheless, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU encounter the same challenge of student-teacher interaction. According to the School Development Report in Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU in 2010, most of undergraduate students reported that they had not raised a single question, not participated in class discussion, nor ever done a class presentation. Many of them had never received any comments from their teachers or advisors, written or verbal, on their academic performance. Many of them never shared their views of the world, society and life with their teachers or school administrators. In contrast, Fudan's undergraduates had more interaction with their teachers



through their mentorship program and residential hall's activities, but the percentage is relatively small according to administrators from Fudan Liberal Arts College.

The current Chinese policy makers, administrators and faculty members I interviewed want, at least in theory, to educate students with the capacity for critical thinking and innovative skills through a liberal arts education. However, administrators, faculty members, and policy makers in general focus narrowly on educating students with creativity, critical thinking, and innovative skills. Liberal arts education has a broader scope. As Peterson (2012) points out, "it provides core knowledge that fosters understanding of one's own culture as well as that of others; strengthens skills of critical inquiry, thinking, and articulation; cultivates social responsibility and civic values; and ultimately creates a basis for lifelong learning, engaged citizenship, and professional competency" (p. 9).

Generally, the core curriculum at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU requires the study of classical Chinese history, philosophy, literature, and science. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU each offer more than three hundred common and core courses in the liberal arts education program. Administrators and faculty members in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU point out that even so the university administration somehow misunderstands the purpose of liberal arts education by adding more and more courses while neglecting the quality, content and process of the courses. Classes are usually large and teacher-centered and students are used to accepting knowledge and answers from the teachers. Students are rather passive compared to their peers in Western countries. Many professors and students consider liberal arts courses as fundamental academic training but only as an opportunity to learn a bit about everything. For many interviewed faculty members and administrators, a liberal arts education is not simply about adding more courses or engaging in curriculum reform; it's really about the quality and

content of the courses and how faculty members teach the course with the idea of a liberal arts education. Gan (2006) has pointed out that many Chinese universities thoughtlessly increase the number of elective courses in their liberal arts education program, with many of them offering more 300 common courses for quality education or liberal arts education. Indeed, these courses are of low quality.

While Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU are still in their experimental stages, Fudan enjoys a more systematic development in its curriculum. There is a common trend that Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU are becoming to some extent increasingly student-centered, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary. The study also found that the curriculum reform and development did not make a fundamental impact on teacher education. Generally, reflective thinking, inquiring, independent thinking, and interaction between the teachers and students still remain a challenge to Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU's liberal arts education program. A few interviewees also pointed out that critical thinking is about more than curriculum development and reasoning skills. It consolidates the knowledge, beliefs, values, and identity that empower civic engagement. It will challenge one's own and others' assumptions, cognitive and affective deliberations on principles and the consequences of actions, values, and institutional practices.

The curriculum reform for critical thinking is always politically oriented in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU. Many interviewed faculty members and some administrators mentioned that the mandated ideological-political education course is a course for Chinese Communist political indoctrination instead of a traditional moral education course. "This course is not really helpful for cultivating students' critical thinking and creativity," a senior professor at Shanghai Jiaotong pointed out. But for policy makers and some administrators, the ideological-

political course must be a key part of liberal arts education for educational or pedagogical development as the central government largely controls the movement of education and leads it towards its own political ends. Even though some faculty members and administrators in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU are hardly engaged in liberal arts education or are simply passive recipients of the reform, they did not directly oppose the curriculum reform and development. Indeed, my interviews confirmed that most faculty members and administrators in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU possess strong positive attitudes toward liberal arts education as a means to cultivate students with critical thinking, creativity, innovative skills, and moral reasoning, and the ability to act in transformation of society. Curriculum reform and development for critical thinking are tactical decisions within the larger context of teaching and scholarship. Whatever decision is made, the content of a curriculum should conform to the university's mission and vision, and the objectives of education, interviewees from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU and the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government all expressed this view.

### **Faculty Member's Role in Liberal Arts Education Development**

In the view of many interviewees, the active engagement of faculty members at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU in liberal arts education is one of the key factors for the success of liberal arts education. Liberal arts education is not only a special curriculum but also entails a particular pedagogy, and a practice that involves interaction in the classroom. The value that teachers put on education and fields of study impact pursuit of learning, especially with respect to liberal arts. Interviewees stated that traditionally teachers paid very little attention to their students. The classrooms and curricula were standardized with no possibility of innovation. The method of teaching was also uniform. The teachers merely communicated the course content

with little or no interaction with students. These interviewees also believed that teachers must keep the moral concepts of education, and become an embodiment of the social conscience to influence the students and the whole society.

As a senior administrator from ECNU pointed out, a good number of teachers in his institution did not take teaching seriously. Thirty years ago teachers were wholeheartedly committed to teach and guide students, but now teachers no longer spend time with students. Some interviewees from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU said that teachers in their institutes spend most of their time on research, publications, or doing part-time work and have little time for teaching or interacting with students. In contrast, Dewey (1919) emphasized the importance of teachers' involvement in the design of educational contexts and the guidance of students in making personal decisions. Teachers of mathematics, science, history, or languages can see the basic value of human development and work to animate each student to realize his/her full potential, although Dewey's position on the importance of these factors has retained its relevance for nearly a century.

Dewey (1919) also emphasized that there should be collaboration between teachers and students, with both viewing themselves as learners. Although Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU have faculty training programs for new faculty members, they are not focused on teaching liberal arts courses. A senior administrator for academic affairs from Shanghai Jiaotong pointed out that his institution has repeatedly asked that teachers pay more attention to the development of the whole person and has encouraged them to build better relationships with students, but little has changed. To create a student-centered campus requires teachers who know how students learn, who understand the obstacles, and who can develop classroom techniques (Stage, Muller, Kinzie, & Simmons, 1998). A student-centered campus starts not just with

knowing how students learn but with knowing the students themselves. Interviewees also expressed the view that pedagogical change is required. The difficulty to reform the method of pedagogy is a challenge for implementing liberal arts education.

. College students are at a critical level of social, emotional, spiritual, and psychological development, a professor from Fudan pointed out. They are also at the stage of seeking values and truth. If students are to make the right decisions, then a good relationship between teachers and students is important. Teachers influence students far beyond instruction because they may be guides to directing students in their personal lives. A senior professor from ECNU indicated that teachers lack the time and patience for students. But a teacher's personal interest in each student is especially important for imparting the values of a liberal arts education. China's educational system is still examination-oriented and teachers have a dominant role. College teachers have the opportunity to influence students but much depends on the personal qualities of the teacher. How to improve the cultural, moral and spiritual strength of teachers of liberal arts to educate students for the challenges in a global society is a challenge in itself for Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU, and the higher educational system in China, a senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government stated. The impact of faculty is evident from student performance in and outside the classroom. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) stated that "faculty behaviors and attitudes affect students profoundly, which suggests that faculty members play the single-most important role in student learning" (32). They further suggested that "because faculty are a critical component in collegiate experience, colleges and universities need to find ways (perhaps new ways) to support and reward faculty in their teaching role" (32).

According to interviewees, college teachers, especially those in their late 20s or early 30s lack training in human qualities and critical thinking. A professor from ECNU stated that “many of our young faculty members are professionally trained, but they lack the sense of creativity and critical thinking.” Consequently, teachers at the universities of Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU ought to be given training in the integration of critical thinking, creativity, and innovative skills with other disciplines so that they can teach and direct students to be socially, morally, intellectually, and spiritually integrated. China’s educational system is greatly influenced by Chinese teachers and culture, as a senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government said.

Faculty can have a vital impact on students and be an important factor in their success. The ‘seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education’ developed two decades ago by Chickering and Gamson (1991) are still relevant for higher education and its ability to affect learning and educational experiences. These principles are (1): encouraging student-faculty contact; (2) encouraging cooperation among students; (3) encouraging students to undertake projects that have personal relevance and interest; (4) providing constructive feedback; (5) emphasizing time on task; (6) communicating high expectation expectations; (7) respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. Astin (1993) and Chickering and Resiser (1993) suggested that sources of influence must be considered in order to appraise accurately the environmental emphases in the institutions. The commitment of faculty members, for example, to student-centered education at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU can greatly determine the outcome of a student’s learning and engagement. But a senior administrator at Shanghai Jiaotong said that “given the fact that teachers’ income is relatively low and the housing and basic living are quite high in Shanghai, teachers still prefer research to teaching since research can bring extra income.”

Other administrators at Fudan and ECNU had a similar view. But a senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government disagreed. For him, once teachers choose academics as their career or professional development, they should know that the university is not a place for making huge salaries.

Because Chinese society and students view teachers as role models, the educational context created by faculty members and their attitudes will have a dramatic effect on student learning and integration. At institutions such as Fudan liberal arts college—where faculty members, mentors and advisors spend relatively more time with students both in and out of the classroom—students feel supported and become active participants in learning. Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU still lag behind in this regard. One major criticism is that Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU have failed to focus on undergraduate education and student learning, particularly through the liberal arts. A senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong said that the goal of a liberal arts education in his institution is not clear. The decisions on core curriculum are not totally based on what students need but on academic authority.

During my interview with faculty members, administrators from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, and policy makers from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government, they admitted that faculty members can make a significant difference in student learning and the undergraduate experience because they can directly influence the critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills of students. Teachers are the center of a school and determine the quality of education. Therefore, professional development of teachers in the area of liberal arts is regarded as a key element in the implementation of a university-wide reform. Some interviewees from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU also admitted that due to lack of experience or passion for liberal arts education, they have not done as good as job as they could.

A policy decision to shift from emphasis on research to emphasis on students is required, but it has not occurred. Research and publications are still what universities value most. Interviewees from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU admitted that there is little interaction between students and faculty members outside the classroom, and students cannot turn to professors for personal or academic support.

As already noted, teachers are the instructors who determine the syllabus students have to study for the purpose of achieving better academic performance. The examination-oriented system dominates most universities. These practices do not encourage students to develop creativity, critical thinking skills or independent learning. Traditionally, the role of a teacher in Chinese history represents wisdom, knowledge and experience. The quality of teaching is a key issue of education. My analyses indicate that faculty attitudes and commitments play a role in creating an environment that fosters student learning and success in critical thinking, creativity, and innovative skills, with moral reasoning, and social responsibility. And to create that environment at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU the required educational activities will take place to the extent that the role of the teacher is stressed. A senior administrator from Fudan pointed out that only if teachers are fully engaged in teaching, student learning, and setting a good example for students, can the educational system elevate the enthusiasm and motivation of students to become eventually critically reasoning and reflecting citizens. In addition, the mentorship program at Fudan Liberal Arts College also plays an important role for teacher-student interaction.



## **Government Policies Concerning Liberal Arts Education Development**

Many interviewees stated that government policy on liberal arts education is important for curriculum development. In 1985, the Chinese government promulgated the “Decision on the Reform of the Education System,” which opened a whole scale of reform across the country. The 1985 *Decision* recognized that curriculum reform is central to the restructuring of the educational system. Without a radical change in curriculum, the demands for more effective education and training for a high level labor force would not be possible. The direction of the 1985 *Decision* emphasized the overall aims of improving educational high quality and producing more qualified people for building a modernized socialist China. The policy makers I interviewed from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government stated that the 1985 *Decision* changed the direction and laid a foundation for education reform in Shanghai from specialized education to research-based education.

