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The Idea of a Normal University in the 21st Century

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Abstract The establishment of normal colleges and universities is an important component of building a modern country, which possesses different value ethos with the universities. The emergence of the École Normale Supérieure in Paris and the local normal schools has set a new model for teacher education around the world and promoted values and knowledge patterns promoted by them quite distinctive from those of the traditional European university. In order to improve the quality of teacher education, the models of teacher education in the U.S., Japan, U.K., etc., are being continually innovated. China has created the teacher education model different with the U.S., Japan, U.K. and France, which is a contribution to the development of international teacher education.

Keywords teacher education, normal university, the idea of a university, teacher education model

Introduction

There has been much debate in the dramatic reforms taking place in Chinese education over the definition and role of normal universities. This paper will take a comparative historical approach to exploring the idea of the normal university, and the relation of teacher education to the university. If one adopts a definition of the university and its core values of autonomy and academic freedom that is rooted in the European historical experience, one might say that the term “normal university” is a kind of oxymoron, or contradiction in terms. The term “normal”

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in English can only be clearly understood with reference to its French roots, where it means “setting a moral standard or pattern.” In Western educational history it has commonly been used for normal schools and colleges which were established in the 19th century as institutions for the formation of teachers, quite separate from the university. France’s *École Normale Supérieure* was first established in 1794, at the height of the social upheaval that followed the French Revolution of 1789, and after the abolition of traditional universities in France (Smith, 1982). Subsequently, under Napoleon the French university was re-established in 1806 as an imperial corporation (Barnard, 1969), while the *École Normale Supérieure* was made into one of the elite *Grandes Ecoles* that dominated a new system of higher education. A large number of *écoles normales* or normal schools were then established at the local level for the training of primary school teachers.

In a certain sense the normal school or college was established as a part of a modern state building exercise, and its values were antithetical to the values of the university. These had developed in the medieval period and persisted in different ways in the national higher education systems that took shape in the 19th and 20th centuries. The formation of teachers for mass systems of education responsible for educating all children to be loyal and productive citizens, called for a different set of values than those which had dominated the traditional university. Interestingly, also, these were the first public higher institutions that enrolled large numbers of women students in Europe and North America (Ogren, 1995). The following table (Hayhoe, 2002) lays out some of the contrasts:

Table 1 Comparison of University and Normal College

University	Normal college
Theory	Practice
Specialised disciplines of knowledge	Integrated learning areas
Value neutral approaches to knowledge	Morally directive approaches to knowledge
A relatively impersonal environment	A nurturing environment with strong mentorship ties between teachers & students
The liberal pursuit of all questions/intellectual curiosity	Action oriented & field based knowledge
Academic freedom & autonomy	State control & professional accountability
An orientation to deep level understanding & long term change	A craft orientation towards high standards of practice

One further contrast that could be added would relate to the fundamentally international orientation of the university, as against the orientation towards nation and local community of the normal college. This would not only be the case for the medieval universities of Europe, which drew students from broadly diverse geographical areas in the European region, but also for the traditional

academies and universities of the Middle East, India and China—institutions such as Jundi-Shapur in Persia, Nalanda and Taxila in India, and China's *Taixue* or *Guozijian*.

The normal university, by its very name, thus faces the challenge of integrating two sets of institutional values which had their roots in different historical periods, and which are polar opposites to one another. This might be seen as an opportunity to forge a model of the university which has greater breadth and the capacity to embrace a wider range of values than the model which has dominated the 20th century. This may be a significant opening particularly for East Asian societies, since some of the values that dominated the Western model of the university are antithetical to traditional values of East Asian scholarship. Thus profound cultural clashes underlay some of the political struggles over higher education policy in the development of modern universities in China and Japan over the 20th century (Hayhoe, 1999).

What we will try to argue in this paper is that the idea of the normal university may bring together values from Western and East Asian scholarly cultures, and serve to bridge the divide between Western and East Asian approaches to knowledge. This is not an argument to suggest that one set of values is preferable over the other, or that one should dominate the other, rather than we need a more capacious university in the 21st century which is able to integrate and harmonize the values at both poles into a new global model of the university. The normal university may have a unique capability of taking leadership in this endeavor.

Part two of this paper will look at the historical emergence of the *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris, and the local normal schools which served to train primary school teachers for the nation's schools. These set a new model for teacher education which was influential around the world, and promoted values and knowledge patterns quite distinctive from those of the traditional European university. Parts three and four will look comparatively at teacher education in the twentieth century, as the teaching profession was upgraded to an all-graduate profession, and teacher education institutions had to engage directly with the university. We will develop a comparative analysis of the transition from normal school to university, as the locus for training the majority of teachers in four countries—the United States, Japan, England and France, following a chronological order in terms of the historical timing of the transition in each society. From this overview, we will then derive three distinctive models of the relationship between teacher education and the university in these four societies, noting the strengths and limitations of each.

Part five of the paper turns to the experience of modern China, in developing teacher education over the 20th century, with a historical overview that shows the influence of various models at different historical periods. China is one of the few countries in the world that has maintained the normal university as a

distinctive type of university in the 21st century, and China's normal universities have broadened the scope of their work in two different ways in recent years. Firstly, they have become more comprehensive, developing many new programs in applied and professional knowledge areas outside the scope of teacher education in response to society's demands. Secondly, they have broadened the scope of their educational work beyond the original focus on the academic and professional preparation of secondary school teachers and now embrace all levels of teacher education from early childhood to secondary and adult education.

As China's normal universities seek for a new vision to guide them in the 21st century, we will suggest that they may turn to some of the values and ideas of Chinese classical scholarship, which gave a unique importance to the teacher, and to forms of knowledge that were integrated and oriented to the moral purposes of good governance and social advancement. We will further argue that the revival of certain core values of Chinese scholarship may contribute to a transformation of the university, overcoming some of the genetic constraints of the 20th century university model and opening up new pathways for scholarship to serve the global community in the 21st century. Normal universities are in a unique position to explore this possibility since education is at the heart of their work, as an inter-disciplinary and morally explicit form of knowledge.

France's *École Normale Supérieure*

The *École Normale Supérieure* was founded in 1794 with the purpose of educating teachers who would disseminate the ideas of the Enlightenment and the Revolution throughout France. The new regime was trying to establish a national educational system so that France as a whole would "learn to think like a republic" (Smith, 1982, p. 6). More explicitly, the decree passed by the National Convention for the founding of this institution, stated that the professors for this new institution "will give lessons to the students in the art of teaching morality and of shaping the hearts of young republicans to the practice of public and private virtues" (Smith, 1982, p. 7). The subject focus was to be on reading, arithmetic, practical geometry, history, and French grammar, and the students trained were to return to their local districts and establish normal schools to transmit the teaching methods they had learned in Paris.

The first *École Normale Supérieure* was a populist institution, which recruited 1 400 students in its first year. However, the gap between the high level professors in sciences and arts appointed to the new school, and the needs of the students to learn basic teaching methods for elementary education, made it dysfunctional. Since the revolutionary government had other pressing concerns, the school was closed within a year or two. Nevertheless, an idea had

taken shape of a new type of higher education dedicated to the field of teacher education.

