

The Mission of Higher Normal Education — On the Necessity for Its Return to Humanistic Education

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Abstract

The mission of higher normal education is humanistic education, which, however, has been declining gradually upon the influence of the utilitarianism of scientific education in modern times. The utility of scientific education in our country is demonstrated dramatically as the stressing of science over humanity, which has resulted in a deficiency of humanistic education in our teachers' colleges and has brought about serious consequences: some executives fish for fame and compliments; some teachers lack proper teaching ethics; some students are in low spirits; the societal conducts are worsening to some extent; the most basic mutual-trust relationship is hard to find in society. In the light of this, contemporary society strongly calls for the resumption of humanistic education in higher normal educational institutions in China. So it is of great necessity for our higher normal educational institutions to rethink profoundly so as to better carry out the historical missions to shape students into persons with thoughts, ideas and souls. Teachers' colleges shoulder the tasks of imparting knowledge and educating students. Furthermore, their students undertake the important mission of improving the whole nation's humanistic qualities and humanistic spirit. Owing to these special characteristics, English teachers in those institutions can better blend humanistic knowledge education in the course teaching, allowing students to study humanistic knowledge and develop a humanistic spirit naturally through experience.

Key Words: Mission of Higher Normal Education, Humanistic Education, Teachers' Colleges

1. The paradox of material and spiritual civilizations

Since adopting ‘the reform and opening up policy’ three decades ago, China has accumulated material wealth as well as increased its people’s living standards to a higher level than ever before. However, our human qualities and humanistic spirits have not grown simultaneously with material wealth. On the contrary, the collapse of the old spiritual beliefs and the difficulty setting up new faiths in the short time have not only triggered several social problems, but also have caused negative impacts on people’s mental health and spiritual state. These are clearly demonstrated in two aspects: first, people have been seeking material wealth unscrupulously; second it is common to see the decline of humanistic quality and the lower standard of social ethics in our society and social credit ability and moral crises. It is never a surprise to see such a phenomenon that pupils monitor police officers in an exam, which is sad and absurd rather than innovative. The loss of eight lives in a serious campus stampede in a secondary school in Hunan is sad enough; however, what is even sadder is the public’s indifference to the tragedy, especially their peers’ amazing indifference just after the tragedy as reported. Facing that, any person with a good moral compass particularly the teaching staff, cannot help asking themselves: what has happened to/ what has been wrong with our education? Man’s nature is supposed to be good in traditional culture. The young pupils’ indifference is a good example reflecting the ruination of the moral bottomline. If this is true, how can we boast of five-thousand-years-old civilization? The reason is that education in contemporary China has largely evolved in an education of scores. Such an education is to select the fewest and desert the majority, rather than encourage and promote them. Score-oriented education has been diverted from the principle of taking people as the foremost; respecting people’s humanity and life. This sort of education is doomed to result in tragedy (Shan Shibing, 2009). Before this paper was finished, another stampede accident occurred in Jiangxi. Campus violence occurs often. If the respect for life is not taught in detail and in practice, similar tragedies can never be avoided. According to a survey by Zaobao.com about an 80-year-old man’s fall on the street made, only 31.28% out of the over 50,000 interviewees expressed that they would not hesitate to help him up.

2. Declining University Humanism

Needless to say, as heirs and creators of civilization, teachers’ colleges in China have been facing a profound ideological and spiritual crisis: declining humanism and a deficiency of responsibility. Therefore, it is hard for them to shoulder the task of providing a spiritual home for the majority of college students in which they can believe and rely. Universities are becoming more and over administered, and have even become an executive bureaucracy of the government’s subsidiaries, instead of developing as they should as educational and academic institutions (Deng Heping, 2009). An independent and critical spirit are what they need, and what they lack. Independence and critical spirit are disappearing day by day. The ability of higher normal educational institutions, academics and university spirit to pursue ideological