In October 1995, the Ministry of Education in China held the first national conference on cultural quality education in Chinese colleges and universities in Huazhong Technology and Science University. This unprecedented conference laid the foundation for the initiation of general education in China (Li, 2006; Wang, 2006). According to the Ministry of Education, cultural quality education for Chinese university students can be achieved in multiple forms and methods, for example, core and fundamental courses, elective courses, workshops, and extracurricular activity. The conference also sought to combine professional courses with cultural quality education, and to strengthen campus humanity cultural development, with particular emphasis on traditional and classical education to improve quality in science and humanity.

After the three years' pilot program, the central Chinese government and the Ministry of Education in 1998 promulgated the "Opinions on Enhancing Undergraduates' Cultural Quality Education" that set up a directory committee for cultural education and ratified 32 "Centers for the Enhancement of Cultural Education of University Students" in 1999 to promote the reform and remodel of the undergraduate system. Since then, the concept "general education" has been a salient aspect of higher education institutions on the China mainland. In response to the "Opinions on Enhancing Undergraduates' Cultural Quality Education" issued by the central government, Shanghai outlined its educational blueprint and attempted to build a modernized educational system that links up general education, vocational education, and adult education. In 2001, the Shanghai government further outlined that its educational goal was to establish an advanced, modernized, and well-organized life-long educational system that is world-class (the Department of Education, Shanghai, 2001). Since then, Shanghai initiated a number of important reforms to implement quality education. The faculty members and administrators I interviewed pointed out that the policies and documents on education reform from the central government and Shanghai government pushed Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU to establish a more efficient and effective educational development to meet the goal of education that is illustrated in the government policies and documents, and eventually led these three universities to start the cultural quality education and then the liberal arts education reform. From then on, a series of reforms in higher educational institutions were carried out, including administrative reform, teaching reforms, and tuition reforms, but none of these reforms were directly related to liberal arts or student development until the year 2005.

Neither the Ministry of Education nor the Shanghai municipal government has issued any policy documents to promote officially and formally liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai

Jiaotong and ECNU. A top senior administrator from Fudan pointed out that “without a national or provincial policy support on liberal arts education, we are just groping for stone to cross the river.” Since universities are still directed by the central or local government and the Ministry of Education, they cannot make liberal arts a main course because all curricula are examined by the government. A senior administrator at ECNU said that universities generally lack autonomy and academic freedom in regard to curricular development and without a government policy, they cannot freely promote liberal arts education. Nevertheless, interviewed faculty members and administrators generally stated that the policies on education reform and cultural quality education laid a solid foundation for the development of liberal arts education. Although these policies did not directly support a liberal arts education, they provide space for discussion and development of liberal arts. Since then, a series of documents regarding curriculum development, research assessment, and teacher recruitment were issued. Interviewees also expressed the hope that the central government or the Shanghai municipal government would promulgate a policy or document that supports the development of liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU.

The reason why the central or Shanghai municipal government did not issue a document to promote liberal arts education, according to some interviewed administrators, is that the Ministry of Education and the Chinese government repeatedly stress the use of science and technology to increase the rate of university development in a society with a knowledge-based economy. This magnifies the challenge to educate students with the capacity of thinking critically, creatively, and innovatively. Many interviewees believe that a liberal arts education is important and necessary, but in a fiercely competitive world, it does not assure much hope for employment after graduation. A senior administrator from Fudan Liberal Arts College said that

many students, parents, and faculty members also worry about the question of employment. Thus, after one or two years at Fudan liberal arts college, students return to their major field of studies and it is hard to know how many students remain oriented to the liberal arts. It is true that in a developing country like China, graduates majoring in liberal arts will encounter a highly competitive job market where those qualified in information technology, accounting, management, or engineering may have a distinct advantage. Current discussions in higher education reform focus on university autonomy and academic freedom, but not on liberal arts education. Therefore, in general, the development of liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU is largely dependent on each university's commitment to cultivate future responsible citizens. Each university bears the responsibility of creating its own approach to liberal arts education.

As already noted, there is no national and provincial level policy to promote liberal arts education. Fudan University created a committee on liberal arts education to oversee the development of liberal arts education. Its committee on liberal arts education consists of faculty members from different departments, administrators, a few student representatives, and is led by the university president. The responsibility of the committee includes recruiting faculty and experts to design and develop core courses, to train faculty members for the core course, and to monitor the implementation of liberal arts education program.

In contrast, although Shanghai Jiaotong has created a committee on liberal arts education, it is a division of the dean's office and just plays a role as coordinator for curriculum development of Shanghai Jiaotong. ECNU does not have any committee on liberal arts education; the liberal arts education program is generally managed by the dean's office. A senior professor from Fudan said that the committee on liberal arts education plays a key role in promoting the

liberal arts education at the university-wide level and has helped to promote core courses and create Fudan liberal arts college as the mechanism for educational reform. According to a senior professor who is a member of the committee on liberal arts education from Shanghai Jiaotong, the committee does not function well. It's like window dressing for curriculum development. And he pointed out that "all decisions on curriculum development and reform are made and guided by the dean's office. The committee on liberal arts education has nothing to say or to do; many of the members are not familiar with liberal arts education development." Several interviewees stated that the educational system is hierarchical and the central government and the MoE dominate the direction of education. It is imperative, therefore, that the MoE or the Shanghai municipal government promulgate a national policy or local policy to promote liberal arts education in order to educate students as whole persons.

The leadership role for liberal arts education is decisive and crucial. Leadership at these three universities will continue to develop and refine the content of liberal arts education program in response to current and future demands to cultivate students with critical thinking, creativity, innovative skills, and moral reasoning. Interviewees from Fudan noted that the leadership in their institution supports liberal arts education and creative development, but interviewees at Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU said that faculty members felt that they received little support from the university leadership. Thus, university administrators in Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU need to make a greater effort to manifest an interest in liberal arts education and to support the roles of faculty members. Chinese higher education is still managed by a strong hierarchical system. Thus, liberal arts education needs more support from the higher levels of leadership. In the past, one of the important reasons for achieving success in educational reform was the strong support and collaboration from all levels of government. However, the

government support is more theory than practice. Leadership is essential in implementing liberal arts education in a Chinese context. Furthermore, accountability is also an important perspective for the success of liberal arts education. Only when a university is accountable to its stakeholders (students, parents, family and the entire society), can it more effectively implement the liberal arts education for the complete development of the person, as several interviewees pointed out.

### **Internationalization and Globalization**

Quite a few interviewees mentioned that internationalization and globalization have changed the liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU in two ways. First, internationalization and globalization open a window for Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU to learn from the experience of a Western liberal arts education. Second, internationalization and globalization have brought competition to build Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU into world class universities through science and technology. Thus, a liberal arts education program is not considered as important as one in science and technology, as many interviewees pointed out. In the last two decades, internationalization and globalization in the field of higher education have become a new force that has energized universities to seek opportunities for students, for faculty development, and for global collaboration through international exchange programs, excellent pedagogy, and an effective curriculum in universities nationwide (Altbach, 2006). China strives to be internationally competitive and to elevate its universities to become “world class.” As globalization advances, international competition increases the demand for educated people. As China raises the level of its participation in the global economy, it needs more well-educated citizens to compete with international colleagues.

Under the influence of internationalization and globalization in the last decade, advancing China to world-class status through science and technology has become the ultimate goal of higher education. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU are making efforts to become world-class universities. Most faculty members and administrators from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU whom I interviewed mentioned that if their institutions want to become world class universities, then development in advanced science and technology is essential. A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government stated that “Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU are three leading universities in Shanghai as well as in China. Therefore, the government has placed high expectation on them to become world-leading universities.” Altbach (2010) stated that China has invested enormously in higher education in the last decade and duplicated the Western model of education in order to establish world-class universities. The infrastructures of Chinese universities are becoming much better than that of Western universities. Still, the students’ overall capacity for creativity, critical thinking, and moral reasoning are lag far behind the standard expected by UNESCO. Globalization agendas and global trends have influenced Chinese education policies and governance. The demand for higher education continues to grow and market ideologies will have a stronger influence on Chinese higher education (Yang, Vidovich & Currie, 2007).

In addition to increasing the number of universities and upgrading academic programs, China is also forging partnerships with Western universities that have established programs in China. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU have partnership programs with Western universities. ECNU and NYU have collaborated on the founding of NYU Shanghai University, which is expected to open in 2013. As China moves forward to become an influential nation and economic superpower, it needs a better-educated labor force and a greater number of citizens

with strong educational backgrounds in order to remain internationally competitive. A senior administrator from Fudan is correct when he says that the university's central role in enabling to compete is enhanced by educating a larger percentage of the population. Research and development are now viewed as the driving forces of economic advancement and higher educational institutions are encouraged to establish links with business and industry.

Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU play important roles in Chinese higher education globalization. While these universities reform in order to meet the requirements of globalization and internationalization, their focus on the development of students and their education through liberal arts education is decentralized when engaged in international cooperation with other universities, as a senior professor from Fudan stated. It is possible that as Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU advance in internationalization and globalization, there will be greater and more opportunities for students to achieve a broader education and to develop critical thinking, creativity, innovative skills, and moral reasoning, and to be better prepared to work in a globalized world.

There are two obstacles for Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU to advance into internationalization and globalization in order to play important roles in global competition. First, China itself invests its resources and funding mainly to build world-class institutions, but neglects whole person development of students. Second, university faculty, administrators, and policy makers repeatedly focus on research and on quantitative measurements as educational outcomes. Consequently, reform of curricula for liberal arts education remains superficial.

A senior administrator from ECNU stated that “the development of a world-class university has been a dream that the entire Chinese higher educational system strives to achieve



and has become a national strategic goal of the Chinese government, but the quality of graduates is still not promising.” Although Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU have set their goal to become top ranking universities internationally by 2020 or 2050, they have not changed their focus from the numbers of students enrolled to graduating students who excel and from developing the infrastructure to concentration on students, service, and teaching enhancement. Apart from the challenge of globalization and internationalization, these three universities need to continue to improve the quality of education and service through a program of liberal arts to cultivate students with critical thinking, innovative skills and creativity, as a senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government pointed out. A professor from Fudan said that contemporary higher education institutions need to deal with obstacles, such as specialized educational programs that are based on utilitarianism and the desire for luxurious infrastructures mistakenly taken to be the mark of a world-class university. The discussion here also shows that the development of globalization and internationalization in these three universities is a double-edged sword; it brings opportunity as well as challenge to liberal arts education in these three institutions.

With the influence of globalization and internationalization, becoming a world-class university is the top goal of many universities across the globe. In response to national policy and the Shanghai municipal government’s strategic plan, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU are trying to become world-class research universities. According to interviewed faculty members, administrators, and policy makers, each university has invested enormously in enlarging the capacity for students, financial resource, curriculum design, teaching, research resource, and government and management structure to compete with their Western counterparts. Many interviewed faculty members and administrators pointed out that with such a goal,

university administrators and faculty members do not pay much attention to students' development or to liberal arts education, and motivate faculty members to produce more papers in SCI and SSCI indexed journals. Although these same people admitted that the goal of a world-class university is clear, no one really understands what a world-class university is. There is no universal standard for that. The interviewed faculty members and administrators agreed that although the latest document on higher education in 2010 has adapted a new term "world-known research university," there is still a need to renovate the higher educational system further and to improve educational quality in a response to educate the future global leaders with critical thinking, creativity, moral responsibility, and accountability, instead of merely focusing on quantitative indicators or ranking.

