

# **The Problems and the Relevation of Humanity Education in the Career-Oriented Universities in China by Comparing with the Situations in Hong Kong and Taiwan**

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**Abstract.** Humanity education is not a major focus in the education of many applied universities in Mainland China and thus faces a dilemma that neither the institutes nor students consider humanity education important. This paper will dig up this problem and develop a possible solution by comparing the methods or policies of executing humanity education in the same type of universities in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The methodology is first to revisit the related studies to examine how different humanity education is implemented in these three places and then fathom out a possible pathway for the humanity education in the career-oriented universities in China.

## **1. Introduction**

There are over 600 career-oriented applied universities in China. Most of them provide education to foster their students' applicable skills for their employment and do research or social service aside. The situation of undermining humanity education will only be worse if the public ignores its impact to the society. Hence, by examining some of the methods done by the educational institutes in Hong Kong and Taiwan, there might be some useful advice for the authorities in the applied universities to ponder.

## **2. The Condition of Humanity Education in the Career-Oriented Applied Universities in China**

### **2.1 The Previous Research**

Since the year 2000, there are not few scholars critiquing the developments of humanity education in Chinese universities and the thread of their discussion concludes that it is to deal with the need of the work force after the reform and open policy in the 80s that the Chinese government initiated a series of educational reforms, including establishing more departments, setting up new educational principles and pedagogy, and letting more universities to be established in the 90s.

Scholars tend to give a more positive opinion regarding to these educational reforms. Chen and Yang wrote: "The new universities spread from the major cities to the minor and 60% of them were set up in local cities in the rural provinces to absorb the suburban students. A part of the new universities are private ones. For the needs to develop the economy of the local area where the schools are located, some schools purely serve their students as places to foster better applicable skills for future jobs [1]." Their study reveals that many of the new universities are set up to fulfill the needs of the development of the local economy, which is vital and necessary according to the policy. Professor Li also comments: "Universities are the places for both our Chinese race and every individual Chinese to realize their dreams. It is the responsibility of the schools and the duty of our contemporary college students [2]." The elevation of the public educational levels can substantially benefit the society in general and encourage the public psychologically.

But there are some professors starting to worry about the imbalance between the education of practical courses and humanity education. Professor Cao indicated: "The benefit-based concepts

entangle the minds of the public. The mercenary thinking leads our Chinese education and circles of the intellectual to emphasize the functional value of the education instead of encouraging the students ponder on the value of individual in life and the reason for living [3].” No matter it is in the universities or the applied universities, the importance of humanity education as a whole needs to be redefined: “The fundamental concept of the higher education in China is originally grafted from the Soviet scientific education, focusing on the teaching of knowledge and skills and neglect the holistic development of morality and humanity [4].” Scholars have been aware of a tendency that the distorting education is to maximize the profits-earning and the efficiency of educating students, which results in utilitarianism. Furthermore, there also lacks a particular division in the school to manage the affairs of humanity education: “Most of the colleges in China have yet settled a special department to deal with the problems of humanity education. In many schools, it is the office of educational administration that does the job, but in many cases, the office only arranges the classes on the surface level [5].” These factors deeply put harms on humanity education. Under such a circumstance, the students only learn things purposefully.

The ineffectiveness of humanity education is a sign of the depreciating value in education. It affects the teachings in classes and some teachers narrow down the depth of their teaching to match the mentality of the students who consider humanity education unimportant. For example, it is a pity that many English classes focus purely on language-training without carrying much cultural or social reflection in its core value.

## **2.2 The Necessity of Redeeming the Humanity Education**

It is perhaps unrealistic to think that humanity education can become like art salon in the west. But if the quality and the practise is not improved, the waning condition of humanity education will only be worse. Scholars like Chen Ju Xian points out that there should be a methodology and evaluating system to harmonize philosophical education and appropriate social practices to strengthen the campus humanistic atmosphere. Some of those ideas sounds good, but nothing is really innovative. Neither is some scholar’s comment like “elevating the quality of humanity of our teachers and making them improve their teaching methods [6].” All these suggestions do not tackle the complicated question of waning humanity in essence, and those methods make no differences between the processes of improving humanity education or any other subjects of study.

The first thing before positing any solution to save humanity education is to redeem the fundament of humanity education. In the west, humanity education arises from the classic Greek rationalism since the epoch of Socrates and Plato. As time passes on through the middle ages, Renaissance, Romantic period, Enlightenment, modern to postmodern periods, human beings continue to form, deconstruct and re-adjust the ways of thinking and so is humanism. The education of humanity aims to elevate and proliferate ourselves through studying literature, history, philosophy and arts. Literature and history can shed lights on the experiences. Philosophy challenges our scopes of thinking. Arts can invigorates our senses to perceive the world. Those are the treasures accumulated in humanism by which people can understand things and identify themselves better. They are by no means less important than science or engineering. The real use of humanism in are shown in countless aspects. For example, arts are concretized in the forms of architecture and industrial design, and history offers so many examples as subjects of study for the management.