freedom and independent individuality are trampled on. Higher normal educational institutions have become an object of public denunciation for their “three wastes” (wastes of taxpayers’ money, bubble academic reputation and students’ youth) and “three sorrows” (sorrows of squander, declining university spirit and graduates’ low employment and payment) (Li Wenbin, 2007). Presidents not only play the role of scholars, but also those of businessmen and officials. In order to get promoted, some school executives have been racking their brains to seek fake diplomas. In order to seek fame, interest, scientific projects and prizes, they even compete with their faculties and students, which can not be fair. Ninety percent of national masters teachers who were sorted out by the Ministry of Education last year held executive posts. Far more than one president or vice president in key universities have been accused of getting involved in academic frauds, but they are infamous for putting the blame on others once they are accused. As the increasing social utilitarianism of education lowers its taste for the humanities, intellectuals whose job is to create spiritual products are extremely short of the freedom of soul and peacefulness of thought, too busy involving themselves in professional titles, educational endeavors and income to produce spiritual products wholeheartedly. As the temptation of the executive power that can bring them so many gains is too powerful for some scholars to resist, they repeat the old adage “the one who excels in study can most probably be promoted to be officials,” and abandon their academic research careers to hold administrative posts, some of whom become an academic hegemony. On Oct. 26, 2009, after exposing that more and more universities teachers have begun to mind “official posts” instead of teaching quality, Ji Baocheng (2009), president of Renmin University of China, attacked sharply that “the biggest group of doctors is not in universities, but in official circles.” Once it was uttered, evidence was collected to prove that the biggest official circle is in universities (Zhang Guifeng, 2009). Public universities and colleges are crowded with officials with corresponding administrative levels, which is particularly difficult for foreigners to understand. It can be seen that how surprising “administrativization” is in universities and colleges! Not humanistically cultivated, some teachers lack rigorous studying and teaching styles. A small number of teachers are frivolous and corrupt in professional ethics: incidents such as corporal punishment, rape, and students’ indecency have repeatedly occurred on campus, as has trading academic degrees for money and sex. Due to the extended enrollments of universities and the disguised industrialization of higher normal education, campuses have become places where profits are sought. Universities trade diplomas for money without the consideration of the graduates’ humanistic needs. Some teachers are always busy hunting for scientific projects, writing academic papers and looking for extra money, so they seldom have time to communicate with and take care of students. Some of them even disdain to communicate with students. Consequently, it is not an isolated phenomenon that both teachers and students can not remember each others’ names even at the end of a course. As a result, students are far less dedicated and loyal to their universities, and the feelings between teachers and students are so indifferent that they look like strangers to each other. Consequently, students are disloyal to their majors, disrespect their teachers, show no passions for their schools and dissatisfied with the

society. The social utilitarianism and the pressure for hunting for jobs have made students choose the courses which may bring job opportunities to them. They have spent too much time and too much effort in such courses as computer science and English, but have hardly paid attention to humanities courses. Some students may be knowledgeable, yet culturally ignorant and badly behaved. Ma Jiajue who killed four roommates is just an extreme case, but it has exposed the grave problems reflecting our higher normal education.

3. The history of emphasis on liberal arts education while contempt for science education

Although there are variety of reasons for such phenomena, the absence of humanities education and civilization training are among the important factors. If we look back at our long history and imagine the drawbacks of emphasizing a liberal arts education while looking down upon science education, it is not hard for us to draw such conclusions. Historically speaking, that China has become a civilized country with five thousand years of history can not be separated from the traditional emphasis on humanism education from its beginning to the late nineteenth century. It was not until modern times that our ancient Chinese empire was thrown far behind by the western industrial revolution. The Opium War awakened the Chinese people. Learning from the advanced technologies of the West in order to resist the invasion of the Western powers became an important means to catch up with the Western powers. The “advanced technologies” here refers to the modern sciences originated in the west, especially the gunboats. Ever since then, the guiding ideology has been for science education to replace humanistic education. The May 4th Movement uplifted the banner of science and democracy, but, unfortunately, the banner of humanism was ignored. Many figures of foresight and sagacity like Mei Yiqi and Zhu Kezhen propose that universities should take science and humanism education into account, but their proposals have never been the dominant thought in contemporary education. In a fairly long period after the founding of the People’s Republic, our country used to copy the former Soviet Union’s education model the separation of science education from humanistic education to foster technological personnel who were badly needed in heavy industries and defensive technology sectors. This sort of separation has sufficed up to now. Affected by that, humanistic education has been marginalized from bad to worse: universities only admit about 20% liberal arts students. The grand objective to realize “the four modernizations” was put forward after the Cultural Revolution, among which the modernization of science and technology, an important part of the four, functioned as a primary productive force, while the modernization of humanistic spirit did not belong to the scope of the four modernizations.