Although liberal arts education for undergraduates is integral to higher education in raising China to be a globally competitive nation, it was hardly addressed in the Fourth National Conference on Education in 2010. Advancing to the world-class stage through science and technology has become a central concern and goal of the Chinese government and the entire nation. Therefore, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, and many universities are moving rapidly to embrace globalization and internationalization to be in the forefront of world development. As China determines to become an innovative country in the context of internationalization and globalization, it wants to recapture its tradition of creativity and history of innovation. Therefore, top universities, such as Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU, play a critical role. Furthermore, in order to encourage faculty members to publish in the journals indexed by SSCI, SCI, and other core international journals, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU required their schools or departments to implement their own reward and punishment policies. Many interviewees mentioned that the overemphasis on international research and

publications created gaps between research and teaching. As a result, liberal arts education through teaching is considered unimportant. The concept of a liberal arts education is still not embraced by many faculty members and students. In general, as many interviewees pointed out, the impacts of global and international development and culture are continuing to affect the national policies, the economic system, research, and Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU and their direction of the liberal arts.

### **Confucian Philosophy and Moral Reasoning**

One aspect of a liberal arts education mentioned by many interviewees from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU is Confucianism because it helps to cultivate students with moral reasoning and civic engagement. They openly expressed support for an educational philosophy that is rooted in traditional Chinese culture. In ancient Confucian philosophy teaching, all human activities should result in the moral good. If a society or a person lacks moral education and commitment, then education simply becomes a means— not the end—and thus loses its commitment to educating responsible and moral citizens. The core teachings of Confucian philosophy are about righteousness, benevolence, empathy, filial piety, loyalty, virtue, universal love, etiquette, faithfulness, self-cultivation, and emulation of moral exemplars. These values and traditions have had a great impact on Chinese education, history, and culture. In his teachings and conversations, Confucius emphasized the cultivation of moral virtues, harmony of the social order, and personal integration. These are expressed in the characteristics of humanness or benevolence (*ren*), the practice of civility (*li*), the practice of filiality (*xiao*), the practice of justice (*yi*), the practice of truthfulness (*xin*), and the practice of wisdom (*zhi*). Confucius taught people to strive to live morally and ethically in their daily lives, in politics, and in education, and also to build proper relationships among people. The ultimate goal of Confucian teaching is to

cultivate the noble person (*jun zi*) within the five relations (ruler and subject, parents and child, husband and wife, older and younger siblings, and friend with friend). For Confucius, the main purpose of education is to help establish a harmonious order in society through individual integration in morality and virtue.

Throughout the last two thousand years, Confucian philosophy has influenced politics, society, and education. It aimed at the cultivation and development of human nature in order to attain virtue and wisdom, and eventually, moral perfection. One of Confucius' deep-rooted normative values is the belief in education and learning as a major instrument for achieving the highest moral good for both individuals and society. The Confucian model places moral cultivation at the center of individual learning process and social engagement. In the Confucian tradition, a teacher has three roles: transmitting moral values and principles, delivering knowledge and skills, and solving doubts that arise in learning. Once a man reaches moral perfection as a scholar-gentleman, he is in harmony with his fellow human beings and capable of regulating worldly affairs for the good of others.

After the Chinese Communist Party took power in China in 1949, the values and teachings of Confucian philosophy were repudiated, severely criticized, and forbidden. However, Confucian philosophy is currently emerging in the Chinese educational system, especially at this time when moral values are rapidly declining and corruption is spreading. As noted earlier, corruption has been prevalent in the Chinese academic community since the 1990s and has affected commitment to teaching, research and service within the universities. Most faculty members, administrators, and policy makers I interviewed admitted that China today is experiencing the greatest moral confusion and challenge in its history. Challenges are present in all areas of moral concern: in politics, in the work place, in the family and in society at large, for

example, leaderships' lack of political integrity, rampant corruption, accountability, disillusionment, the awareness of a spiritual void, and moral confusion. The real crisis is the fact that Chinese society has so far been unable to find within itself an answer to the moral challenges stemming from modernization and globalization. Interviewees from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU all agreed that Confucian tradition has many elements in common with the Western liberal arts education, for example, the development of the whole person, and the cultivation of one's morality and personality. On the other hand, they also recognized the importance of specialized knowledge for career development. A senior professor from ECNU stated that many teachers commit most of their time to research and publications that often requires a bribe to the editors of academic journals unless there is a personal relationship. Many interviewees complained that as academic corruption increases in universities, educating students with moral reasoning becomes of less interest to many teachers and educators.

Tu (1998) believes that learning from Chinese classics and Confucianism can help to nurture the social responsibility and spiritual development of students. Although China has progressed rapidly in educational reform in the last decades, it is still far from implementing a type of learning that absorbs the best from traditional Chinese culture and tradition. Most of those I interviewed mentioned that the higher educational system and liberal arts education should go back to the values of Confucian philosophy. A senior administrator from ECNU is of the opinion that this philosophy teaches moral virtue and values and cultivates students with a moral standard and civic commitment that is needed in contemporary society and universities. To help students understand and appreciate traditional Confucian philosophy teachings and to cultivate moral reasoning, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU introduced humanities courses, which include classical readings on Confucianism and philosophy. An emergence of Confucian

values and thought will bring a new orientation and challenges to the higher educational system and to society as a whole. They can also be an important and integral part of liberal arts education where Western and Eastern traditions can meet. According to a senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong, “Chinese universities, including his own institute Shanghai Jiaotong, draw inspiration from Confucian philosophy. Liberal arts education in Chinese universities should not merely be modeled on the Western academic system, but also retain their cultural heritage and values as part of liberal arts.” As a component of liberal arts education the values and teachings from Confucian philosophy will continue to play a crucial role in cultivating Chinese students with the spirit of humanity, moral reasoning and social concern. In general, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU viewed the classical Chinese topics from Confucian tradition as essential for cultivating moral and ethical understanding and therefore Confucianism is manifested in their curriculum development.

### **Evaluation of Faculty for Promotion**

There is a current tension between the goals of research and of teaching. Hayhoe and Li (2010) stated that the quality assurance mechanism tends toward the scientific, specialized, and quantifiable, rather than toward encouraging a spirit of profound thought and deep concern for the long term good of the society. Faculty members are busy conducting scientific research projects and lobbying for funding, but neglect teaching and tutoring students, especially undergraduates. Hence, their way of proceeding will have great impact on the success of liberal arts education. Unlike universities in the United States, most Chinese universities do not have a tenure system. The four basic academic ranks are lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor and full professor. Academics in a lower rank can be promoted to a higher rank, if they meet the specified institutional criteria and pass the reviews of the departmental and university-level

committees. The impact of faculty is evident from student performance in and outside the classroom.

Since 2006 Fudan has incorporated teaching into formal faculty evaluations. Even when excellent teachers are not good at academic publications, they can still be promoted to the rank of professor. The evaluation of faculty for promotions and research grants at Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU still rests almost entirely on faculty research results and publications. Although Shanghai Jiaotong has tried to include the teaching performance into its faculty promotion evaluation scheme, it still does not work well. A senior administrator from Shanghai Jiaotong stated that the policy of faculty promotion has not significantly changed. The committee for faculty promotion still places more emphasis on research publication because this adds extra point to the university's national and international ranking. At ECNU, the evaluation is not related to teaching qualifications according to interviewed faculty members. Many faculty members, as previously noted, in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU seek advancement in their careers in specialization and receive evaluation according to works published in top journals, but with little teaching skills. Although the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education include the national undergraduate teaching evaluation, research competitions and grants at all governmental, local and international levels, yet, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU still emphasize research more.

Hence, faculty members spend more time on research and publication in core journals, especially on SCI and SSCI journals. In addition to research and publications as an important part for faculty promotion, evaluation also depends on the personal relationship (Guan xi) between faculty members and administrators. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU have not adapted peer review from outsiders. Hence, promotion evaluation is an internal affair. A few

faculty members and administrators said that everyone in a college knows everyone else, everyone knew everyone else and there were always a few whose job it was to know you better than anyone else. Sometimes it is hard for them to try to find an impartial and objective way to judge the young faculty members. Obviously, social relationships influence faculty promotion decisions and play a role in the outcome of teaching quality. Generally, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU count the number of publications that appear in journals of “high quality” but ignore the content. According to interviewees, a great emphasis is placed on government grants, official competitive awards for research, and publications in national core journals and international journals. To be promoted, a lecturer must have been the principal investigator of at least one municipal-level grant or at least one provincial or national grant. An associate professor is required to have been the principal investigator of at least one provincial or national grant from the National Science or Social Science Foundation in China. Deem et al, (2008) state that “publishing in English-language journals comes to dominate everything else” (p. 85) and creating world-class universities is the main goal for the Chinese higher education system (Yang & Welch, 2011). And teaching performance is often considered to be unimportant. Over all, faculty promotion criteria at these three universities are largely influenced and determined by the government policies.

This analysis shows that research and publications are expected more now than ever before. Many faculty members excel in teaching but are neither promoted nor given research grants for their performance and lose enthusiasm for teaching and treat liberal arts courses passively. Quite a few of them are engaged in some type of “entrepreneurial” activities, such as cooperating with industry, consulting, or lecturing for additional income. Consequently, if the faculty promotion evaluation system does not consider a broader range of factors, it will



significantly affect the outcome of education, the overall quality of liberal arts education and the cultivation of students with critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills will decline as well. Without incentives for faculty promotion and research grants for excellence in teaching, the expectation of high quality liberal arts courses diminishes. If the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government or Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU do not reform its evaluation measurement for faculty promotion and research grant, the issue of student development through liberal arts courses may linger long into the future, as some interviewed faculty members expressed.

### **Secondary Education and the College Admissions System**

Interviewed faculty members, administrators, and policy makers have recognized the importance of shifting from specialized education to educating graduates to be creative and competitive in a globalized world. However, pressure from exam-oriented teaching and a transmission method of teaching impede faculty and university administrators from wholeheartedly embracing liberal arts education. Relatively narrow studies for professions still dominate the curricula in most colleges and universities. In addition, course requirements are extremely rigid and leave little room for reflection or thinking. Despite the educational aim of nurturing students for critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning and problem solving skills through a liberal arts education, secondary education and the college admissions system constitute serious obstacles. Every teacher, administrator, and policy maker interviewed stressed that a liberal arts education is a wonderful thing, but there are many barriers to putting it into practice. Furthermore, Chinese parents are now more willing than ever to invest in their children's education for professional or specialized education, and do not really care about whole person education. Many of them stated that the college admissions testing system also needs

reform so high school students will enter college prepared to think critically, not just memorize test material. As a senior professor from Fudan stated, in order to get good results in the national college examination, many high schools do not spend much time on training for problem solving and critical thinking but on preparing students for standardized testing.

As already noted, the contemporary Chinese secondary system usually divides its curriculum into the humanities (Wen Ke) and science (Li Ke). Thus, university students tend to select liberal arts courses related to their high school interests. High school students spend most of their time studying to get high scores on the national college entrance examination. Most high school students become excellent memorizers but know little about teamwork, class presentation, problem solving, creativity, and innovative thinking. Class lectures and memorization have dominated class teaching. Examination papers are based mostly on lecture content and the textbook. Students are not encouraged to think creatively or to reflect and interact with teachers. Many students eventually either cease to think independently or are afraid to be critical. Many teachers try to balance the tension between analysis, innovation, and transmission pedagogy, but the examination system still dominates.

