

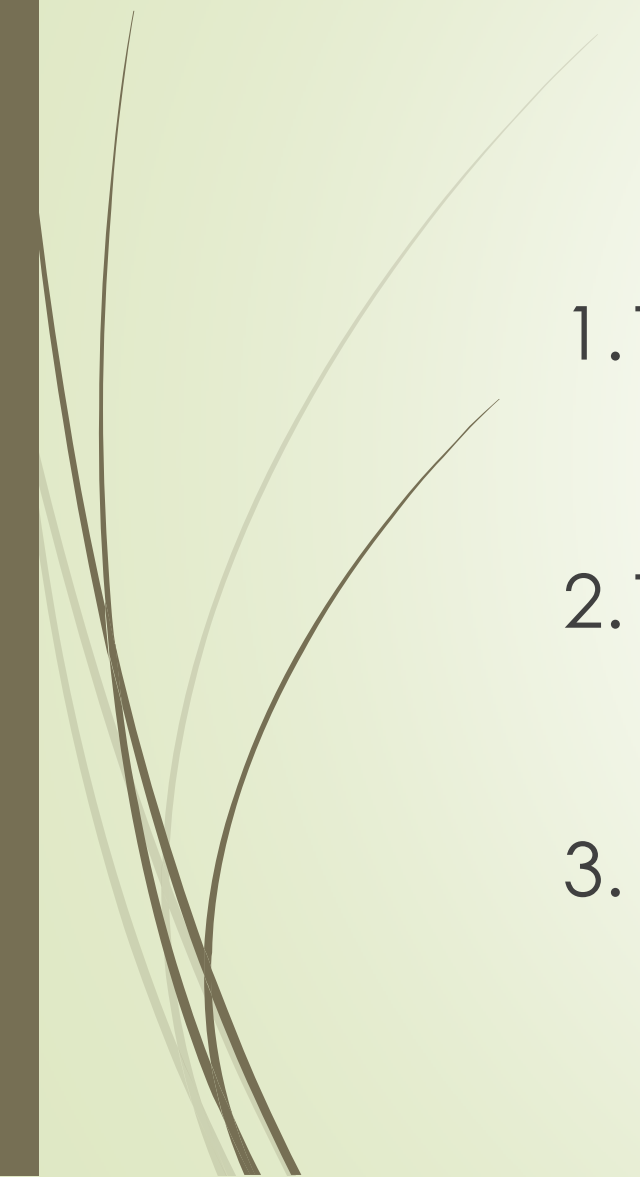


# The Normal University as a Distinctive Chinese Model in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Webinar at the Centre for Global Higher Education.  
Oxford University - June 7, 2022



# Overview of this presentation

1. The Emergence of the Normal School and the Normal University
  2. The Normal School and Teacher Education in France, the USA, Japan & China
  3. Implications of a Confucian Pedagogy
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# France and the Ecole Normale

- One Ecole Normale for girls and one for boys was set up in France's 28 districts to prepare teachers for a state schooling system for all children after the Revolution
- The word *normal* in French means to establish a norm, model or standard & the vision was for all children to be educated equally as citizens of a new republic
- This was the first formal higher education for women as well as men from the working classes
- The universities were seen as too elite & specialized to form teachers committed to educating every child



# *Value Polarities between the Normal College and the University*

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



The Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) was founded first in 1795 then re-established as a Grande Ecole in 1806

- ▶ A hybrid between the university and école normale which demonstrates how education can serve as a leading field in the university
- ▶ The Grandes Ecoles and French concours were shaped by China's *civil service (keju)* system & it is worth reflecting on the Confucian values found in the Chinese translation of *normal* as 师范, the teacher as a model
- ▶ While the écoles normales have been upgraded to university level and linked to universities, France still has four Ecoles Normales Supérieures

# ENS Paris

Established in 1806, highly competitive entrance examinations and professional prospects



# The ENS Cachan – not far from Paris





# Teacher Education in the USA

- The first normal school on a French model was founded in 1839 in Lexington Massachusetts
- There were 90 normal schools all over the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, called by Christine Ogren (2005) “An instrument for great good”
- As the first higher education for women –laid the foundation for a progressive schooling system
- However all were either upgraded to local universities or merged in the massification of higher education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as “poor stepchildren of Academe” (Lucas, 1997)



# Lexington Normal School 1839.





# Teacher Education in Japan

- From the Meiji period to the second world war, the influence of the French model led to normal schools for the training of excellent elementary school teachers,
- After WW II, Japan followed the U.S. in raising teacher education to university degree level
- Americans advised that normal schools be upgraded to local comprehensive universities following its experience, blaming the normal schools for nurturing an exaggerated patriotism
- Japanese leaders responded by creating universities of education – (*kyoiku daigaku*) which nurtured new inter-disciplinary fields such as environmental studies, women's studies and media studies as well as education, constituting a unique Asian university model