At present, education in China, which is seen as the tool to reach the goal, is too utilitarian. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council, sharply criticized that utilitarianism widely exists in some universities and it is the fatal problem that Chinese universities are facing (Zhao Cheng, 2010). Society’s necessary professionals are the guideline of the talent-training criterium.

Universities rush to set up corresponding specialties and courses without sufficient proof, and students swarm to specialize in those fields. As far as humanities education about life and ideals is concerned, since it is difficult to bring immediate returns in the employment rate, provide students with decent income and help parents take back their education investments in a short time, it fails in drawing our proper attention. It seems that employment rate and GDP have equal importance in universities. In order to enhance the employment rate regulated by the government, some universities even falsify data. It is right for both universities and students to take professions into consideration; after all, employment is quite necessary for their survival. However, the meaning of universities should not be limited solely to that. A great number of people who do not receive higher normal education today still have jobs, so if universities are limited to preparing their students for employment, there is no need for teachers' colleges. There is no doubt that universities are utilitarian, yet they should emphasize humanism as well as spirit.

4. The historical review of humane education

In China, the term“人文” (humanity) appeared for the first time in the *Book of Yi*. It is a combination of “人” (human) and “文” (culture). Humanity and culture interact with each other deeply, and the people-oriented spirit is at the core. In the West, the Greeks used the word “paideia” (culture, civilization) to mean “graceful, virtuous, noble and ingenious” education, revealing the close relationship among the humanities, culture and education, which is also characterized by people-centered thought.

In modern times, new ideological meanings such as human rights, concepts of freedom were attached to humanities. New concepts such as humanism and humanistic spirit came into existence one after another. Humanity refers to man's concerns about and pursuits for their own sound development and improvement, including the cultural features of human beings and the human nature of culture, whose essence is humane education, human quality and humanistic spirit. The ties between them are that schools improve students' humanistic qualities and spirit by means of humane education, which mainly refers to an education of humanistic knowledge and humanistic spirit. It is entrusted with the responsibility to teach students how to behave properly and how to get used to thinking of placing people above everything, as well as how to master the humanistic knowledge and skills which are needed for their harmonious existence and development in society. A humanities education also plays an important role in the process of training students' creative accomplishments and helping them to transform human knowledge into humanistic spirit. The relationship between culture and education has been closed from time immemorial. Confucius's *Six Classics* laid down the basic pattern of the traditional humanities disciplines, while his *Six Arts* included the fundamental aspects of human accomplishments. The ancient Greeks' *Seven Arts* was the initial integration of humane education and science education. Cicero, a famous Roman philosopher, translated Greek

“paideia” into Latin “humanitas.” Italians then called those teachers who taught classical languages and literatures “humanitas.” It was translated into English as “humanities.”

Humanistic qualities refer to human being’s comprehensive humanistic achievements in their personal development and improvement, including humanistic knowledge, thought, methods and spirit. The formation of humanistic qualities depends primarily on the acquired humanistic education.

Humanistic spirit is the spirit of seeking virtues and beauty (Gu Yuxiu, 2008) and the question which mainly concerns why we are human beings. It includes two chief elements of human nature, reason and transcendence as well as two dimensions of philosophy, politics and ethics, demonstrated as “a kind of universal human self-care, the maintenance, pursuit and concern for human beings’ dignity, value and fate and the high values for the various spiritual and cultural treasures coming down from history, the recognition and shaping of the ideal comprehensively-developed personalities” (see the encyclopaedia of Baidu). It also advocates human’s values, and citizens’ rights first, as well as the respect for human’s spiritual values. Humanistic spirit in the current China is a people-oriented spirit, the starting and fundamental point on which human development is based on.