The main problem of humanity education lies in the fact that there is a general cognition which treats humanity exclusively from other disciplines, that is, a dichotomy between humanity and other practical subjects exists. For example, the general view of science is that it is opposed to humanity, but in fact it is not so. Science is derived from the natural philosophy from the ancient Greece. So is math, which is a part of metaphysics in its formative stage. The essence of humanity is a dynamic remodeling and reforming process and other disciplines can testify the validity of it. In other words, the scope of humanity education should be wide and inclusive and scientific discovery can help to revise the humanity, and vice versa. In ancient mythology, when there is any natural cause that human can not explain, people refer it to God’s will. But in our time, many of these inexplicables can be explained. Science assists and revises our views, and humanity can thus extend. There probably will

be no hot topics like globalization in the forum of academics without the invention of internet. But all such developments of technology are made to satisfy human's eternal desires. Thus both humanity and other disciplines are supplementary to each other. If the humanity education and other disciplines stay in a dichotomous cycle, it is in fact anti-humanity. Wang claims, "In the 1930s, the famous American science historian George Sarton critiqued the conflict and antagonistic state between science and humanity and asserted a view called "Neo-humanism" that melts science and humanity. The new humanism emphasizes the combination of the two. Scientists should have the historical sense and the humane spirits. Likewise, classic humanity scholars have to adapt new views to do humanity like they mantle the humanism with science [7]." Instead of dividing the different disciplines, it would be better if different disciplines can supplement each other to fill in the shortage of each disciplines.

To do research inter-disciplinarily is not a new concept, but not many practitioners are good at it. French film scholar, Gille Deleuze who uses the concept of physics to develop his film theory, is a example of study humanity in a new direction. The intervention from different disciplines enriches both humanity and technology. They equally benefits our students who will use all these knowledge together for future development.

### **3. The Differences of College Humanity Education between Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan**

Hong Kong is a highly populated region where the pace of life is so fast. Due to its colonial past, it is one of the most westernized Chinese societies and capitalism plays a vital role for its prosperity. Commercial as it can be, the authority concerning education does not undermine humanity education. The courses of humanity anchor early in the high school. Besides the mandatory subjects such as Chinese, English and math, courses like history and information technology are set as selective. Before entering college, students are equipped with the knowledge to think and reflect, "Hong Kong's education is set for each student's own needs, so it emphasizes the self-learning habit and developments of it [8]." In China, most students learn humanity because they need it to pass the college entrance exam and such a drive does not sufficiently invoke student's perchance of the subject.

Hong Kong's education system is elastic but not skin deep. Hong Kong's universities open courses that update with the society. They set up new courses or new departments, such as City University has the Colleges of Creative Media, to fit the trends of time. Students who have completed a certain number of credits under certain category will be noted on their transcript like they have done a minor or double major. As long as the basic requirements of the major are completed, students in Hong Kong enjoy a flexibility to choose a variety of classes whereas in China, most of the regulations of courses are decided by the departments, even the textbooks are decided. The polythitic nature of Hong Kong's education attracts many mainland students to study there. Hong Kong university, Hong Kong University of Technology and City University focus on science, but these universities hold conferences frequently to better the humanity education. Not only college professors can attend these conferences, high school teachers are offered a lot of opportunities to attend as well. Although some people criticize that Hong Kong's overly liberal education gives rise to the anti-mainland protests in recent years, Hong Kong's universities' emphasis on the freedom of the individuals should be praised. because it is a part of the achievement of humanity education. Lingnan University's educational mission, "Liberal Arts Education. Transformation for Life," explains everything.

In Taiwan, the universities suffer greatly from the low birth rate and the proliferation of the numbers of university in the 90s, so many schools are forced to close or merge. The teachers and staffs in many private ones face the problem of not keeping their jobs. The ministry of education intervened to reform the schools to do adult education or simply call to discontinue.

Difficult as the situation is, Taiwan's polytechnic universities still strive to live on by attempting opening new types of classes or programs to differentiate themselves from others. Taiwan University of Technology opens 140 courses in general education while Taipei University of Technology opens 267. Among many of those courses, there are courses that combine localization and technology while

maintaining perceptive training in life, such as “The Contemporary Asian Visual Arts,” “The Pleasure of Zen: Tea, Flower and Incense,” “Practical Sharing of End-of-Life Care,” “Visual Sociology of Contemporary Taiwan Labor” and “Marine City and Its Culture” are the creative courses that explore different phases and fields of life.

The ways Hong Kong and Taiwan’s universities do education distinguish themselves from that of China, “Taiwan’s education focuses on the creativity and creative thoughts while Hong Kong takes thinking as first in language education and emphasizes the development of cognition as the goal of learning [9].” In the art center of Taiwan’s universities and Hong Kong’s universities, there are often art exhibition, small concerts or speeches being held. Schools use the facilities and funds to invest in the developments of humanity education both in the classroom and as extra-curricular activities.

Both Hong Kong and Taiwan take creativity as a core value in humanity education. They do different things to achieve this goal but they equally focus on combining the campus life with humanity. Humanity education is not treated as a vague idea.

#### **4. Revelations to the Applied Universities in China**

According to the analysis in this paper, there are three major suggestions to the humanity education in the applied universities:

1. Humanity education should be a life education. An integration between humanity and science must be stressed. School must build a platform within its own limitations for the students to experience humanism. By doing so, the utilitarian concept of education will be transcended.

2. A scholar in humanism must widen his scope by incorporating new perspectives, so as to update their courses. Universities have to continue developing new courses in directions.

3. School should not give general education a minor role. Humanity education is an ontology which needs more elasticity in the process of implementation.

Due to the historical and spatial differences, to do the practices of the three points mentioned in mainland and see their effects will not be possible in a short while. Hong Kong and Taiwan are still endeavoring in elevating their own education. But they can still illuminate the schools in mainland China to adjust their path of carrying out humanity education.

#### **5. Summary**

The applied universities in China can offer students what it takes to get a job, but they should never undermine or neglect humanity education. By comparing the humanity education in China with the contemporary situations in Hong Kong and Taiwan, it is lucid that the humanity education should root in the formal education in mainland China by various means, such as enriching the humanistic atmosphere on the campus and opening more inventive courses. It is necessary to keep in mind that technology comes from humanity, and the developments of all the disciplines should lead to perfecting the well-being of our world.

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