With Napoleon's ascent to power, a completely new concept of the university took shape in France—as a highly centralized national corporation responsible for directing an entire national education system, from elementary through secondary to higher education, throughout the country. The *École Normale Supérieure* was given the role of educating professors for the elite secondary schools or lycées, that prepared students for entrance to university faculties, as well as for the faculties themselves. The new French university was an integrated part of the national bureaucracy, with professors having the status of civil servants, whether they taught at tertiary or secondary level, and all aspects of education regulated and financed by the state. Elementary school teachers, who were called “instituteurs” rather than “professeurs” were to be educated by normal schools which were established for both men and women at the local or department level in each of the 34 academies or university districts of the country.

The *École Normale Supérieure* kept some of the characteristics of traditional universities, with a curricular focus on the basic arts and sciences—mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, history, literature, classical languages, and pedagogy, of course. Although it lost the traditional autonomy and academic freedom of the old universities that had been protected by their charters and their status as legal persons, the fact that it was controlled by the Ministry of National Instruction, rather than any of the specialized ministries in charge of the other *Grandes Ecoles*, meant that it kept an atmosphere of liberalism and freedom (Smith, 1982, p. 9). By contrast, the normal schools that were established at the local level in every academy, were closely controlled by local educational authorities and had a curriculum that was oriented towards education as a craft rather than a liberal profession. Emphasis was placed on the teaching of basic reading and arithmetic, and on the formation of teachers who would shape the minds of children towards moral behaviors and republican values.

In these schools we see the fostering of values that were in many ways antithetical to the university tradition—an emphasis on practice rather than theory, on morally directive approaches to knowledge as against the value neutrality that had come to characterize university disciplines, especially in the sciences, on a close and nurturing relation between student and teacher, as against the relatively impersonal environment of the university, where freedom to learn and freedom to teach were upheld. There was also a strong sense of professional accountability. State control and regulation were seen as essential since the majority of teachers were expected to serve in newly developing state schools.

The idea of the normal school or normal college that took shape in France was widely emulated in other parts of Europe, North America and countries as far distance as Japan. As state schooling systems were established, huge numbers of teachers were needed for the schools. Since universities remained elite institutions well into the twentieth century, and since they were not always amenable to direct state control and oversight, normal schools or colleges took up the bulk of the responsibility for teacher education at the basic level. Also the idea of a graduated system of teacher education became widespread. Thus teachers of secondary schooling, particularly the upper levels, were to be educated by universities, while teachers for lower secondary or middle schools might be educated by normal colleges or colleges of education, and teachers of early childhood and primary education could be educated in normal schools, which sometimes formed the upper level of secondary schooling.

Only in the mid-20th century did teacher education begin to be integrated into the mission and work of the university, as the teaching profession became upgraded and the critical importance of education recognized. The core problematic of the transition from normal school to university lies in the deeply rooted differences in value orientation between these two kinds of institution. The dilemma lay in the question of how the normal college could maintain its commitment to the practical improvement of schools and teaching, while being upgraded to an institution with the high standards of theoretical and specialist knowledge of the university

Historically, it was the United States that first upgraded all teacher education to university level beginning in the 1940s, followed by Japan which was greatly influenced by American educational patterns after the Second World War. It was not until the 1960s that England moved to an all graduate teaching profession, and France made the transition only in the 1990s. China still trains many of its teachers in sub-degree educational colleges, but recent educational reforms have seen important changes in teacher education. The trend is certainly towards an all graduate profession, though this will take time, with the huge numbers of teachers needed for rural schools throughout China. Also many comprehensive universities are now opening faculties of education and beginning to contribute to teacher education. Of greatest interests to this paper are the challenges facing normal universities, which are taking on a much broader spectrum of teacher education than in the past, with the integration of colleges of in-service teacher education and schools for primary and early childhood education, in addition to their many new programs in other fields. The main purpose of the paper will thus be to reflect on the idea of the normal university, as it is emerging in 21st century China.

Comparative Reflections on the Transition from Normal College to University: The U.S., Japan, England and France

The American Case

There can be little doubt that the United States historically led the way in upgrading teacher education to an all graduate profession, a process that was completed by the middle of the 20th century, earlier than in any other society. Over the first half of the century, the normal colleges that had developed in all parts of the United States were either upgraded to become local comprehensive universities, or were merged into the faculties of education of major national universities. In some cases they had been established by universities, but as attached non-degree colleges for those not up to degree study, “poor stepchildren of academe” in the words of one historian (Lucas, 1997, p. 39). This may be the reason that few of the local universities that developed out of normal schools kept the designation of “normal” or even the word education in their titles (Ogren, 2005).¹

The normal schools that developed into locally oriented comprehensive universities have continued to be dominated by large faculties of education, and to have teacher education as a major responsibility, alongside of undergraduate programs in broad areas of the liberal arts and social sciences. Few of these local universities have other traditional professional faculties, such as medicine, engineering, or law, with the result that teacher education is a highly valued and central aspect of their work. Thus some of the values on the right hand of the diagram above have served to shape these institutions towards an ethos of direct social responsibility, a strong sense of local community and identity, and a nurturing and morally conscientized environment.

For those normal schools that became faculties of education at major national universities, two striking American examples, both associated with the famous philosopher educator, John Dewey, show the possibilities and pitfalls. The University of Chicago, where Dewey taught in the early part of the century, and established his first Lab School, has had a high profile faculty of education, famous for its traditions in the economics and sociology of education and comparative education. There were times when practice and local school improvement were emphasized at the University of Chicago. However, the

¹ Two exceptions should be noted: Southwestern State Normal College, founded in 1855 in Lebanon, Ohio and retitled as National Normal University in 1870, was closed down in 1917; Illinois State Normal University, in Normal, Illinois, had this title from 1857 to 1964, when its name was changed to Illinois State University at Normal, Illinois, and subsequently, in 1968, to Illinois State University.

tendency to privilege theoretical research in basic disciplines led the faculty of education to a situation where it had gradually become removed from the needs and realities of the Chicago school system in the 1980s. As a result the university decided to close down the faculty in 1996, citing its failure to make any positive contribution to the improvement of education in the locality (Altbach, 1998). By contrast, an equally high profile faculty of education at the nationally prestigious Columbia University, where Dewey taught subsequent to his early career in Chicago, managed to preserve an independent identity under the name “Teachers College, Columbia” (Pangburn, 1932, pp. 25–26). It has been able to balance high standards of scholarship with a genuine and sustained contribution to improving schools, curricula and teacher standards in the New York area, and nationally.

When a group of deans of education from well known national universities formed the Holmes group in the 1980s and made concerted efforts to shape teacher education, their solution to the “Chicago problem” of the dominance of traditional university values was to create professional school networks which involved close linkages with a group of schools that could provide a practical context for field service, action research and professional revitalization. This has been fairly effective, but has required a constant state of alert, as the drift towards conventional academic values is a particularly strong tendency in major comprehensive universities (The Holmes Group, 1986, 1995).

