

Preface

The topic of the mission of Chinese higher education has attracted enormous attention as the promotion of Chinese higher education reform. Referring back to the history of Chinese higher education development, educational mission has evolved from knowledge transmission to humanistic development. Entering the 21st century, more and more specialists and educators have acknowledged the importance of promoting the overall development of human beings. Such mission cannot be realised without the pool of efforts from the government, the university, the society, and also from the administrators, the teachers, and the students.

In this issue of JCS, Heng WANG, academic visitor at the University of Cambridge from Beijing Foreign Studies University, first elaborates the mission of Chinese universities from a cultural perspective by examining the Socratic tradition in teaching and learning styles in the University of Cambridge. She argues that the introduction of the Socratic tradition, with its emphasis on interactions and thinking, is crucial to empower students and liberate their enquiring and analytical abilities, which is beneficial for the future development of Chinese higher education. Then Prof. Lingcui KONG *et al.* raises the urgent call for the promotion of humanistic education in higher normal educational institutions in China as against the influence of the utilitarianism of scientific education.

After the discussion of mission orientation, the following authors share with us their reflections on particular educational and applied linguistic theories. During the current national English educational reform, there has been heated discussion on grammar teaching, which leads to some controversial opinions. After examining the nature of second language acquisition, Prof. Siwu ZHANG *et al.* from Sichuan Normal University claim that the essence of language teaching should be the teaching of form and grammar-based language teaching conduces to the progressive complexity in form. Limei, BAI *et al.* from Northwest Normal University, explore the role of pragmatic inference in metaphor comprehension and metaphor in pragmatic inference on the basis of relevance theory.

Then, some other authors provide us with their empirical attempts in promoting the educational reform. Zhenping WANG *et al.* introduce their action research on students' reflections on the Video Course. Their results show that the innovation on English language teaching in their university has mostly been achieved. Finally, Xuemei SHAN unravels how Chinese English learners' level of anxiety relates to their language acquisition process.

As the executive chief editor of this issue, I wish to take the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all invited authors for their contributions to this issue's special topic: the mission of Chinese higher education.

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