Some provincial level educational authorities, for instance, Shanghai, Beijing and Zhejiang, have decided to admit college students based on several criteria by 2013 (MoE, 2012). For example, college admissions test scores, high school GPA, social service performance, special talents, personal statements, and recommendations. High schools also began new trials and experiments on curricula development with new textbooks, new teaching and learning methods. They also began to adopt student-centered and integrated learning processes in their schools. Mohrman, Shi and Li (2012) find “passing the entrance exam with high scores to be the motivation for many students in the secondary school. The exam-oriented system

misappropriates students' time, constrains their interests and creativity, and even impacts their overall physical and psychological development” (p. 42).

Despite increases in college places since 1997, spaces in higher educational institutions are not sufficient to accommodate the number of current applicants. To be admitted to college, high school students must pass the rigid and highly selective national college entrance examination with high scores. Consequently, students and faculty in high schools focus on test scores by traditional transmission and memorization pedagogy. Rarely is there discussion about critical thinking, analysis skills, social service, and moral integration. While many educators are trying to reform the national examination system, borrowing from the US college entrance admission structure, the single national college entrance examination system still dominates the entire nation.

The Chinese government and the Ministry of Education in 2003 published a document on New Curriculum Reform to improve the quality of secondary education, considering such reforms as student-based learning, service learning, and integrated learning. The New Reform aimed to foster capabilities such as creativity, critical thinking, innovation, self-expression, service, engagement, inquiry skill, and problem solving. The Reform also encouraged schools and teachers to employ a more student-centered approach. Educators were also asked to replace the traditional transmission, teacher-centered, examination-oriented pedagogy with the development of the whole person. Nevertheless, high schools and higher school teachers still give test scores top priority. In the past two decades, one of the most common criticisms of the Chinese educational system has been the lack of creativity, critical thinking, and moral reasoning. The testing and test results to measure education quality have caused a negative impact on social, economic and political development as the entire nation is oriented toward the national college

entrance examination. Many faculty members interviewed in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU suggested adopting the US model of college entrance examination. However, administrators in these institutions and policy makers from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal disagreed with their views.

A senior officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government claimed that if the Chinese higher education institutions follow the USA model to admit college students, it will cause serious problems about credibility and education quality. Chinese universities are not ready for this reform. A professor from Shanghai Jiaotong also mentioned that since the system in China is not mature when compared to the US model and its education system, the current practice of college entrance examination system is still the best way to go in China. Although some faculty members and administrators also suggested that education should train talent with creative and critical thinking, others insisted that there must be a secondary school curriculum reform instead of merely focusing on the reform of college curriculum and education. Hence, in the era of expansion and massification, the college entrance examination is still dominant in the Chinese educational system and will directly make an impact on Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU's effort to cultivate students with critical thinking and creativity. If the national college entrance examination system does not change, as some interviewees pointed out, a large number of students will not have the opportunity to study the liberal arts.

### **Spiritual Development in the Context of Liberal Arts Education**

Many interviewees discussed the spiritual dimension of their universities as a key part of liberal arts education and the promotion of spiritual civilization is essential for contemporary Chinese society. They thought that spiritual integration through the liberal arts can enrich

education, society, and personal development and personality. The spiritual growth of students can positively affect their education and enable them to become responsible citizens, and extend their concern to other aspects, such as family, society, environment, and foster a spirit of respect for human life. The attitude of faculty members toward spirituality at Fudan is more positive, perhaps because Fudan has a history related to religious background and humanities. As a professor from Fudan pointed out, spirituality in education challenges teachers to follow a new paradigm of thinking or a new awareness of their personal professional development, thinking, values, beliefs, and daily experiences. Interviewees from Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU who have overseas educational backgrounds value spirituality as a means to nurture students' full development and integration as a whole person, and that spirituality should not be equated with religion. However, the political situation, the educational system, and society at large are not willing to accept spirituality as important in education and in student development through a liberal arts education. Spiritual search and fulfillment are simply not topics of interest in contemporary Chinese culture, as several interviewees stated.

Some interviewed faculty members from Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU are also indifferent about spirituality courses. The proportions are substantially different in China from what I have encountered here in the States. For Chinese faculty members, although spirituality is a Western cultural term, it does have elements from which Chinese people can learn. However, administrators from Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU are more negative about spirituality because of their political stand. Policy makers from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government are the most opposed to the idea of spirituality because many of them follow strictly the teachings of the Chinese Communist Party. These policy makers confuse spirituality in liberal arts education with religion that is forbidden in the schools. While the Chinese

Communist Party is relatively tolerant to religious groups, the university is still a forbidden city in regard to these issues. Although many interviewees mentioned the importance of spiritual development, this is related to a Confucian, not Western spirituality. At Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU, courses on spiritual formation are rare. None of these three universities offer courses or programs on spirituality, except for a few courses on Daoism, the Bible, the history of Christianity, or Buddhist studies. However, these courses do not engage the deeper dimensions of spirituality, according to a professor from ECNU who teaches Daoism. The obvious reason for not offering courses on spirituality is because it is prohibited by the Chinese government and the university administration. Due to the social, political, cultural influences, and the rise of secularization, many faculty members, administrators and policy makers interviewed do not see the value of spirituality for life-long education in colleges and universities. However, they do agree that universities need to think about the spiritual development of their students.

Several interviewees stated because corruption and moral decline are prevalent across the country, and because the legal system is barely accountable, spirituality can help people to become good citizens. Nevertheless, if the mentality of the Chinese Communist Party and government towards religion and spirituality do not change, it is unlikely that Chinese colleges and universities will offer spirituality in education as freely as their counterparts in the USA. A senior administrator in Fudan stated that student engagement in spiritual conversation can be a good opportunity to understand the self, others and the world because many Chinese youth feel empty and search for a deep meaning in life. Contemporary Chinese youth have little concern for social commitment. There is a great void in the lives of many youth.

Many Chinese youths are still searching for the meaning of life (Wiest, 2002). What is the purpose of life? What is the direction of future? Who am I and where am I going? And how does my spirituality shape my world view? A few interviewed faculty members pointed that spiritual development enables students to engage in a profound search for meaning and self-discovery and to find the answers to the above questions. These questions also encourage students' self-reflection, and value clarification. Students can continue to inquire about their identity, values, and vocations and become creative and innovative critical thinkers. Several faculty members and administrators agreed that their institutions need to face the challenge that spiritual dimension in Chinese culture and tradition has been ignored and they must take up their tradition actively and reflectively to bring them into dialogue between tradition, spirituality and meaning through liberal arts education.

The analysis shows that, in general, interviewed faculty members, administrators and policy makers in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU do not consider spirituality an integral aspect of liberal arts education for student development as it is in the Western liberal arts tradition. This study also shows that faculty and administrators lack sufficient enthusiasm to get involved with courses related to spirituality, although it is a common and popular topic in the Western liberal arts tradition. Chickering (2006) wrote that rational analysis, creativity, and scientific research should be balanced with effective authenticity and spiritual growth. Based on the interview, faculty members, administrators, and policy maker at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU, and the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government lack understanding on this issue for social, political, cultural, and historical reasons. Two main dilemmas face Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU according to interviewed faculty members. First, they must come to realize in one way or another the potential importance of spirituality in liberal arts education

for cultivating students as whole persons who find meaning in life, become a critical and reflective thinker and innovator. The second dilemma stems from the cultural and political context that does not openly welcome issues on spirituality on campus.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed varied factors that have affected and will affect the development of students and the implementation of liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU universities. Each factor plays an important role in changing the results of education as well as providing the educators, faculty members, and policy makers with a sense of the context that would help to evaluate the situation for a more efficient outcome of liberal arts education. Contemporary youth struggle to determine who they are and who they want to become, while at the same time experiencing major changes in the development of their life and society. Although Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU have all begun a liberal arts education program, the context and nature of the higher educational system and the vision of each institution are still key factors that determine the success of the implementation of liberal arts education. The general conclusion from my analyses is that although all interviewees are aware of the importance of cultivating students with critical thinking, creativity, innovative skills, moral reasoning, and spiritual engagement, the actual practice and implementation are varied and depend on a number of factors. In theory, faculty members, administrators, and policy makers began to take a personal interest in the intellectual, affective, moral, and spiritual development of every student, and help each one to develop a sense of self-worth and to become a responsible individual within the community. As an officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government pointed out, in order to meet the growing demand of cultivating students with integration through liberal arts education, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China need to have



an in-depth understanding of the various factors that contribute to the fruitful outcome of a liberal arts education.

Contemporary scholars argue that although professional education is useful, it is insufficient because technical training can be used for good or for ill (Li, 2006). By contrast, a liberal arts education seeks the formation of the whole person by examining life's important questions (Flannery & Newstad, 1998). Because of the Chinese government's central authority, university curriculum reformation and development are still under strict control by the Ministry of Education. As Li (2006) has observed, the institutionalization of liberal arts education in China reflects a shift from the Soviet model to a market economy and innovation-driven society. A goal to build world-class universities and modernize China through science and technology bring all their forces together, and reveals that liberal arts education reform is linked with the goal to build a stronger nation and to be in line with the international standards and global development that Chinese intellectuals and government leaders have been seeking since the past century. As Zhang (2012) has argued compellingly, liberal arts education in China is also influenced by political purposes of Chinese government, and differs from the Western tradition of liberal arts education. The culture, the social structure and the different factors influence educational movements and direction as is the case in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU that are different in type but have come to share a similar goal and philosophy of liberal arts education to cultivate students with critical thinking, creativity, innovative skills, and moral reasoning, but there is still a long way to travel before the goal is achieved. Having analyzed some key themes of interview findings, the next chapter concludes this dissertation.

**Overview**

Stages of development in higher education in modern China mark a series of influences corresponding to academic models in Japan, Europe and America. The Japanese model predominated from the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. From 1911, however, to the early 1940's the great impact on Chinese universities was from academic models in Europe and America. The founding of New China in 1949 initiated a period when the Chinese Communist Party held sway over higher education, and based on the Soviet Union model a reorganization of the colleges and universities emerged in China.

This dissertation provides the academic and historical context for an understanding of the current status of liberal arts education in Chinese universities, particularly in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU in Shanghai. The current thinking on liberal arts education among selected faculty members, administrators and policy makers in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU and the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government is presented in this study. Interviewed were participants from various disciplines in these three top universities with different categories (research-comprehensive oriented, science-technology oriented and teacher education oriented) in Shanghai. While these three universities represent the major categories of Chinese universities and their liberal arts development, this study does not intend to generalize on the development and implementation of liberal arts education in other Chinese universities because there is no single norm and each institution implements it in various ways.

The interviewed faculty members, administrators and policy makers generally pointed out four major factors in their institutions essential to the success of liberal arts education: curriculum development, critical thinking, moral reasoning and spirituality. This concluding

chapter provides the current thinking and development of liberal arts education in the three purposive sample study universities, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, and a broad view of the academic and extracurricular structures. The three purposive sample study universities were examined for their liberal arts education program through policy making, curriculum and teaching plan reform, teacher's role, demand of social needs, and the challenges of implementation. Because each school is different in its academic, social, cultural and historical context, their achievement in liberal arts education will be determined by various factors. Although many colleges and universities in China have adopted some form of liberal arts education in the last two decades, three purposive sample study universities and some interviews with policy makers, senior administrators, faculty members and students for this study convince me that it is impossible to formulate a general, common model of liberal arts education in China. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future study.