The overall resolution of the problem in the United States has resulted in two major types of institution. On the one hand, there are local or regional universities with strong faculties of education that have a high profile and considerable influence within their overall ethos. On the other hand, there are faculties of education at major national universities, some having an independent identity, such as Teachers College Columbia, and most being standard faculties of education that maintain and develop strong professional values through a network of professional schools. However, the normal school or college has disappeared forever, and there are no normal universities in the United States.

The Japanese Case

We turn next to East Asia, as Japan was the second country after the USA, historically, to move towards an all-graduate profession for teachers. In the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century Japan had developed a large number of normal schools and colleges to train teachers for the modern education system which has been so important to its economic rise. These were developed under the influence of European models, particularly French and German, and they provided a large cohort of well-trained teachers for primary and early childhood education, under a highly centralised organisational model. With the American occupation after World War Two, Japan was strongly influenced by the

American model, and by American concerns to support democratization and decentralization. As a result Japan became the second country in the world to move towards an all-graduate profession for teachers. Higher education was restructured in ways that absorbed some of the former normal colleges into university faculties of education. Others were developed into prefectural level universities with a strong focus on education.

In effect, the Japanese adopted an open model of teacher education, which allowed universities of all kinds, public and private, national and local, to provide courses for teachers' professional development as long as these courses were approved by the Ministry of Education. However, the actual certification of teachers for primary and secondary school teachers was put into the hands of prefectural authorities, who selected the very best of those qualified by universities and colleges through competitive examinations for positions in their schools. The fact that teachers are civil servants, with commensurate salaries and benefits, has made the profession highly attractive. In a typical year, only 20 percent of those qualified in higher education institutions to enter the profession are able to succeed in prefectural level examinations for the selection of new teachers. This has made the teaching profession in Japan far more competitive than in the USA, in spite of a broad similarity in the nature and level of education programs within colleges and universities.

Like the USA, Japan thus ended up with academically strong faculties of education at major national universities, which prepared many secondary school teachers, and a small percentage of primary school teachers, and prefectural level universities, public and private, which tended to focus on education as a major field, as well as having programs in social sciences, liberal arts and new fields such as environmental studies. These institutions prepared the majority of primary and early childhood teachers. Some of these came to be called "universities of education" as early as the 1960s, and their graduates tend to find work in fields allied to education in their local communities, since only a minority are successful in competing for teaching jobs.

The status and quality of the teaching profession was further enhanced in the 1970s through a reform agenda put in place by the National Council of Education which was concerned to ensure a good supply of highly qualified and highly motivated teachers for the nations schools (Shimihara, 1995, pp.169–179). Firstly, *the Human Resource Procurement Act of 1974* committed the government to increasing teachers' salaries to 30–40% above that of public employees with equivalent qualifications, making the profession both competitive and attractive. Then three new public universities of education were founded in the prefectures of Niigata, Tokushima and Hyogo, with undergraduate programs for primary teachers and graduate programs offering opportunities for ongoing professional development for in-service teachers. They set high standards for education as the

major focus of undergraduate and graduate work in prestigious public institutions (Government of Japan, 1990, p. 32).

Japan's open teacher education system has involved faculties or schools of education at major comprehensive universities as well as the development of local or regional universities of education, which have a particular commitment to setting high standards for the teaching profession, and which have been able to incorporate some of the values of the normal school—a focus on professional practice, close links to the local community and a range of integrated knowledge areas, such as environmental studies, community development, and adult and lifelong education. The approach to knowledge in these universities of education covers all the subjects taught at primary and lower secondary levels in school. In addition, the field of education is developed in ways that serves both the formal teaching profession and the needs of other organisations and agencies for training, lifelong learning and adult education. It is thus a model quite distinct from that of the major comprehensive university, and one which has a unique contribution to make to local and regional economies as well as to the teaching profession.

The Case of England

The transition from college of education to an all graduate teaching profession in England has many parallels with that of the United States, except that it took place considerably later, in the 1960s and the 1970s. Some of the former colleges for training primary and secondary teachers were absorbed into the faculties of education of major universities, while others developed into colleges of higher education providing bachelor degree level programs for pre-service teachers, as well as other undergraduate programs in the arts, social sciences, and various applied fields. Some of these became full-fledged universities in the movement towards mass higher education of the 1980s and early 1990s.

The Institute of Education of the University of London was able to maintain a leading role, because its unique status within the federated University of London, gave it the autonomy and status of a fully fledged university of education, and enabled it to set standards for high-level research in education, as well as for pre-service and in-service programs for primary and secondary teachers, mainly at the postgraduate level. Its role has some parallels with Teachers College Columbia in the USA. The integrated Bachelor of Education is a more common degree in the colleges of higher education and new universities.

Growing political concerns about the academicization of education as a field of study, and the perceived tendency for university programs to become more and more remote from the actual needs and concerns of teachers and schools resulted in government initiatives in the 1980s and early 1990s far more radical than those adopted in Japan or the United States. Government laid down criteria

that courses of professional training must satisfy, and issued sets of competences that beginning teachers must demonstrate as a condition of certification. A Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) was set up to oversee the implementation of these changes and to advise government on the development of professional preparation. In 1993 CATE was replaced by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), which is responsible for accreditation and also serves as the channel through which universities and colleges obtain funds to provide professional education for teaching (Maguire & Ball, 1995, pp. 246–249).

While teacher training has remained a responsibility of universities, all programs have to meet the stringent professional and practical requirements of the TTA before gaining on-going accreditation and funding. Much of the field service and professional training aspect of education programs is required to take place within primary and secondary schools, and schools have been given a remarkably high degree of responsibility for the design and management of this aspect of professional preparation. This initiative has been controversial, and much resented by many in the university community, but it illustrates a rather radical approach to ensuring that some of the valuing of practice, integrated learning, mentorship and accountability to society that had characterised the former colleges of education could be brought back into university programs for teacher education.

If we sum up the experience of historical transition from normal college to university-level institution in these three countries, we can see two major modalities. One is the absorption of former normal colleges into national level comprehensive universities, where faculties of education tend to be given less respect and importance than traditional faculties such as medicine, law, engineering and arts and science, and are likely to face pressures for increasing academicization. The other modality is their development into local or regional universities, in the Japanese case called “universities of education,” where the faculty of education has a leading role in the institution and sets standards of its own, which integrate some of the values of the traditional normal college. Both types of institution are able to make their contribution to teacher education, with a somewhat different emphasis and focus, and subject to national mechanisms put in place to ensure a reasonable supply of quality teachers for the schools.

The university of education or local comprehensive university dominated by a large faculty of education, has the special feature of being a modern university whose ethos is shaped by education as a cross-disciplinary and applied field. This marks it out from traditional comprehensive universities which tend to have an ethos dominated by either pure academic disciplines or traditional professions such as medicine and law. It seems to be a creation of East Asia, developing first in Japan, then in South Korea, and most recently the Hong Kong Institute of

Education is appealing to the government for re-titling as a university of education. It is also interesting to notice that Japan has kept the status and remuneration of teachers as civil servants, thus ensuring a supply of highly qualified people for the profession. The only other country that has done the same is France, and we now return to some reflection on the French case.