5. The bitter fruit of emphasis on liberal arts education and contempt for science education

Under the guidance of a policy of emphasizing science education at the cost of liberal arts education, humanistic education has gradually got lost. The separation of liberal arts and science education in middle schools makes students feel that if one is good at math, physics and chemistry, then he/she is able to succeed in the world—which even became the motto for many high school students. This policy has not only reinforced the tendency to emphasize subjects such as math, physics and chemistry, but also virtually killed the cultural awareness of middle schools and students, making them mistakenly believe that science education is the entire content of school education. As a result, humanistic education with China’s outstanding traditional culture and advanced foreign cultures as the teaching content has been treated more and more coldly. It is no doubt that teachers’ college humanistic education, based on primary and secondary schools’ humanistic education, has suffered heavily. Aggravated by a test-oriented education, compulsory education has been turned into a highly competitive education aiming for the selection of candidates for higher teaching institutions. Consequently, basic education, whose major objective is to cultivate the younger generation, has become hard knowledge-reciting drills, and students have become slaves of textbooks and test machines. Only a few “elites” are admitted to study in Tsinghua or Beijing University, while a majority of students become the losers and victims of such education, their human nature destroyed and all-round development as human beings suffering a heavy blow. In an era of using scores to decide who the winner is, scores are almost the only criterion to evaluate students or to decide whether they are qualified to study at higher schools. Society, parents and students tend not to

care about students' own moral and humanistic accomplishments. Driven by "industrialization of education," education became the tool for making profits, filled with copper stinks. As college graduates have had greater difficulty in getting employed, the historical mission of higher normal education has been ignored or even forgotten. In short, for quite a long period, education has been misunderstood as a specialized, human resource education, which takes students as machines and tools, while humanistic education has been ignored and even forgotten, owing to the temporal need of our country, the mistakes of our education policy as well as the increasingly serious employment situation. Emphasis on teaching students how to do work at the expense of teaching students how to think and behave has resulted in a lack of humanistic education and the decline of students' humanistic spirit, and the bitter fruit caused by the ignorance of humanistic education has already been revealed by students. Although the students in those schools have gathered some knowledge, mastered some techniques or skills, their knowledge is not broad or profound enough, and their knowledge structure is far from rational. In addition, abilities as communication skills, manipulative ability, mental capacity, the interpersonal ability of coordination, the ability of adaptation to the actual work as well as the capacity to resist all kinds of erroneous ideological and cultural infiltration and erosion are all weak. In a word, their comprehensive accomplishments badly need to be improved, particularly their cultural knowledge, humanistic self-cultivation and humanistic spirit. Consequently, their all around development faces very big challenges. It is common to see that the relations between students, teachers and even parents have become weaker and weaker. Students' psychological problems have become increasingly serious. Their life values have been distorted. Extremely malignant cases have frequently occurred because of social irresponsibility.

6. The call for humanistic education in contemporary Chinese universities

Science was created in the process of human exploration of the objective world, while the humanism came into being in the process of human exploration of the spiritual world. They look like twin brothers, jointly promoting social progress and coordinating the development of mankind. With the rapid development of science, contemporary society needs humanism much more urgently than ever before, specifically emphasis on the integration and coordination of humanism education and science education. Higher normal education serves not only to create material wealth, but also to cultivate each person into a whole man. Kant says that the aim of education is to make a real man. Cai Yuanpei also says that a successful education is to train people's characters. Teaching students to learn what to be and how to be is the permanent and glorious historical mission. So the mission of education is to arm students with noble souls and firm and clear value pursuits (Xiao Chuan, 2007). Examining today's education, it has been alienated into education of knowledge, profession even tools and employment. In that case, education has lost its original meaning, and educated people lack human soul and spirit. Such education can not be considered a complete education.