### **Current Developments**

Education in China is considered essential to social and national development. What takes place in colleges and universities impacts the existence of future generations of leaders in China with creativity, critical thinking, innovative skills and moral reasoning. The Chinese government issued a document "Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)" as a concrete way to enhance creativity and critical thinking through higher education, in particular and notably through liberal arts education. Contemporary Chinese educators and policy makers understand that liberal arts education is an important academic program to educate students to be holistic persons who are socially, spiritually, morally and intellectually integrated. The purpose of traditional Confucian education was to nurture students active in society, to become morally upright and politically mature

individuals and sage leaders of the country. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese educational system tried to learn from Western countries. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Japanese model of education was adapted by Chinese intellectuals, and the American model during the Chinese Republican era (1911-1949) was the basis of what is thought to be the best period in the development of liberal arts education (Chen, 2008).

The Soviet Union model dominated the entire Chinese educational system in the early 1950s with a focus on specialized education for industrial development. When China began its own economic reform and open door policy in the 1980s, the educational system was responsible for training high-level human resources, for generating new knowledge, and for promoting economic development. As Mohrman, Shi and Li (2012) stated, the Chinese higher educational system has three major goals: economic, political and cultural. In the middle of the 1990s, with the expansion of college student enrollment, Chinese higher education entered an era of increased number of universities with an enrollment of 27 million college students (MoE, 2012). The Chinese government and the Ministry of Education, aware that the quality of students must keep pace with economic development, initiated Cultural Quality education in 1995 to improve the quality of students. Eventually, universities in China began liberal arts education programs in institutions across the country. The “Middle and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)” manifested the goal to expand liberal arts education at the college level throughout the country.

Historically, higher education in the United States remains as the largest system to educate students with critical thinking (Peterson, 2012). In China the understanding of liberal arts has yet to develop as a program to educate the whole person. In Chinese universities and among policy makers there is vagueness in regard to many factors. Most Chinese educators,

administrators, and policy makers partially understand that liberal arts can help cultivate students with critical thinking, creativity, and innovative skill. They make an effort through course work to learn from the US model but what they have acquired is superficial knowledge. They may learn, for example, about the structure, but never learn about the heart and spirit of liberal arts. They need to ask themselves certain basic questions. Are they fully and resolutely involved in liberal arts education even to communicating its spirit to students? Are they consciously concerned about developing in each student the whole person? Without serious contemplation of these fundamental questions, liberal arts programs in Chinese universities to educate the whole person with creativity, critical thinking, moral reasoning, and innovation skills will remain wishful thinking.

The revival of some interest in liberal arts education in the mid-1990s in China has demonstrated that the government and the universities have begun to realize that the current curricula, with their focus only on professional training and narrowly specialized education and professional training surely do help students compete in a globalized economy, but they are only part of what students need to compete. The rest is the self-conscious integration that critical thinking provides along with the broadened intellectual horizon innovative thinking produces. Liberal arts, they are learning, leads to students developing not only a broad general knowledge or vocational training but also critical skills and innovative thinking. The reemergence of liberal arts education is a result of the great need for educating well-rounded citizens to build upon China's traditional classical knowledge. Modern liberal arts education is a necessary supplement to national, social and economic development and for building a harmonious society. Liberal arts education has an economic, political, social, and cultural mission in contemporary China (Gan, 2006). This research study shows that Chinese policy makers and educators in the past fifteen

years have come to realize the importance of liberal arts education in the higher educational system for well-balanced education and for critical thinking. Chinese leaders are now concerned that the current educational emphasis on specialization, narrow technical expertise, memorization, and lecture pedagogy will fail to produce college graduates with the creativity and cognitive complexity needed for national advancement in a global context. Small-scale experimental faculties of liberal arts are beginning to appear at the top universities in China. However, these efforts are at an early stage, poorly segmented with career paths, and inconsistently promoted in government policy.

Personal, social, and national development merge in the study of liberal arts as a powerful combination that has the potential to reform Chinese higher education. The need for change is especially pressing because of the rapid transition from elite to mass higher education in China. The emergence of liberal arts education is a breakthrough to enhance the educational development with better quality outcome. China struggles to build world-class research universities and to develop a higher educational system of international stature. Billions of dollars have been invested to achieve these goals. The Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU must now shift from quantity to quality in educating students, and from focusing on infrastructure building to concentrating on student learning and integral development. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU desire to enhance the quality of service and education for students, but because of the current control of the higher educational system and the priorities of the central government and Ministry of Education, liberal arts education in these institutes is far from the required status.

## **The Philosophy of Culture in Liberal Arts Education**

Culture, broadly speaking, refers to the patterns of behavior that are acquired by learning and examples not programmed through instinct. Culture includes deeper forces of motivations and values; it is not just intellectual assent but heart and mind assent. Edward Tylor (1871) defined culture as "... that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (p. 1) . According to Tylor, two basic concepts of culture can be distinguished: the "traditional concept of culture" and the "enlarged concept of culture." The traditional concept of culture mainly includes the fine arts, philosophy and spiritual manifestations (religions). The enlarged concept of culture comprises all forms of human manifestations of social, material and also spiritual culture encompassing art and literature and the human conditions of life in general.

Culture is the particular way in which people relate to nature, to other people, and to the sacred. What we mean by culture is the totality of people's lives in searching for their identity. Culture is passed down from generation to generation and there is always tension between the old and new, between the continuities of tradition and the discontinuities of different modes of behavior and meaning. To understand the condition of culture will help to understand that liberal arts education is viewed as a part of culture in China, as a form of cultural activity. It is historically and socially conditioned; it cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of human socio-cultural practices. In another words, human life is always a quest for meaning and fulfillment in culture and history. The ultimate goal of liberal arts education, as Huang (2006) states, is the formation of human beings in an intercultural context.

Culture is an instrument for understanding human life in its diverse forms and conditions. Being re-embodied into the various languages of culture, art, and tradition, liberal arts education transforms not only the culture creatively by judging and illuminating; it can also be illumined in terms of various multiple cultures. Indeed, Chinese spirituality and culture, like Daoism and Confucianism, have great influence on the value and meaning of life, and on the value of critical thinking and creativity through education. In the Great Learning, it says, “the way of human being is to self-cultivation, and eventually reaches the ultimate goodness and holiness” (Great Learning, 1). Thus, in the dialogue with the culture, people would find the value, hope and meaning of their being through self-cultivation. Human beings’ encounter with different cultures and traditions and engagement in studies of cultures will help them to appreciate the values of cultures, and to find meanings from other cultural and spiritual perspectives and backgrounds. The new global orientation in various cultures and anthropologies gives people opportunities and opens new ideas for cultural dialogue, especially on how to conceive inculturation in other cultures, especially the culture of liberal arts education.

Contemporary Chinese society and its culture are more and more materialistic and utilitarian oriented, and the Chinese educational system is likewise influenced by cultural and spiritual nihilism (Yang, 2012). Chinese higher education needs to realize that a living exchange is fostered between the education and the diverse cultures of people. In this light, an understanding of culture, custom, and tradition through the study of culture can help educate students with creativity, critical thinking, moral reasoning, social responsibility and spiritual commitment. Yet, a challenge remains: how is liberal arts education related in different cultures, e.g., East and West? How do Chinese policy makers, administrators and faculty members in higher education institutions educate the whole person to their understanding through liberal arts?



How do Chinese higher educational institutions integrate politics, literature, economics, aesthetics, etc, into a meaningful whole through liberal arts education in their own culture? What can Chinese culture, influenced by Confucianism, bring to Chinese higher education in its present rapid transition? Can Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU help people to an understanding of life and graduate students with critical thinking and creativity through its university culture? The idea of culture as an influence to cultivate Chinese students with critical thinking through liberal arts education or whether Chinese culture alone can educate students to be critical thinkers, is for future deliberation. Liberal arts needs to be expressed through Chinese culture or somehow integrated with the culture or draw from its culture. The importance of Chinese culture as an added element in educating students to be critical thinkers with creativity, innovative skills, moral reasoning and spirituality cannot be underestimated by policy makers, administrators and faculty member at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and East China Normal Universities, as well as the Chinese higher education system.

As some interviewees noted, culture denotes a historically transmitted pattern of way of life embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions which students communicate, perpetuate, influencing the development of their knowledge and their attitude toward life. The interviewees also emphasized the impact of Chinese traditional culture that specifies the set of values and meanings by which people lead their lives. Chinese traditional culture was an attempt to bring the liberal arts education into living dialogue with modern Chinese higher education, to make sense of critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills and moral reasoning relevant to men and women who are from different backgrounds. For some people, Chinese higher education in the last two decades changed too fast and too much, while for others the change was too slow and too little. Change always means loss or gain. What, then, is the meaning of the

change in the liberal arts education for Chinese higher educational institutions today? It is not an easy answer as many faculty members, administrators and policy makers still struggle to see and digest the implications of the liberal arts education for Chinese students. Likewise, the historical transition in American liberal arts education of the last few decades has greatly changed America's social, political, cultural and economic life. Many contemporary American higher educational institutions focus more on research and world-class ranking than teaching and educating a whole person.

As China continues its economic reform and building world-class universities, a remarkable transformation has occurred in the Chinese higher educational system and the culture in the last two decades. Those interviewed mentioned that they viewed the transition of Chinese higher educational institutions in the late 1990s with reluctant acceptance of the values and attitudes of liberal arts. They also found that implantation is always challenging in a culture where modernization has overwhelmed the traditional values. The fact that most of the Chinese higher educational institutions, under the influence of globalization that kept their move toward secular and utilitarianism, is perhaps one of the major challenges of the massive process of implementing liberal arts education. The move from specialized education to liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU was interpreted by most interviewed as hopeful, fulfilling long dreams of educating future leaders with critical thinking and innovative skills and able to meet the global challenge. But in making the transition from specialized education to liberal arts education the Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU were also embracing new kinds of values which would eventually prove to be not fully compatible with their educational goal under the influence of utilitarianism and materialism. According to Tong (2012), "culturally speaking, Chinese higher education institution's identity raises profound questions

about its vision and mission. Does this change help Chinese university students to find direction from its cultural roots?” Hence, are Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU and other Chinese higher educational institutions ready to address this challenge?

Today globalization and internationalization have made it possible for people to enjoy more freedom than ever before which has given rise to the struggle of identity crisis. What does it mean to be Chinese students deeply rooted in their culture? It is a complicated phenomenon to understand and address without a cultural perspective. Challenges for Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU and other Chinese higher educational institutions may be: How can they adapt to a multi-cultural society, adjust to new values and learn a new culture in liberal arts education? How can they retain their spirituality as part of the educational community and relate to the value of liberal arts education?