The French Case

We have already looked earlier at the foundations of teacher education in France, with the creation of the *École Normale Supérieure*, followed by a large number of *écoles normales* at the local level for training primary school teachers. It seems clear that the *École Normale Supérieure* set the model for the normal university, which proved particularly appealing to modern socialist states (Judge, Lemousse, Paine, & Sedlak, 1994, pp. 47–54). It was one of the new institutions established by the modernizing French state in areas of key importance, such as engineering, commerce and political science. The *Grandes Écoles* were given a higher status than the universities, and selected their entrants through a highly competitive set of examinations (*concours*) for entry to the civil service. Interestingly, these examinations probably reflected the influence of the Chinese traditional Civil Service Examination system, introduced to France by Jesuit missionaries and French philosophers in the 17th and 18th centuries (Teng, 1942). All those selected were paid as civil servants from their time of entry, and were groomed for leadership throughout their years of higher education, then assigned positions on graduation.

In France there was always a clear divide between primary and secondary teachers. Those teaching at secondary schools and at universities were called *professeurs*, with the *École Normale Supérieure* setting the standards, while teachers for primary schools and *écoles maternelles* (kindergartens) were called *instituteurs* and were trained in locally based *écoles normales*. Each academy or university district in the country, had one such leading school for young men, and a separate one for young women, while many of the departments within each academy also had such schools (Judge, Lemousse, Paine, & Sedlak, 1995, pp. 55–63). These local institutions were characterised by values rather similar to the normal schools and colleges of education of the United States and England, with a strong moral orientation, and a focus on primary teaching as a craft occupation. A particular feature of the French context was the emphasis on nurturing republican values in the young.

Interestingly, France was one of the last of the Western industrialized countries to move towards an all-graduate profession for teachers. *The Orientation Law of 1989* established patterns that were quite different from those of either the Anglo-American world or of Japan. The local normal schools were integrated

into a University Institute for Teacher Formation (*Institute Universitaire pour Formation des Maîtres* or IUFM), which was established in the main centre of each academy or university district, separate from the university, but expected to cooperate with it in the work of teacher education. The IUFM was located on the campus of the *école normale* of the major city within the academy, while linking up to it the campuses of former normal schools at the department level in a kind of network. All prospective teachers now have to gain a university qualification (licence) in one or two subject areas first and then complete two years of professional education at the IUFM to qualify for teaching careers as civil servants.

The first year focuses on knowledge in the subject disciplines to be taught, as well as some professional studies, in preparation for national competitive examinations for a teaching position (CAPES). Like Japan, all teachers in public schools in France are civil servants, and the competition for teaching jobs is fierce—with often only 15–20% of those academically qualified successful in being selected. Those who succeed in the examinations take a second year, which focuses on professional courses in areas such as educational psychology, teaching methodology and curriculum development, as well as extensive field service experience in schools. This is greatly facilitated by the close links between the campuses of the former normal colleges and local schools. All teachers, at primary and secondary level are now given the title of *professeur*, and they have equal salary scales, with the old designation of *Instituteur* for primary school teachers now abandoned.

The fact that IUFM have an independent legal status, though they work very closely with universities with some overlapping academic appointments, enables them to retain a close link to schools, and a strong emphasis on professional practice. They have been able to integrate some of the important values of the normal school into a new framework which requires of all teachers the academic status and level of university graduates (Brisard & Hall, 2001; Foster, 2000). At the same time, recent pressures of the Bologna process and globalization have led to them losing their independent legal status and becoming integrated into the university in each academy. The results of this move in 2007 are yet to be fully understood (Geoffrey, 2007).

France has thus produced two rather unique models of teacher education—the normal university in the 19th century, which had a wide influence in the later socialist world, and the University Institute for Teacher Formation (IUFM) in the late 20th century, which is unique to the French context and now under threat. Interestingly, both France and Japan have maintained the status of teachers as civil servants, and used highly competitive examinations to guard the entrance to the profession, thus assuring a supply of well qualified candidates. Both seem to have learned the lessons of the traditional Chinese Civil Service Examinations

and used them rather effectively in the service of educational quality for schools and professional status for teachers.

Comparative Historical Reflections on Three Institutional Models Linking Teacher Education to the University

The historical overview of the upgrading of teacher education in USA, Japan, England and France has yielded three distinct models, whose strengths and weaknesses will be considered in this section of the paper:

A. Normal colleges being absorbed into major comprehensive universities as faculties of education (USA, England, Japan).

B. Normal colleges being upgraded to become universities of education, or local comprehensive universities in which faculties of education play a leading role and shape the ethos (Japan, England, USA).

C. Normal schools merged into independent university level institutes which cooperate with universities in the training of teachers for primary and secondary schools, but have a separate legal existence (France).

Model A has the advantage of full parity of status and dignity for education, alongside of other major faculties and professions. It has the problem, however, of a tendency to academic drift and the devaluing of excellence in professional practice, mentorship and the integrated learning areas appropriate for primary schools. The autonomy of major comprehensive universities can easily result in a situation where resources are moved from education to other fields, and the government has little control over the supply of teachers.

Model B has the advantage of education as the field that provides a defining identity for a university institution, with natural links to professional practice and school improvement. It provides an environment supportive to teacher formation as a primary goal, and makes it possible to guarantee a supply of teachers. It also makes possible the development of fields such as adult education, the training of trainers, lifelong learning, and profession-specific education, that may be useful for many sectors of the knowledge society, including the corporate world, government, professions such as law and medicine, and community organizations for the elderly, new immigrants or other groups. Model B may not always be adequate for the task of preparing teachers for upper secondary education in basic fields such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, geography, languages and literature. For this, it may depend on a supply of graduates from major comprehensive universities. In the East Asian context, Model B has taken the name of a university of education, a new type of university which may be able to serve the knowledge society in important ways, though it also has certain historical limitations.

Model C has the advantage of parity of esteem and status for education as an undergraduate and graduate field of study, separate from but equal to other major disciplines and professional schools in universities. It encourages a focus on education and its various disciplinary bases in psychology, philosophy, sociology, economics etc., and gives less attention to the subject areas that provide the substance of the school curriculum. For these it depends largely on the university. It is supportive to high-level research in education, both theoretical and practical, and makes possible the guarantee of a stable supply of teachers.

Interestingly, the case of teacher education in 21st century China does not conform to any of the above models. Normal universities that had their roots in the 19th century French model of the *École Normale Supérieure*, were adapted to the Chinese context in the reforms of the 1950s. These institutions combine the strength of major comprehensive universities, with the focus on education as the leading field of knowledge, a characteristic that is absent from the Western model of the comprehensive university. They have diversified and broadened their curricula in recent years, while also extending their educational focus from the training of secondary and tertiary level teachers (as in the French model of the ENS) to a broad range of educational studies, from early childhood and special education through primary, secondary and adult education, from educational leadership and administration through to public administration and human resources management.