# Osaka University of Education





# Teacher Education in China

- China began establishing normal schools on the French model in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which were open to women as well as men
- Higher Normal Schools emerged in Beijing and Nanjing, with Beijing Higher Normal School becoming Beijing Normal University in 1923
- Nanjing Higher Normal School was merged with Southeast University in 1921, following the American pattern, but education and the training of teachers remained a key concern in the Nationalist period in spite of the trauma of the second world war and the civil war



# The Normal University in China Today

- After the 1949 Revolution higher education was reorganized with one national normal university in each of China's six major regions, which led the way for education and teachers at a national level
- Then by 1958 almost every province had established a normal university to serve provincial needs while there were also normal colleges or schools at prefectural and district levels to form teachers for elementary schools
- Under the impact of internationalization and globalization in the 1990s some normal universities wished to be renamed comprehensive universities in order to gain better recognition in the English speaking world, but the Chinese government did not agree

Beijing Normal University, which inherited the campus of Furen Catholic University in 1952





# What can China's Normal University bring to the world?

- ▶ An Ethnically Engaged university that gives highest place to the public good and forms citizens committed to serving a global knowledge society
  - ▶ An alternative to the Global Research University with its focus on competition in a global knowledge economy
  - ▶ An institution that demonstrates the richness of Confucian humanism and the kinds of creativity that arise from its harmonious interaction with the classics of the Christian West
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# The normal university as a distinctive Chinese higher education model in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Three cases and their value

Dr. Hantian Wu

Department of Educational Studies, College of Education, Zhejiang University (Hangzhou, China)

CGHE Seminar | Tuesday, 07 Jun 2022 14:00 - 15:00

## The ethical engagement in social transformation of China's normal universities: Three cases



- East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai inherited the tradition of St. John's University and has been committed to maintaining its “elegance [*you ya*]”;
- Central China Normal University (CCNU) in Wuhan inherited the tradition of a Christian university and adopted a humanistic education philosophy;
- Nanjing Normal University (NNU) inherited the spirit and the campus of Christian Ginling Women's College;

## The ethical engagement in social transformation of China's normal universities: Three cases:

**ECNU and CCNU:** national normal universities;

**NNU:** provincial normal university with an influential national center for moral education

- **The major rationale for choosing the cases:** their respective history and representative leaders/scholars are an excellent reflecting of the role of China's normal universities in promoting the integration of Confucian traditions and Christian educational philosophy in a formal context of socialist ideology;
- "...insisted on and promoted non-utilitarian values during China's market-oriented transformation"
- "...their development strategies have not been shaped by the increasingly dominant audit culture and utilitarian social values ..."

## East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai



**1951:** Two prestigious private universities in Shanghai, the Great China University and Kwang Hua University, were merged to form the ECNU, using the campus of GCU (Yuan & Wang, 2001);

**1952:** departments of **St. John's University** were merged into ECNU during a nationwide reorganization of HEIs aimed creating specialist universities (ibid);

- The early development model (1952-1957) of ECNU was mainly Soviet style, with the major goal of training middle school teachers (ibid);

## The 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century:

- a) along with the expansion of the university and the end of the job assignment system, **more non-education related departments and schools** were established (Hayhoe, et al., 2011);
- b) **female students** made up a high proportion of the student population (ibid);
- c) the emphasis on **international cooperation** has continued to the present;

## Present ECNU:

chose “**elegance** [*you ya*]” to summarize its spiritual characteristics in a macro atmosphere of utilitarianism;

**4 undergraduate colleges** [*shu yuan*] were established to take the responsibility for the holistic/general education, named after its first president and predecessor institutions;



**2011:** ECNU and New York University (NYU) co-founded **NYU Shanghai.**

- “...promoting a more liberal and cosmopolitan higher education philosophy, and attempting to have more institutional autonomy”
- **February 2022:** ECNU and NYU Shanghai co-hosted a panel entitled “Bridges of Knowledge: A Half Century of US-China Collaboration in Higher Education” (NYU Shanghai, 2022)...given the challenges of the current Sino-US relationship...