The process of change of culture includes a crisis of identity. Chinese universities today need to begin a search for their true but new identity in light of the wisdom of culture. Individuals are deeply conditioned (though not fully determined) by their context. Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU are going through a historical moment of cultural studies, looking at the values and ideas which influence people's lives and at the context of symbols, institutions, and experiences, all of which form a new identity in and through an educational and cultural critique and reflection in a contemporary changing community. While Chinese universities and the Ministry of Education repeatedly emphasize Chinese culture (*wenhua sushu jiaoyu*: cultural quality education and Chinese heritage), and educate Chinese students as whole persons through liberal arts education, they must also lead them to go beyond China's borders to experience a broad spectrum of cultures or ideas making them aware of other models of political, social and cultural life (Peterson, 2012).

On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Tsinghua University in 2011, the Chinese president Hu stated that “in order to raise the quality of higher education, we must energetically advance the work of cultural transition and cultural creation, and let higher education play the role of an important vehicle to carry forward the fine tradition of the Chinese culture and as an important source of ideals and thoughts” (Hu, 2011). Hence, there is a need to balance the relationship between the scientific culture and humanistic culture, the academic culture and the utilitarian culture, personal culture and communal culture, and the national culture and international culture when Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, as well as other Chinese higher education institutions, implement programs of liberal arts education. Hu (2011) stated that “in order to raise the quality of higher education, we must energetically advance the work of cultural transition and cultural creation, and let higher education play the role of an important vehicle to carry forward the fine traditions of the Chinese culture and important sources of ideals and thoughts.”

### **Challenges to Liberal arts Education in China**

#### **The roles of teachers in the development of liberal arts education**

Numerous studies show that the development of liberal arts education in China relates mostly to curricula reform. In some universities there are more than 300 liberal arts courses in the curriculum (Gan, 2012). Because the Ministry of Education, since the middle of the 1990s, requires every university in China to establish the Cultural Education Program, universities hastened to establish a program in the model of Harvard or Yale College to fulfill the requirement; but many of them do not truly bear the spirit of liberal arts education. Many interviewed mentioned that liberal arts education or general education has become a negative

term in Chinese universities. Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU do not provide any significant programs with students-centered curricular development and creative pedagogy. Faculty members still practice and teach by transmission pedagogy or rote learning and they narrowly focus on curriculum. Students are taught to memorize without any emphasis on analysis, critical thinking, social awareness and moral reasoning.

According to interviewees, many faculty members experienced difficulties and challenges in implementing liberal arts courses for two reasons: first, it is easier for them to teach major courses in their discipline with which they are familiar; second, teaching major courses is a help in their own research, and they find no benefit teaching a liberal arts course. While all schools and departments at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU mobilized (not actually carried out in some contexts according to some interviewees) faculty members to engage in liberal arts courses, and faculty members expressed support for liberal arts programs, many institutions could not put the program into practice. Without faculty members and administrators' active participation, understanding and commitment to liberal arts education at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, as well as in other higher education institutions, actual liberal arts courses in the curriculum will not be implemented. "Education is the best hope for revitalizing the Chinese nation, and the hope for revitalizing education lies with teachers," according to Chinese policy makers (Ashmore & Cao, 1997). Without faculty member's creative participation in liberal arts education and student-centered teaching, a liberal arts program is unlikely to succeed.

Mohrman (2006) pointed out that any material can be taught in a way that is liberally educating. While she demonstrated with a pedagogical problem, she illustrated the importance of the active role of teachers in implementing liberal arts education. Cardinal John Henry Newman (1996) stated that the university is a place that should provide liberal learning in which

a teacher should be a great guide for students rather than vocational or professional instruction. Thus, teachers in Chinese higher education system, and Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU in particular, need to modify their role in order to guide each student “to be a good citizen and a man of civilization...the living source of personal conscience” (Maritain, 1971, p. 16). In modern Chinese society, liberal arts education is especially necessary because it prepares people to deal with problems which confront all members of a democratic society, as many interviewees pointed out.

In the last decade, student affairs is getting more attention in China. Chinese higher education institutions now are concerned about their progress in the development of students not only academically but also socially. Student affairs personnel deal with activities related to whole person development, for example, student participation in organizations, programs, social service, and curriculum. The director of student affairs also is involved with daily counseling, extra-curricular activities, psychological counseling, career counseling, and financial aid. In the last few years, the enrollment in Chinese college and university students has reached 27 million. Consequently, the director of student affairs influences a vast number of students in their years of learning and development. The Office of Student Affairs in Chinese universities focusing on ideological and political education, treating students not as adults, but through control and management teach them to serve the state effectively. More faculty members and administrators, however, are open to a comprehensive development of students as socially, spiritually, morally and intellectually integrated citizens. Chinese higher education institutions need to develop their own culturally relevant courses and activities in student affairs while they learn from the US model and tradition, and to find more creative ways to strengthen and student affairs in practice.

Therefore, in addition to curriculum reform, student affairs has a greater contribution to liberal arts education in higher education institutions.

### **Employment and economic concern**

Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU offer liberal arts courses outside students' major field of concentration. However, because of concern about finding employment since large numbers of graduates are unemployed or underemployed and the challenge of the market economy, students give greater attention to their major area of study and only fulfill the requirement in liberal arts courses. Employment competition, utilitarianism, and the gap between the rich and the poor are challenges that all Chinese college students face today. Mohrman (2003) stated that the problem of finding a good job has been exacerbated by the rapidly increased number of institutions of higher education resulting in more graduates. Peterson (2012) states that "students' choices about academic programs are influenced substantially by the economic marketplace and perceived prospects of employment" as elsewhere in the world (p. 232). The labor market has been the top focus for students, parents, and universities. With rapid expansion, the Chinese higher educational system produces millions of undergraduate and graduate students each year, which has increased unemployment among college students. When choosing their field of concentration, most students and parents focus on the labor market and possible opportunities of employment and favor a specialized field to obtain relevant knowledge and skills. Consequently, students neglect liberal arts education and the traditional societal role of universities is lost. It is noteworthy that Altbach (2009) states that higher educational institutions are to be responsible for public enlightenment, yet they react to pressures from the labor market.

Higher educational institutions in China have undergone a substantial transformation in the last two decades and moved increasingly toward a utilitarian-oriented business model for

profit. The tension between cultural, social and economic demands in higher educational institutions now affects the institution and individuals. Higher educational institutions and intellectuals have played important roles in social, cultural and moral developments in the past centuries in China, but today the labor market needs, employment demands, and the “commercialization” of institutions of higher learning significantly impacts the social mission of universities, including Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, and their priority to educate students as whole persons. Technically, in addition to course in their major fields, students at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU are required to take a significant part of undergraduate courses in cultural quality education (or liberal arts education) and military sports courses. However, according to participants, many students do not believe that these courses will affect their marks nor improve chances for employment and, therefore, are not serious about them. Even some interviewed faculty members and administrators do not consider liberal arts courses relevant and the departments offering the courses do so just to fulfill the requirement of the university.

### **Professional ethics in Chinese universities**

Many interviewed stated that professional ethics is one of the significant challenges to Chinese higher educational institutions, including Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU. The most challenging issue that the Chinese society and government face is corruption (Yan, 2011) Corruption also impacts the academic community. According to many faculty members interviewed, corruption affects not only college students and young teachers but also professors, university presidents, and respected academicians. Academic corruption encompasses fraud, plagiarism, cheating, favoritism, project monopolization, obtaining scientific research projects or rewards by illegal means, deliberately hiding academic scandals and covering up academic



corruption by the universities or research institutions, misuse of research grants and bribery for publication in academic journals either by the individual or the institution (Ren, 2012). Many faculty members are eager to take administrative positions whenever there is an opportunity because this means more power, rewards, and money. As the system is not transparent, decisions about awards, promotions, and research funding are oftentimes determined merely by power and personal relationships rather than by quality and competence; this has become a systemic and institutional issue more than an individual one (Han, 2012).

Since the 1990s, academic corruption has had an impact on the Chinese higher educational system, as well as on Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU in particular, as an officer from the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government stated. Reasons behind the academic corruption are varied. For instance, a weak academic management system, lack of transparency, the influence of bureaucratic corruption, and lack of personal integrity. The significant loss of high ethical standards in Chinese higher educational institutions has lowered many people's confidence in educating graduates with professional ethics and moral reasoning (Yang, 2012). Although the Ministry of Education launched and implemented a new policy entitled *Several opinions on strengthening the construction of academic ethics* in 2002 (MoE, 2002), academic issues of corruption have not decreased. In the last two decades, Chinese higher education has moved toward out pacing US higher education models and aims to build world-class research universities; but the values and ideas of higher education are not embedded in the Chinese academic environment. The latest MoE document in 2009 entitled '*Notice on seriously dealing with academic misconduct in higher education institutions*' further points out that the seriousness of academic corruption threatens to hinder the quality of higher education and the development of well-rounded graduates. But the effect of academic corruption on Fudan,

Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU as well as on the entire Chinese higher educational system remains serious. The culture of relationships (Guan Xi), personal interests and an environment of societal corruption among the government officers need to be changed or eliminated for the sake of higher education by means of a transparent monitoring system and accountability.

### **Future Trends**

The development of Chinese higher education in the last few decades reflects a transition from the specialized education of the former Soviet model under the planned economy policy (1949-1995) to general education (liberal arts education) under the market economy and globalization (1995-present). The rise of the Chinese higher educational system in general, at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU in particular, has shown that the development and reforms of liberal arts are closely related to the central government's and the MoE's goal of building a powerful educated nation and world-class universities that cultivate students with critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills who can be competitive global citizens. Liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU and other Chinese universities bears a political and social mission (Zhang, 2012). In the last few decades, however, Chinese society at large and the higher educational system in particular are driven rapidly toward a culture of utilitarianism and materialism as repeatedly warned by many educational leaders and scholars (Yang, 2012). The Chinese universities, as well as Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU in particular, must develop the core ideas of the university, as Huang (2010) emphasized that a university is an academic community with autonomy and academic freedom to take good care of their students.

Although Confucian cultural traditions have some similarities with the idea of liberal arts education in a Western concept, such as the development of the whole person, the cultivation of people's morality and personality, and educating reflective citizens, Chinese tradition has deteriorated due to a great impact of Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and market economy development (1978-present). Hence, there is a great need of organizational and cultural change which should be based on the founding mission at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU. Kuh and Whitt (2000) define university culture as "the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus" (p. 162). Thus, the success of higher education in China and at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU in particular is largely dependent on the transformation from a culture of utilitarianism to that of liberal arts education, and to ensure that the quality assurance system in higher education is accountable to its stakeholders.

Although Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU are engaged in liberal arts education at different stages, they have focused mainly on the reorganization of courses but have not focused on the content or quality of the courses. They also did not evaluate the possible result of implementation of a liberal arts education in their own institutions. Liberal arts education is not just curriculum reform or adding some new courses. It is the result of educational philosophy, belief, values, rituals and normative positions (Ratcliff, 1997). Each of these three universities needs to consider their institutional culture regarding liberal arts education. They need to consider how they, as well as other Chinese universities, continue their founding mission and vision to cultivate a whole person with critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning, innovative skills and spiritual commitment (or spiritual civilization in the Chinese official term). During the

interview, interviewees mentioned some popular terms such as “innovative skills, responsibility and moral reasoning, critical thinking and independent thinkers” in regard to liberal arts education development, but their implementation faces many obstacles.