China has thus produced what we might call Model D, an interesting amalgam of features of each of the other models. Teacher education is carried out in national and provincial level normal universities, while it has also become an open system, with major comprehensive universities establishing faculties of education and contributing to some dimensions of teacher education. In the next section of this paper we will reflect on China's historical experience of developing teacher education over the modern period, and the new possibilities and responsibilities that lie ahead for normal universities in the 21st century. Then we will turn to China's classical traditions of higher learning and the role and status of the teacher in traditional Chinese society, and ask whether China's normal universities might not be in a particularly suitable position to bring elements of China's rich scholarly tradition into a global arena.

Historical Reflections on China's Teacher Education and Heritage

The Trajectory of Teacher Education in Modern China

In the development of teacher education in modern China, one can see a series of experiments that reflected the influences of various models of teacher education

from both Japan and the West. In the early period, between the 1890s and the Revolution of 1911, Japanese influences predominated, with some European patterns having an indirect influence through Japan. From 1911 to the early 1920s, European patterns had some influence, followed by a strong interest in American patterns from the 1920s through to the 1940s. With the Revolution of 1949, the new Communist government followed Soviet patterns very closely in the reorganization of higher education and teacher education.

China's early normal schools were of several types. Some were independent, such as the Hubei Normal School founded by Zhang Zhidong in 1902 (Chen, 1981, p. 117), and Tongzhou Private Normal School founded by Zhang Jian the same year (Liu, 1984, pp. 7–8). Others were integrated within newly developed modern higher institutions, such as the Normal School of Nanyang Public Institute in Shanghai, founded in 1897, and the Normal School of the Imperial University (later Peking University), founded in 1898. The school regulations of 1904 stipulated that every prefecture should open a junior normal school to train elementary school teachers and every province should found a senior normal school to train middle school teachers (Chen, 1979, p.183). Thus there was to be a national system of normal schools, rather similar to the French model, with the explicit political purpose of forming teachers who would contribute to national self-strengthening under a reformist Qing imperial government.

After the Revolution of 1911, European patterns had a more direct influence, with the first Minister of Education, Cai Yuanpei, being a returnee from studies in both France and Germany. In republican legislation of 1912 and 1913, it was stipulated that provincial normal schools should be established to train teachers for elementary schools, and higher normal schools should prepare teachers for secondary schools (Chen, 1981, p. 278). Two of the most famous of these were the Beijing Higher Normal School and the Nanjing Higher Normal School. Also a women's normal school in Beijing, that had been established in 1908, was upgraded to a higher normal school in 1919. Most of the teachers in these institutions had been educated in Japan, and the Chinese term for "normal" (*shifan*) was adopted from the characters used in Japan. In 1916, the first certification system for elementary school teachers in modern China was enacted (Sun, 1971, pp. 531–533). As in Europe and North America, normal schools were the first public higher education institutions that were open to women, and they formed a system separate from the public universities that were beginning to develop.

After the celebrated visit of John and Alice Dewey to China, from 1919 to 1921, and the beginning of a flow of Chinese students back from America, one can see strong American influences in teacher education. With the legislation of 1922, many specialized institutions were upgraded to university status, with the comprehensive university model dominating (Sun, 1971, p. 359). Beijing Higher

Normal and Beijing Women's Normal were upgraded to the status of normal universities in 1922 and 1924 respectively, and then merged into one normal university in 1931. By contrast, Nanjing Higher Normal School was merged with another institution to form Dongnan University in Nanjing, and many normal schools for training elementary teachers were merged into comprehensive secondary schools. Teacher education thus lost its special status within the system.

The situation of Beijing was exceptional, as Beijing Normal University managed to maintain its distinctive identity even during the Sino-Japanese War, when it moved to Lanzhou in the Northwest, and then back to Beijing. However, Nanjing and subsequently Chongqing were the national capitals over these years, and Beijing Normal was not given a high status in the Kuomintang (KMT) university system. In the 1930s and 1940s, the KMT government made efforts to restore the identity and role of a number of normal schools and colleges at a lower level, as they saw the value for teacher education, but these efforts were limited by economic and political difficulties and the disruption of war. Thus we see a kind of mixture of American and European influences during the Nationalist period, with American predominating.

Only after the Revolution of 1949 did normal universities gain a high standing in China and take a leading role in Chinese higher education. Under the influence of the Soviet model of higher education, which in turn had been greatly influenced by European models and especially that of France, China's whole higher education was reformed in the "reorganization of colleges and departments" of 1952–1953. One of the major concerns was for a fair geographical distribution of higher institutions throughout the country, and this was achieved through a regional organization around the six major military districts of the Northeast, North China, the Northwest, East China, the Central South and the Southwest. Throughout the early fifties there was a regional bureau of education in each region, and a rational representation of all major types of university at the national level was arranged in each region—including polytechnical universities, comprehensive universities, normal universities and foreign language institutes under the national ministry of education, also various specialized universities in areas such as medicine, agriculture, metallurgy, railway building, politics & law, economics & finance, which were administered by the respective national ministries. What we see here is a system of higher education rather similar to that of France's *Grandes Écoles* and to the national universities and institutes of the former Soviet Union, with students recruited nationwide and assigned cadre positions in the national bureaucracy on graduation, according to a plan laid out by the State Planning Commission. Only after this national system was put in place, were provinces encouraged to develop

local institutions and most of them established or revived a provincial level normal university.

The first national meeting for teacher education in the new regime was convened in August of 1951, and there it was decided that normal schools should be established in each prefecture throughout the country for the training of primary school and kindergarten teachers (Wang, 1997, p. 8). With each province having about 10 prefectures, this amounted to a large system of normal schools at the local level. In 1952, the Ministry of Education promulgated new regulations on higher normal schools, which set the principle that a teacher education system should be set up as an independent part of the national higher education system, which would be responsible for the training of teachers at all levels. By 1953, there were a total of 31 independent normal colleges and universities, including six national normal universities, one in each of the six major regions of China, and many provincial normal universities (China National Institute of Educational Research, 1984, pp. 90–91). All the former departments of education within comprehensive universities were integrated into these new normal universities, and teacher education functioned as an independent system at four levels—national normal universities, provincial normal universities, normal colleges with 2–3 year short-cycle programs, and prefectural normal schools at the upper secondary level. Primary and kindergarten teachers were educated in normal schools, some primary and most lower secondary teachers in provincial normal colleges or universities and upper secondary teachers in provincial and national normal universities. A separate system of in-service education for teachers was carried out by colleges of education established at provincial level or below, which were to upgrade the qualifications and skills of teachers already serving in schools. This was a highly sectoralized system, but it made possible national and provincial level planning to ensure a supply of teachers throughout the nation, and also provided a means of controlling the content of all teacher education throughout the country such that teachers would be prepared to imbue their students with new socialist values and encourage a strong nationalist consciousness. Here we can see clear parallels with the role of the normal schools in France under Napoleon, and the system of pedagogical institutes and universities in the Soviet Union.

On paper, the system looked rational and well organized. Interestingly, however, there were anomalies that are often not noted. For example the government of Zhejiang Province transformed its provincial normal college into a local comprehensive university, Hangzhou University, in 1956, and this institution maintained a high profile in teacher education as well as functioning as a comprehensive university. At the national level, Xiamen University in the Southeast refused to allow all of its professors of education to join Fujian Normal College in 1953, when Department of Education of Xiamen University was

moved there, keeping a number of education specialists who would offer educational training to students in the arts and sciences who wished to become secondary school teachers.