# Central China Normal University (CCNU) in Wuhan





**1871:** The earliest predecessor, Boone Memorial School, established by the American Episcopal Church (Wang, 1993);

**1924: Christian Central China (*Huachung*) University** established on the basis of Boone School/University.

**1951:** became a public institution and began its transformation into a normal university;

**1952** (the nationwide reorganization): Central China Higher Normal School established mainly based on the Central China University (CCNU, n.d.);

- ...the relationship between the college and its affiliated middle school was strengthened;
- ...conducting research in the fields of both natural sciences and social sciences was encouraged;

**1984** (after the Cultural Revolution):

President **Zhang Kaiyuan**, who was educated at the Christian University of Nanking (Jinling University) and had served as a faculty member of the College:

- ...put forward the principle of “undergraduate-orientation [*benke weibei*]” and concentrated limited resources towards undergraduate education (Zhou & Zheng, 2021);
- “[higher] education should serve the entire society” (ibid);

**In the 1980s:** Chinese HEIs changed “college” in their names to “university” (Zhang, 2015);

- **Zhang** thought it was unnecessary and later realized that it negatively affected the college’s student recruitment (ibid);

\*Liu Haifeng (a famous Chinese scholar in education history): the word “normal [*shifan*]” should be preserved as a cultural symbol to inspire their students to become moral role models;

## Nanjing Normal University (NNU) in Jiangsu Province



**1913:** Ginling College founded by five American Christian churches (Sun, 2005);

**1928: Wu Yifang**, a member of its first cohort of graduates returned to China after completing her PhD in biology at the Univ. of Michigan and became its first Chinese president;

- In 1945: signed the United Nations Charter on behalf of China, becoming one of the four women to sign the Charter;

**1950:** Two Christian HEIs in Nanjing, Ginling and the University of Nanking [*jinlin daxue*], were temporarily merged (NNU, n.d.);

**1952:** Education-related departments of this new (public) university were combined to form **Nanjing Normal College**, using the campus Ginling (NNU, n.d.); educating school teachers for Jiangsu Province;

**1984:** The College changed its name to **NNU** and **Wu Yifang** served as its honorary president;

**NNU**: famous for its influential national center for **moral education** established by **Lu Jie**, a distinguished scholar and the first woman doctoral supervisor in education in China's reform period;

- ...an undergraduate student at Ginling (Lu, 2020);
- **The mid-1980s and the 1990s**: “while China’s economic system was being transformed..., **Lu Jie** realized that the **market-oriented culture** was having a profound impact on Chinese society”;
- She believed it was crucial to determine the value orientation of **school moral education** during such a transition period (Lu, 2020);
  - e.g., “The value orientation of moral education under the market economy” (Lu, 1994), “Market economy and school moral education” (Lu, 1995), and “Moral crisis: A modernization paradox” (Lu, 2001);
  - **Historical background**: after 1949: all humanistic educational concepts and practices were criticized; reform period: dominated by utilitarian values (Tan, 2021);

**Lu Jie's** influential viewpoints: an emphasis on the importance of individual agency in educational practices and constructing education theories (Zhang, 2010), which was based on her integration of Confucianism, Christianity, and socialism;

**2000:** Institute of Moral Education approved by China's MoE as a key research base for humanities and social sciences (IMENNU, 2017);

- **Focuses:** theoretical studies on moral education, moral education curriculum development, traditional culture and moral education studies, moral education and psychology studies, and civic education studies (ibid);
- developed life moral education courses and moral education textbooks for primary and secondary schools used nationwide (ibid);



## China's normal universities: an alternative model in the changing world

China's normal universities (especially the three cases):

- **Pre-1949 history:** both Confucian traditions and Christian values had been involved;
- **China's reform period:** their development have shown resistance to the audit culture and utilitarian social values;
- ...their integration of Confucian, Christian, and socialist values..., and their emphasis on holistic education and cultivating responsible citizens may have the potential to promote a cosmopolitan outlook that emphasizes the importance of human agency;
- The leading role of women historically and also in the current normal universities;

## China's normal universities: an alternative model in the changing world

China's normal universities (especially the three cases):

- ...enable the younger generation to deal with challenges in geopolitics, the acceleration of global warming and the health issues in the post-pandemic period, while the global research university continues to focus on research and specialized professional knowledge;
- Examples of this potential can be seen in the ECNU-NYU recent event, CCNU's tradition of emphasizing undergraduate education, and NNU's research on innovative approaches to moral education.

China's normal universities might be seen as an alternative Asian higher education model. Their ethical engagement in China's social development may inspire the development of HE in other countries and regions of the world.



# Thank you for your time!

wuhantian@zju.edu.cn | wuhantian7@gmail.com

<https://person.zju.edu.cn/wuhantian> (CN) | <https://person.zju.edu.cn/en/wuhantian> (EN)

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