Chinese higher education institutions in general and Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU in particular are at a crossroad in which mass building of universities, reform of the curriculum, building world-class research universities, doing cutting-edge research, investing billions of dollars for new buildings, engaging in international competition, and other activities are interrelated. The question arises: Can Chinese universities, and in particular, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, accomplish these goals at the same time? If not, what is their priority for education? In 2010, the MoE drafted the “Outline of China’s National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)” stated that the general goal of education is to promote the whole development of students. But this can come about only if the Ministry of Education, all higher educational institutions and governments at different levels move together toward a philosophy of educating whole and balanced people who are socially, critically, morally, spiritually integrated, and with innovative and analytical skills. Then, and only then, can the implementation of liberal arts education be solidly established. After three decades of economic reform and development, the Chinese government, the Chinese society and many ordinary people now realize that China’s modernization development and competition with global partners requires college and university graduates who are well-rounded. China’s emphasis on the quality of higher education has opened the possibility of change in personal development.

Overall, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, as well as other Chinese universities, need to consider carefully two fundamental questions regarding their educational philosophy. What is

it to be a fully developed human person through education? What is the responsibility of higher educational institutions to this process and what is their basis of moral guidance? As the Chinese higher educational system moves from elite to mass education, universities need to find effective ways to adjust their educational goals to cultivate a new generation of students with critical thinking, creativity, analytic and innovative skills, moral responsibility and spiritual engagement. A well-integrated interrelationship between liberal arts education, specialization, professional education, whole-person development and market demands will allow Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU and other Chinese universities to educate more qualified global citizens. As Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU become more internationalized and globalized through educational exchanges, Western values, systems, and practices in higher education will bring new challenges, opportunities and advantages. While remaining rooted in their own cultural context and values, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU and other Chinese universities need new strategies to enhance their interaction and exchange with the Western academic culture, values and norms.

A crucial challenge to higher educational institutions will be an orientation to be more secularist and commercial which will significantly affect the goal of higher education (Yang, 2012). If Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU, and other Chinese universities are to achieve the goal of cultivating a whole person by means of liberal arts education and to educate future leaders with moral responsibility, it is imperative that they develop a serious spiritual renewal. Indeed, spirituality is one of the most essential values that has been neglected but is urgently needed by Chinese society and the higher educational system (Huang, 2010). Hayhoe (2010) points out that truth, rightness and authenticity are more critical and important than knowledge and technology transmission. Although Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU and other higher education institutions are expected to contribute significantly to development of the local and

national economies and the market and likewise to become world-class universities, the importance of cultivating fully developed human beings through liberal arts education and transformation from a culture based on ranking to a culture based on quality should not be underestimated. The move to liberal arts education at Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU and other universities should not be just an effort to be in step with an international orientation toward liberal arts. It has to be a serious undertaking that is thoroughly integrated in the mission of each university and the Chinese tradition. Otherwise, there is small hope that the movement will be meaningful.

In Ma Xiangbo's view, the purpose of education is not only to shape a person who can speak or do things but also to form a person who seeks the ultimate meaning and value of life in various perspectives of culture, science, morality, spirituality, emotion, and intellectuality (Ma, 1912, 1996). Tu (1998) believes that learning from Chinese classics can help to nurture the social responsibility and spiritual development of students. Although China has progressed rapidly in educational reform in the last decades, it is still far from implementing a type of learning that absorbs the best from traditional Chinese culture and that presents the spiritual values of the West. The Western liberal arts education model may not be China's desirable goal, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ENCU, as well as the entire Chinese education system instead should bring to bear China's liberal arts education tradition from its history of arts, philosophy, religion, poetry, literature, critical thinking, politics and Confucianism.

Despite the lack of institutional autonomy, the presence of disregard for humanism, and a preponderance of materialism and utilitarianism in educational goals, it can be said that higher educational reform has revived liberal arts education in some elite institutions to educate more students with critical thinking, creativity, innovative skills, moral reasoning and balanced

development. In Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU government policy, the educational system, indifference of faculty members and market demands continue to impact the implementation of liberal arts education. Many other universities in China have already started programs or pilot experiments. Despite the emergence of liberal arts education in China as a new phenomenon, it has not had a critical impact on higher education. The expansion of liberal arts education in the Chinese educational system is still in its infancy and experimental stage.

Moreover, Fudan, Shanghai Jiatong and ECNU, as well as the higher educational system, need to revisit the purpose of education which was clearly stated in the Great Learning: “to let one’s inborn virtue shine forth, to renew the people, and to rest in the highest good.” To achieve the highest good, teachers serve as cultural catalysts in transmitting moral values and principles, delivering knowledge and skills, and addressing the doubts that arise in learning. Hayhoe (2010) states that the purpose of education is always to lead in individual growth and societal development. Thus, the Chinese government leadership and university administrators have to be more accountable to the formation of their students and make the university the conscience of society. In his *Discourse Seven: Knowledge Viewed in Relation to Professional Skill*, Cardinal Newman stated that the core mission of a university should be centered on liberal arts for the education of citizens and higher education should aim at “raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind (Newman, 1907, p. 167, 177).

Hence, Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, and ECNU and other Chinese higher education institutions must continue to enhance the role of liberal arts education in nurturing future responsible global citizens with critical thinking, creativity, innovative skills and moral reasoning, and continue to emphasize the spiritual dimension of a university and its faculty members and students, and they are supposed to embody their most beautiful ideal of morality in

the society, as many interviewees pointed out. Since the era of Confucius, and particularly since the New Culture Movement in 1919, scholars, university faculty members and students are typically expected by society and by themselves to become pioneers of social reformation for common good. Huang (2010) stated that “the spirit of the university, the culture of the university, and the core values of the culture and the spirit of the university is the unlimited pursuit for freedom, truth, democracy and justice” (p. 254).

Since China has moved towards a market economy and capitalist development in the last three decades, its society and higher education system have experienced rapid change and reform. While China has numerous top universities of international prominence and has shifted from elite to mass education, these changes also have been at the cost of declining quality in undergraduate education. Much evidence suggests that specialized or professional education programs have not yet met the demands of China’s global and economic development, and that university graduates often lack leadership ability, creativity, critical and innovative thinking skills, and the capacity for moral reasoning. Curriculum reform and development are tactical decisions within the larger context of teaching and scholarship. Whatever decision is made, the content of a curriculum should conform to the university’s mission, its animating vision, and accepted standards regarding scholarship and the objectives of education. Despite tremendous progress, many good academic practices and traditions from the Nationalist period are not well embedded in the contemporary Chinese higher education system, due to various cultural, market and social factors (Jiang, 2011). China today has become one of the leading countries to produce PhD’s in the world, but the quality has also become a great concern, as Street and Matelski (2009) pointed out that “the Chinese PhD may merge as a highly skilled person, but lack of a “liberal



arts” education and critical thinking skills in particular and focus on developing or problem solving issues only for certain products” (p. 130).

Contemporary Chinese universities and policy makers have much to learn from the educational experiments with the liberal arts of the Nationalist period. At that time, due to the efforts of scholars such as Ma Xiangbo, Cai Yuanpei, Li Denghui, Mei Yiqi, Zhu Kezheng, and many others, China’s universities had considerable autonomy and built a university model that highly valued liberal arts education (Chen, 2008). In other words, Chinese universities and their higher educational system need to draw inspiration and insight from the Nationalist period, and from Confucian tradition. New developments and reforms in the Chinese higher-education system have brought great progress in expansion of access since the 1990s. In the context of a market economy and the ambition to build world-class universities, many leading Chinese colleges and universities have become more utilitarian-oriented and have overemphasized research products, university rankings, infrastructure construction, and advanced laboratories (Chen, 2008). Although the government and universities at different levels have made great efforts to promote liberal arts education, its implementation through policy reform, revision of teaching plans and curricula, and faculty involvement will continue to remain challenging (Jiang, 2011).

Under the pressure of exam-oriented education and transmission teaching methods, faculty and university administrators have been unable to embrace liberal arts education wholeheartedly. Relatively narrow professional studies still dominate the curricula of most Chinese colleges and universities. China’s advance to the world stage through science, technology and education has become of central importance to its government and universities, and a goal that the entire nation is eager to achieve. Altbach (2007) observes that the infrastructures of many

Chinese universities are more advanced than those of Western universities, yet Chinese students' comprehensive qualities, i.e., their creativity, critical thinking, moral reasoning, commitment to social service, and their sense of civic responsibility lag far behind the standard of their peers in the West. If Chinese higher education institutions just respond to the market or to economic needs while ignoring larger educational values, then they fail in their mission of education.

In general, contemporary Chinese colleges and universities emphasize research more than teaching, and focus on providing human capital for market needs. Contemporary Chinese society, educational theory, cultural values, and science are at a crossroad; social values and morality have deteriorated (Jiang, 2011). The effort of Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU's educational thought and practice, directed at the education of the whole person through liberal arts education, are still relevant. They can inspire contemporary Chinese higher education to educate citizens with creativity, critical thinking skills, the capacity for moral reasoning, and a sense of social responsibility. Universities need to develop structures and incentives to encourage continuous conversations at the intersections of the varied disciplines in the university, the academic community, and the larger society. Chinese policy makers, educational leaders, and faculty members will have to redefine the content and strategy of education in response to current and future demands.

Since 1995, "strengthening university students' cultural quality," which was advocated by the Ministry of Education in China, has become a popular slogan and the practice of Chinese universities and the Ministry of Education. Under this national guideline, the Chinese higher education system has begun curricular reform to accommodate the requirements of liberal arts education. While these new reforms and innovations have changed the Soviet model of teaching and research, many Chinese colleges and universities are still being driven by market economic

orientation, utilitarianisms and materialism and colleges and universities become market-oriented enterprises. On the one hand, Chinese intellectuals are facing significant challenges for research projects, publications and promotions for their career development. Faculty members spend more and more time in research rather than in teaching. On the other hand, liberal arts education has not merged well with the Chinese academic culture. Chinese society and the educational system in China have not identified liberal arts education in its context. Indeed, if faculty members and university administrators are not open to knowledge, morality, social responsibility, universal love, and the challenge of being men and women for and with others, the implementation and the development of the liberal arts education will be impossible in China or will be just superficial. Furthermore, the emergence of globalization and internationalization also demands that universities, educators and policy makers re-think educational aims and the idea of a university.

Based on my research, I contend that in order to develop liberal arts education program in China, the government and the Ministry of Education must establish an efficient policy to support and promote the liberal arts program. Second, the government and the MoE should reform the policy for research and development grants as an incentive to reduce the tension between the research and teaching, so that teachers will spend more time teaching creatively. Teaching should be an important component of the criteria for faculty promotion; moreover, teaching should be more than lecturing, facilitating workshops, and seminars, and it should cultivate the creativity, critical thinking, and analytical skills of students. And faculty members should be able to teach what students need to learn.

Third, it is urgent for the university to train teachers to teach classes in a more creative way. Policy makers and university administrators must help faculty members develop an acute sense of educational responsibility for its undergraduates and provide guidance about educated,

civilized, and responsible citizens should be and know in the globalized world. The leadership of each university must embody the ideals and values of education and embody the spirit of the humanities. They should not only be smart, accomplished, skillful, and expert, but also wise, mature, personable, and visionary for whole-person development. They must inspire each member of the university to develop a philosophy of life that values the liberal arts while making its best effort to become a world-class university.