In addition to these anomalies which showed expressions of local independence, teacher education was greatly disrupted by major political movements, such as the Great Leap Forward of 1958, and the Cultural Revolution, when many institutions were closed, qualified teachers sent down to the countryside, and revolutionary peasants and soldiers brought into the classrooms to teach a different kind of political lesson. However, with the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1977, and Deng Xiaoping's accession to power, teacher education became a national priority. In the early years, the Soviet-influenced system of the 1950s was restored, and a major reform document of 1985 stated that teacher education must be the first priority of educational development (CPCCC & the State Council, 1985, May 27). In 1985, September 10 was declared national Teacher's Day as a symbol of respect for the profession. However, the main changes to the teacher education system took place in the 1990s.

Before we look at the reforms of the 1990s, let us take a moment to reflect on the character of the six national normal universities which had been given a leading responsibility for teacher education throughout the country. These institutions had an elite standing within the teacher education system, and recruited students nation-wide to become secondary and tertiary teachers. They were comprehensive universities in the sense of having all the same departments in the basic sciences and arts as major national comprehensive universities of the time, with the addition of departments of education and fine arts. The model was very close to that of the *École Normale Supérieure*. The teachers who graduated from these normal universities were typically specialists in one traditional discipline of knowledge, which they were expected to teach at upper secondary or tertiary level. This was effectively a 19th century model of higher education, which upheld the high status of theoretical disciplines of knowledge and supported a hierarchical system of teacher formation, with upper secondary teachers having the highest status and qualifications, kindergarten teachers the lowest. In effect, the Soviet patterns adopted in 1952 led to the 19th century European model being "frozen in time" on the Chinese education landscape.

Only with the reforms of the 1990s did teacher education change dramatically in China. The focus moved from quantity to quality, and there was a wide recognition that the Soviet model could not respond adequately to the needs of basic education across the nation. The fact that the Soviet system separated in-service from pre-service teacher education meant the dissipation of resources, and the rigid system of training from normal school to normal university at four levels was no longer appropriate to serve the need for highly qualified teachers at

all levels. In 1993, *Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China* was enacted, the first such law since 1949, which regulated the legal rights and responsibilities of teachers and professionals and mandated a national teacher certification system (CPCCC & the State Council, February 13, 1993). This was followed by *Regulations on the Qualifications of Teachers*, passed in 1995, which required that candidate teachers obtain at least one of seven recognized licenses to teach (the State Council, December 12, 1995). In 1996, further reform was introduced by a policy document passed by the State Education Commission which stated that normal universities and colleges would be the major providers of teacher education, but comprehensive universities could also participate (State Commission of Education, December 5, 1996).

Thus China's closed and independent teacher education system has been transformed into an open system. While normal universities and colleges still carry the main responsibility for teacher education, graduate schools of education have sprung up in top comprehensive universities, such as Peking University, which opened a faculty of education based on its higher education research institute, and Zhejiang University, which benefitted from a merger with Hangzhou University, a provincial institution with an excellent teacher education program since the early 1950s, as noted above. There is thus an open market for teacher education and excellent students in top comprehensive universities are being attracted into the profession. At the same time, there has been a merger between in-service and pre-service teacher education, with the former colleges of education now merged with normal universities. Furthermore, the traditional hierarchy of normal university, normal college and normal school, for training teachers at different levels within the schools, has been upgraded. Normal schools are being increasingly closed down or integrated with normal colleges and universities. All primary school teachers are now required to have at least a 2–3 year subdegree qualification, and most urban primary teachers are expected to hold university degrees. Also many universities, both normal universities and comprehensive universities, are offering Masters of Education degrees in subject teaching, with enrolments of serving teachers reaching 20 000 in 2003 (Feng, 2003). There is also an internet based national network for teacher education providing distance education courses from major normal universities in both pre-service and in-service modes (Shi, 2003).

In the 1990s, there was an intense debate over whether national normal universities should retain their historic identity or take the designation of comprehensive universities, recognizing the breadth of their curricula and their standing within the higher education system. It was finally decided that normal universities had a special responsibility for setting high standards for teachers, and giving the profession a high profile nationally; therefore they were not allowed to follow the trend of merger that was affecting many comprehensive

universities, but required to maintain their unique standing as normal universities. “Education is the best hope for revitalizing the Chinese nation, and the hope for revitalizing education lies with teachers,” concluded Chinese policy makers (Ashmore & Cao, 1997, p. 70). As a result, five of the original six national normal universities have avoided major mergers, only integrating some lower level normal institutions into their campuses, and broadening their responsibility to prepare teachers for all levels of the school system. The one exception is Southwest University near Chongqing, which consists of a merger of Southwest Normal University and Southwest Agricultural University.

The five remaining national normal universities carry in their title an ethos that goes back in history to France’s ENS, founded in 1794. They have a unique responsibility and opportunity to make education the key focus of their work. This does not mean neglecting the basic sciences and humanities, which have been historically well developed in these institutions, unlike the situation of lower level normal colleges. Rather they are called upon to promote education as an integrating and integrative field, that holds highest importance for society’s health and well-being in the 21st century.

Given the low status that education has tended to have as a field of study in the Western model of the university, this is a difficult and challenging task. The European university ethos tended to give high status to specialized knowledge in the basic disciplines and the traditional professions of medicine, law and theology, also to privilege theoretical over practical knowledge. No wonder a field as multi-disciplinary and oriented towards application and practice as education was excluded from the university in the early years of the normal colleges, and then tended to be given a relatively low status once it found acceptance. However, if we look at China’s scholarly traditions, both epistemological and institutional, we will find a more holistic approach to knowledge and institutional patterns that favored integrated forms knowledge that would nurture social advancement and good governance. Specialist knowledge in areas such as chemistry, engineering, agriculture and medicine was well developed but tended to have a relatively lower status in Chinese traditions.

In the next section of this paper we will thus turn to China’s scholarly traditions, and reflect on the role education played within these traditions, and the status and role of the teacher in this tradition. The intention is to discover whether China’s contemporary normal universities might be able to find inspiration in elements of Chinese civilization to develop their unique educational mandate. We would like to think this demanding yet worthwhile task would be rewarding not only for the benefits it could bring to Chinese society, but also for the contribution it might make to global society, where universities are being pressured into the role of instruments of economic competitiveness in

many nations, with the assumption that their specialist knowledge holds the key to success in a global knowledge society.