Fourth, while policy making, faculty development and involvement, and curriculum development are important to the success of a liberal arts education program, the spirituality of faculty members, administrators and policy makers is also essential. A good university challenges its students to ask personal and social important questions. Without the development of the spiritual dimension of faculty members, administrators, and policy makers, it is hard to expect them to be fully accountable and responsible for the formation of students as integral persons. One cannot maintain the idea of a university. Teachers' involvement in social, leadership, accountability, and community service activity can be a manifestation of their spiritual development and quest for meaning. These do make a difference in students' development. Only when faculty members and administrators are fully engaged, can a liberal arts education be fruitful. Otherwise, the idea of liberal arts lives only in name and the higher education becomes what Harry Lewis (2006) describes as "excellence without soul."

As contemporary Chinese society and universities become more utilitarian and vocation oriented, secularization and commercialization also have weakened the mission of education, Chinese universities must remain true to the classical mission and idea of education for whole person development through the liberal arts rather than becoming vocational training centers. Educators and students should be concerned about the ultimate value of education, and

universities should enhance their tradition to influence society with their excellent cultural and spiritual elements and lead the society with their creative and constructive ideas. If so, universities will be able to show the wider society that there is more to education than degrees and titles. The liberal arts are essential to sustaining and enhancing our humanity (Lewis, 2006). Without them, education loses its values. Policy makers, educators, students and other stakeholders in the educational enterprises in China or any culture could benefit from reflecting on the role of liberal arts education.

It is imperative that policy makers and university administrators change the system of evaluation and research, so that teaching and research can be weighted equally for promotion and resource allocation. This change will encourage teacher's commitment to more student-centered teaching and to spending more time with students, leading them in reflection. Regardless of their course, teachers can be good guides for students in their development of creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and morality. They can lead their students to be aware of personal responsibility and the value of life. However, in China moral education is linked to social policies so any change will depend on political reform.

Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong and ECNU and many Chinese universities still follow the lecture-based and rote learning style and there is pressure for education to be more technically and professionally focused on concern for employment and market demands. Based on my research, I believe that the American model of liberal arts education will be more successful and acceptable by people in the next decade in China. It educates students not just in technical or professional skills but in creative thinking and innovative skills, and it provides more interdisciplinary studies to prepare students for their futures. Although Chinese students far surpass their peers in the US in math and science tests, they often lack critical thinking and

creativity. To achieve the goal of liberal arts education in Chinese universities, there are several ways to be considered. First, at the national level, the central government and the Ministry of Education must establish a national policy that mandates a liberal arts education curriculum for undergraduate students that particularly emphasizes interdisciplinary studies. Second, at the institutional level, in addition to curricular reform, universities must weight teaching and research equally when evaluating teachers' performance in promotion and grants.. Individual institutions also need to offer some incentives to encourage faculty members' commitment to liberal arts education and creative teaching rather than relying on the traditional transmission pedagogy. Third, on the personal level, the university must provide training workshops and seminars for faculty members to better understand the value and meaning of liberal arts education, and to provide strategies to teach liberal arts courses effectively and efficiently. Teachers have the key role in successfully implementing liberal arts education because they directly interact with students in and out of classrooms. It is evident that China has great need for new pedagogy and curricular reform to attain the goal of critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills through the renaissance of liberal arts education.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

This is the first study that examines the current thinking of faculty members, administrators and policy makers on liberal arts education in Fudan, Shanghai Jiaotong, ECNU and the Department of Education in Shanghai municipal government. Some key themes derived from interviews were examined and discussed. In further research the following recommendations should be considered.

First, this qualitative study has been carried out mainly through interviews and data/document analyses, a singular approach. Multiple methods would help corroborate findings from different data resources. A future study should use a mixed methodology, including survey, observation, questionnaire, interview and other quantitative methods.

Second, the data about students' thinking and views on liberal arts education was not examined in this present study and any follow up definitely should include their views on liberal arts education and its place in the curriculum. It is important to administer a survey to students and to listen to their comments on liberal arts education and to learn how aware they are of implementation of liberal arts education in their institution. My informal conversations with the students revealed that they had very different understandings about liberal arts education and their enthusiasm for liberal arts courses varied.

Third, the present study focused on faculty members, administrators and policy makers in three universities in Shanghai. Although the educational context does not vary greatly throughout China, several other regions ought to be included for a more comprehensive research, perhaps in Beijing and in lesser developed regions. This study encompassed faculty members and administrators at top research universities. A future study could investigate some non-research universities and universities at the provincial level for comparative studies.

Fourth, the Ministry of Education is granting more autonomy to individual institutions, but the entire educational system is still hierarchical. It is important that the Ministry of Education draw up a national policy with goals for education in Chinese universities and create a program for liberal arts education. Efforts beyond this present study could include a proposal to the Ministry of Education for such a program. The results from further research could be the

basis of support and serve as reason for the government to initiate the program which will do much to form future leaders with critical thinking, creativity, innovative skills, moral reasoning and social responsibility for individual and communal good.

Lastly, the concept of organizational culture and organizational change is often used to explain the development processes in higher education globally. As Chinese universities continue their reform and pursuit for the appropriate institutional framework, a study on organizational culture and change and impact on higher education would help to understand better the development of liberal arts education.



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## **Appendix A: Recruiting Email**

Dear Dr. XXX,

Thank you in advance for your attention to this email. I am a doctoral student at Boston College, conducting a dissertation research on liberal arts education in contemporary Chinese universities. To that end I would like to interview you in your convenience to address the following questions:

- Your experience regarding the liberal arts education in China
- Your motivations to implement the liberal arts education course
- Your reflections about the development of liberal arts education in China

If you would like to share your experience with me, please email me or call me at (1) 617-552-8166 in order to schedule the interview.

Attached please find a consent form and an interview guideline.

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely

You Guo Jiang, S. J.

Ph. D. Candidate

Higher Education Administration Program

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Boston College

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## **Appendix B: Consent form**

Dear Professor,

You are being invited to take part in a dissertation research conducted by Mr. You Guo Jiang, S. J. under the direction of Dr. Philip G. Altbach. I am asking you to participate because you are a faculty member (administrator or policy maker) at Shanghai Fudan University. This interview is being conducted as a part of a doctoral dissertation. The interview aims to explore the perceptions of Chinese policy makers, university faculty and administrators on liberal arts education in contemporary China. The person who is conducting the research is Mr. You Guo Jiang, S. J., a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration program, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.

### ***Purpose***

Through this study I hope to examine how do Chinese thinkers and educators (policy makers, university administrators, and professors) understand liberal arts education? And the value of the liberal arts education in educating contemporary Chinese students with critical thinking and creativity?

### ***Procedures***

The interview will occur at a place and time most convenient for you. No special preparation for the interview is required. The interview will be audio-taped with your permission, but you may request to stop recording at any time if you do not feel comfortable. Interview tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet by the researcher. Only the researcher has access to the tapes. The interview will be transcribed by the researcher and only the researcher will have access to the interview tapes and transcripts.

Your real name and other identifiable information will not be made public in any written records or publications. All records of data and reports in this study will be used only for research purposes.

### ***Risk***

To the best of my knowledge, the things you will be doing in this interview have no more risk to you than what you would experience in your daily life. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your regular daily life and academic standing.

### ***Benefits***

You will not receive any direct benefits from being a part of this research project, but I will be more than happy to share my findings with you.

### ***Costs and Compensation***

You do not have to pay to participate in this interview; the only cost to you will be your time. You will not be monetarily compensated for your participation in this research study.

### ***Participation and Withdrawal***

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to stop your participation in the research project at any time and may refuse to answer any of the questions. Your decision to stop participating will have no consequences on your academic standing and daily life.

### ***Confidentiality***

Your identifying information will not be required for the interview and will not be disclosed to any individuals and organizations. You will be assigned a pseudonym in the research study. Identifiers will not be presented in any interview transcripts, study reports,

notes or memos, as well as other related documents. The interview will be audio-taped with your permission and will be transcribed by the researcher herself. This informed consent document, with your name on it, will be stored in a locked cabinet separately with the interview tapes and transcriptions. The informed consent document will be destroyed when the dissertation is defended. Interview tapes will be destroyed when the dissertation is defended.

### ***Questions***

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Mr. You Guo Jiang, S. J. at

(1) 617-552-8166 or via email [jiangyf@bc.edu](mailto:jiangyf@bc.edu), or the faculty advisor, Dr. Philip G. Altbach at (1) 617-552 -4236 at any time.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Boston College Office for Human Research Participant Protection at (617)552-4778.

### ***Certification***

I have read and believe I understand this consent inform.

I believe I understand the purpose of this research project and what I will be asked to do.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and they have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may stop my participation in this research study at any time and that I can refuse to answer any question.

I understand that I will not be identified in the research study and I will not be identified in the reports on the study.

I will receive a signed copy of this Informed Consent document for my personal reference.

I hereby give my informed and free consent to be a participant in this study.

Consent signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Participant's name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2010

Signature of Researcher (You Guo Jiang, S. J.): \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C: Interview protocol**

### **For faculty member**

1. Before we start, do you have any questions or need any clarifications?
2. When did the liberal arts education begin in your institution?
3. How do you define the liberal arts education?
4. What goals or outcomes do you seek from a liberal arts education?
5. Could you please tell me about your teaching experience that relates to liberal arts education?
6. How do you participate in implementing the liberal arts?
7. Have you given any liberal arts education lectures in your institution?
8. What are the challenges you encounter while teaching or implementing liberal arts courses?
9. How do students absorb the idea of liberal arts education (or how do students engage with liberal arts course work)?
10. How do you choose to teach liberal arts education courses? Is this an assignment from your department? How do you feel about your experiences?

### **For policymaker**

11. How do you define or conceptualize a liberal arts education in the Chinese context?
12. As a policy maker, what are the motivations of the Chinese government to promote policy on liberal arts education?
13. Could you please tell me more about the background of revival of interest in liberal arts education in China?

14. What factors have influenced or accelerated the process of policy on liberal arts education?
15. What do you think is the impact of liberal arts education (or significance) as a new phenomenon on the Chinese higher education system?
16. How do you perceive the relationship between a liberal arts education and education for a “well-rounded” person?
17. Everyone knows that contemporary Chinese universities are more utilitarian-oriented and focus more on research and market economy. Does policy on liberal arts education do anything to this?
18. Are there any obstacles in promoting policy in Chinese colleges and universities? How were these obstacles overcome?
19. Can you provide some examples of how policies were implemented or a versa?
20. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

**For administrators**

21. How do you define a liberal arts education? What is your perception of the value of the liberal arts education for Chinese higher education?
22. What goals or outcomes does your school seek from liberal arts education reform? What are the universities’ objectives in implementing a liberal arts education?
23. How have the government policies on a liberal arts education influenced the curriculum reform at the university level?
24. How have university administrators supported faculty members who are involved in the liberal arts education? Can you give me detailed examples?



25. What are the current practices the university has adopted in terms of liberal arts education curriculum development, and the supporting mechanism?
26. How does your university balance the relationship between the course requirement of liberal arts education and courses in the students' majors?
27. Can you tell me something about the current context of liberal arts education reform in your university and how this related to educational reform in China?
28. What are the difficulties and challenges that the current implementation of a liberal arts education encountered? Is there any way to overcome these problems?
29. Why teachers are not interested or involved in implementing or teaching the liberal arts education course?
30. Is there anything you would like to share with me or do you have any comments?