On the one hand, a small number of elite universities are being given an increasing level of resources to enable them to compete globally in many countries, while on the other a range of indirect means of ensuring accountability is limiting the kinds of autonomy and academic freedom that have been a part of their traditional ethos. While the forms of bureaucratic accountability that were particularly notable in the continental model of the university are being reduced, the kinds of autonomy and academic freedom associated with the Anglo-American model, are less and less able to ensure a genuine freedom of spirit under the conditions of global competition and global capitalism. National pressures for accountability through quality assurance mechanisms tend to reward what is scientific, specialized and quantifiable, rather than encouraging a spirit of profound thought and deep concern for the overall longer term good of the global community. To use a phrase from Tu Weiming, there is a need to overcome the genetic constraints of the Enlightenment tradition, that has spawned this approach to knowledge (Tu, 1998). The important values of autonomy and academic freedom associated with modern universities are under threat and we need a more capacious and more deeply critical kind of scholarly autonomy and intellectual freedom to absorb and carry them forward. In the final section of this paper we reflect on the traditions of the Chinese academy, in order to see if there may be lessons there for the normal university, and indeed the university more generally, in the 21st century.

Reflections on China's Educational Heritage

One of China's most deep-rooted normative values is the belief in education and learning as a major instrument for achieving the highest good for both individuals and society. The purpose of education and learning was defined as "to let one's inborn virtue shine forth, to renew the people, and to rest in the highest good," as stated in the *Great Learning (Daxue)*, showing a harmonious integration between the individual good and the benefit of society (Lee, 2000, pp.10–11). Education and learning were thus the first priority in any political agenda, as made explicit in the *Theory of Education (Xueji)*, one part of *Book of Rites (Liji)* in the *Five Classics*. This belief in the importance of education and learning has been deeply imbedded in Chinese culture over the past two thousand years, and is still widely embraced by Chinese people. Education was also seen as a private good, in the sense that it provided individuals with a competitive advantage in the struggle for desirable social positions. Thus the famous Imperial Examinations made it possible, in theory at least, for any young man who mastered the classical texts to a high enough level to become a scholar-official.

Concomitant with the high importance given to education in traditional Chinese society, teachers were usually given the most respected socio-political status. Teachers were important cultural symbols in traditional Chinese society, while at the same time there were very high expectations of performance. Xunzi, a Confucian philosopher and reformer of the 3rd century BCE, was the first to theorize the role of the teacher. He viewed teachers as on the same level as sovereigns, and made the point that teachers must be respected if the nation was to rise (Xunzi: 27). Later in the Tang Dynasty, Han Yu (768–824 CE) depicted the responsibility of the teacher as encompassing the following three roles—transmitting moral values and principles (*chuandao*), delivering knowledge and skills (*shouye*) and solving the doubts that arise in learning (*jiehuo*). Lee observed that “the Chinese people have since cherished this dictum as the best characterization of a model teacher” (Lee, 2000, p. 258). The concept of the teacher as knowledge transmitter, role model and solver of puzzles is deeply implanted in Chinese culture.

Probably the most powerful example of the teacher in classical China is seen in the picture of Confucius that emerges from his dialogues with his disciples in *The Analects (Lunyu)*. Here he emphasizes both a sound grasp of knowledge and openness to new ideas: “Reviewing the old as a means of realizing the new—such a person can be considered a teacher” (2:11). He also demonstrates that teaching and learning is an interactive process, with teachers playing key roles as co-learners, cheerleaders, mentors and role models of individual integrity: “To quietly persevere in storing up what is learned, to continue studying without respite, to instruct others without growing weary—is not this me?” (7: 2)

The *Theory of Education (Xueji)* has a particularly profound explanation of all that is involved in becoming an effective teacher, as explained in the following depiction of “four successes” and “six failures” in teaching:

The ways of higher education are as follows: To suppress what has not yet emerged is called *prevention*; to present what is opportune is called *timeliness*; not to transgress what is proper is called *conformity*; to observe each other and follow what is good is called *imitation*. These four things are accountable for the success of teaching.

On the other hand, to suppress what has broken out will arouse opposition which cannot be overcome; to study what is not opportune calls for bitter efforts which hardly bring about any outcome; to teach what is improper will result in confusion not cultivation; to study alone without co-learners will lead to ignorance; to feast friends in defiance of teachers and to associate with evil companions is to the detriment of study. These six things are accountable for the failure of teaching.

The gentleman, when he knows the causes of the success of teaching, as

well as the causes of its failure, is qualified to be a teacher....When the gentleman knows what is difficult and what is easy in learning, when he knows what is the difference of potentials and capacities, he is then able to teach with comprehensive illustrations. When he can teach in this way, he is then qualified to be a teacher (*Xueji*—Chai & Chai, 1965, p. 347, translation adjusted).

The authors of *Xueji* clearly stated that a scholar who is only able to memorize what he has learned is by no means qualified to be a teacher.

China has a long and rich historical experience of higher education, and here we will examine the main features of the imperial universities in the public sphere, as well as the academies in the private sphere, in order to reflect on their implications for a Chinese model of higher education. The first imperial institutions of higher learning (*Taixue*) were established during the Western Han Dynasty in 124 BCE, and these continued as an important part of the imperial government through changing dynasties up the last dynasty, the Qing. The purpose was to prepare scholar officials and the selection of teachers and students was thus serious, competitive and rigid. At first a system of recommendation was used, with teachers for the *Taixue*, called “scholars of broad learning” (*boshi*), initially selected by local officials, then recommended by ministers and finally approved by the emperor himself. In the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE) an examination system was initiated and used along side of recommendation. This later developed into the famous Imperial Examination System (*keju zhidu*) which was formally established during the Sui Dynasty in 606 CE. Thereafter these examinations became the only way in which talented people could become teachers in the imperial institutions of higher learning or officials serving in other roles within the government. The imperial institutions of higher learning set up an institutionalized administration system and regulations for student recruitment, the academic calendar, examinations, codes of conduct, etc. (Sun, 2000, pp.158–159). There were also firm moral requirements for teachers and students, based on the core Confucian value of benevolence, which Confucius explained could be reached through five essentials: respectfulness, tolerance, trustworthiness, diligence and generosity (*Analects* 17:6). These moral values were taken as fundamental requirements in selecting teachers and students.

While the imperial institutions of higher learning were a part of China’s governing system, so had little autonomy, there was considerable intellectual freedom. At least there were lively debates among different schools of Confucianism, and the acceptance of diverse approaches to teaching. The ancient text (*guwen*) and contemporary text (*jinwen*) schools of Confucianism employed different paradigms, original texts and research methods. While the

contemporary text school was the dominant one, and most teachers had that background, the ancient text school won a seat for teaching in the *Taixue* towards the end of the Western Han Dynasty, after a long struggle. The *Taixue* was thus open to different schools of Confucianism, and both the content and method of teaching varied with different teachers.

China also had a long history of private higher education, going back to the 6th century BCE. During the Warring States period (475–221 BCE) private schools were so widespread, that many states saw them as a key strategy for attracting talented people for political purposes (Li, 1991a, 1991b). A striking example is the Jixia Academy, established by Duke Huan in the state of Qi in the third century BCE. At one time it had a population of more than ten thousand students and teachers. While it was an imperial higher institution, it was effectively private and provided space for many different schools to debate with and learn from each other, without any intervention from government. It was self-administered, with teachers and students who adhered respectively to Confucianism, Taoism, the Huanglao School, the Yinyang School and others. Students and teachers came and went as they pleased, and the teaching was open to all, regardless of their academic background. Regular fora were held where teachers and students of different schools could debate with each other or hold discussions (Li, 1988).

The academies or *shuyuan* first appeared in the 8th century CE during the later Tang Dynasty, and they are often seen as inheritors of the spirit of the Jixia Academy. They were set up by scholars to provide a quiet learning environment where students could engage in study and contemplation without distraction. They were often in remote mountain areas, and some developed in association with Buddhist temples or monasteries. By the early Song Dynasty, *shuyuan* had become very popular, as a welcome alternative to the restricted opportunities for higher learning in the formal imperial system (Sun, 2000, pp. 204–205).

Shuyuan had a rich heritage of teaching and learning experiences, which were developed from such ancient private institutions as the Jixia Academy and from the influences of Buddhist education. Over its 1 200 years of history, the *shuyuan* accumulated significant experience in the following areas: organizational governance, methods of creating and selecting teaching content and approaches, ways of integrating knowledge and practice, and a unique style of relationship between students and teachers.

While some academies looked to local or the imperial government for support, both financially and politically, many found their own funding through the ownership of land or through donations. This made possible a high degree of independence and a democratic approach to self-governance. The second important feature of the *shuyuan* was its autonomy in generating new knowledge and in selecting teaching content and approaches, which reflected its relative

freedom in teaching and research. One of the significant roles of the master of a *shuyuan* was to develop new teaching content which was influential in attracting students and in raising its public image. For example, the *Bailudong Shuyuan* (White Deer Grotto Academy) was revived when Zhu Xi became its master in 1179 CE. He re-examined the *Five Classics* of Confucianism, and organized them into the *Four Books*. His *Selected Commentaries on the Four Books* became the major teaching content of the White Deer Academy. Later it was selected as the basic teaching content for the imperial universities and for preparation for the civil service examinations over many centuries.

In order to create a free academic environment, the *shuyuan* used the approach of organizing fora, called *jianghui*, where one or several keynote speakers were invited from other institutions, to introduce new ideas. In many cases, this was a monthly event, and it encouraged lively debates among scholars adhering to different schools of knowledge. It was an event open to everyone in the community, and not limited to the students and teachers associated with the academy itself. While women studied mainly within the family and were not allowed to become formal students of the academies, these were occasions which they also could attend.

A third feature of the academy was its emphasis on the integration of knowledge and practice. In the guidelines for the *Bailudong Shuyuan*, Zhu Xi reiterated the point that the purpose of learning is for practice, not for knowledge itself. In this he reflected the famous opening lines of Confucius in the *Analects*, “Isn’t it a pleasure to practice what you have learned after due intervals?” (1:1). Learning and practice are seen as one integrated process, and Zhu Xi urged both teachers and students of the academy to integrate Confucian human relationships into daily life in the neighborhood, the local community and the wider society. Perhaps the most famous example of knowledge and action is the *Donglin Shuyuan* under its master, Gu Xiancheng. Gu’s research and teaching focused intensely on contemporary political issues and social development, and he attracted students from all over the country, who wished to emulate his approach to putting knowledge into immediate political action.

Finally, the relationship between students and teachers was one of close connection and deep mutual commitment in the *shuyuan*. Traditionally, the master-disciple relationships in China resembled that of parents and children in families, based on the Confucian rituals. To commit oneself to students is an essential requirement of every teacher. On the other hand, to be loyal to one’s teacher is a first step to learning and moral discipline. In private academies or in the *shuyuan*, teachers and students usually met for purely academic or occupational interests, rather than practical purposes related to career advancement. In imperial institutions of higher learning, teachers had dual-identities, as both teacher and scholar official. In private academies or in the

shuyuan, teacher-student relationships thus tended to be relatively more equal, compared with the situation in imperial institutions. Moreover, teaching and studying in academies was usually a life-long process, which involved close communications on a regular basis. The teacher-student relationship became one of tangible caring, sharing and responsibility to each other. This was particularly true when difficult times came. In the case of the *Donglin Shuyuan*, when political persecution came, teachers and students made every effort possible to protect each other, at the risk of sacrificing their own lives.

Conclusion

Traditional Chinese education is a remarkable heritage for contemporary Chinese universities, and particularly for normal universities. We conclude with some comments on China's knowledge traditions, which developed in a very different way from those of the European university, with its early acceptance of a hierarchy of specialized fields and professions, with theology having the task of integrating them into one. In China, technical and specialized knowledge had its role and was highly developed, but was always subordinated to humanistic knowledge, categorized as classics, philosophy, histories and literary collections, since the third century CE. Thomas Lee notes that Zhu Xi's work in editing the *Four Books*, and developing a Commentary on them which was to dominate the higher curriculum from the Song Dynasty through many subsequent centuries "represented the contemporary consciousness about the need for a meta-narrative. This is represented by the word *tong*, which could loosely be rendered as "comprehensiveness" but which could also mean the inter-connected nature of things under examination, especially when applied to human affairs and historical events (Lee, 2000, p. 300). This view of education was modified somewhat by the Ming Dynasty scholar Wang Yangming, whose work probably had the greatest influence on progressive education in the 19th and 20th centuries, in both China and other parts of East Asia. To quote Thomas Lee again, "whereas Zhu Xi emphasized the serious inquiry and intellectual pursuits, Wang Yangming believed that human ability was capable of 'naturally knowing' to distinguish between good and evil. The latter's approach clearly implied a kind of egalitarianism, with which we are now familiar. It provided a foundation for education of nearly all people" (Lee, 2000, p. 332).

Suffice it to say, in conclusion to this paper, that China has a remarkable tradition of education as the core integrative field of higher learning, encompassing an understanding of the classics, philosophy, history and literature. It has been an open tradition, with Confucianism enriched and transformed over time through the integration of ideas from Daoism and Buddhism, yet a coherent

and consistent one, which progressed from an elite understanding of who could benefit from education to a highly populist one. It has been a tradition that emphasized the practical application of knowledge, and saw responsible action for the social good as the main test of valid knowledge, rather than logic and theoretical proof, as in the European tradition. It has also been a reflective tradition that continuously speculated on the successes and failures of learning, teaching and education, and distilled these valuable experiences into various educational theories which still provide powerful normative frameworks for the practices of modern schooling and teacher education.

Most importantly, the Chinese heritage of education over thousands of years has reminded us that the role of the teacher combines that of knowledgeable scholar, artistic and caring professional and responsible public intellectual, and that education is always a priority, both for individual cultivation and for national strengthening and societal development. To ensure this priority, the teaching profession has been seen as the core to providing educational service for both the public and the private good. The education and development of teaching professionals is commonly recognized as the key to the success of basic education and student learning. Thus it is not surprising that the concept of a “university of education” first emerged in East Asia, particularly Japan and South Korea, and that the idea of the normal university, first developed in France after the French Revolution, has taken deep root in Chinese soil. While the university of education is somewhat limited by its historical roots in the normal college, the idea of the normal university embraces all the strengths of the basic disciplines in the sciences and humanities found in the comprehensive university, while giving education a core responsibility for integrating each field of specialist knowledge into the broader field of education, with its moral, intellectual, aesthetic and emotional dimensions.

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