Humanistic education has been very important. Wang Tong, an ancient Chinese figure, believes that the rise and fall of a country lies in man himself, while the gains and losses are based on education. The humanistic quality of students is not innate, but acquired through education and cultivation. Universities are where humanistic knowledge is developed, human qualities are improved and humanistic spirit is cultivated. Universities are the spiritual home of students. It has been proven that humanistic education is badly needed in modern universities, particularly in Chinese universities, and called for the return of humanistic education.

Humanistic education has an indirect as well as direct impact upon student job-hunting and professional promotion. Students' humanistic knowledge and accomplishments are bound to be reflected in their job interviews and behaviors. On the condition that all the candidates have roughly the same professional background and skills, those detailed humanistic elements such as eloquence, grace, and dignity are likely to determine whether they will succeed or fail. Humanistic education also has an influence on students' professional growth even after they are employed, because positive attitudes towards life are not only good for mental and physical health, but help people to better succeed. In view of the relevance between humanistic and scientific education, the achievements of humanistic education can be widely applied to professional work. Whoever has made first-class achievements at home or abroad, almost without exception, possesses very high scientific and cultural attainments.

7. The significance and focus of humanistic education in teachers' colleges

7.1 The significance

Those who win the morale of the people will win the world, while those who educate the young students will have future. It takes three generations to make a gentleman. Only when proper education is done can a person be called a "man." Education is the noble endeavour of cultivating people, developing their natural endowments and giving them souls, thoughts and spirit. Therefore education should place first the raising of people rather than knowledge and skills, and take the development of students as its glorious goal. Higher normal education in teachers' colleges is to implement education for the future teachers, so its humanistic education has tremendous effects of heritage, penetration, leading and radiation. It will be much easier for students who have good humanistic teaching qualities to devote themselves to the cause of an education that regards man as "man" instead of "resources." They will contribute to the promotion of humanistic education, starting from elementary education, helping students form the concept that scientific spirit and humanistic spirit should be integrated with each other, and promoting students' comprehensive development. In addition, in view of the weakness of humanistic education in elementary education, it is absolutely necessary and urgent for teachers' colleges to strengthen comprehensive humanistic education.

7.2 The focus

7.2.1 Ethics of the teaching profession of both teachers and students

Ethics of the teaching profession of both teachers and students is the focus of humanistic education. Education is based on people, and moral cultivation is at the core of educating people. In addition to teaching, faculties in teachers' colleges should cultivate students' moralities. Here, morality refers to a teacher's teaching ethics and moral qualities. Therefore, only those who have high moral cultivation and professional capabilities should be qualified to hold teaching posts. Teachers should set examples for their students through their own conduct. In addition, teachers should try their best to be self-cultivated and strive to cast the "soul of a teacher's", and demonstrate what profound meaning it has, then becoming the moral models and conduct idols for their students, sowing the seeds of moral integrity in students' hearts to turn biological beings into social beings.

7.2.2 Dissemination of a broad range of humanistic knowledge

Human knowledge is the summary of the knowledge that human beings realize and improve themselves as well the society. Although humanistic knowledge is not the equivalence of humanistic spirit, and having humanistic knowledge does not necessarily mean having the humanistic spirit, it is the prerequisite for students to internalize it and fix it in their souls. It is likely for the students to bring the instilled humanistic knowledge into humanistic spirit by means of their own insights and personal experience.

7.2.3 Strengthening the education of love, sense of responsibility and sense of mission

The objective of education is to make people grow and be happy, with wisdom nurturing wisdom and soul fostering soul. Schools' mission is to make students learn to study and grow under the atmosphere of love. Therefore, love of education is an important component of human education. Without love, there is neither real education nor humanism. Teachers must see all students as their students and love them, and show them how to love and cherish love. Mencius said that only those who know how to love and respect others can be loved and respected. Since teachers' colleges undertake the historical mission of China's future development, they must have a high sense of responsibility and historical mission in the cultivation of future teachers.

7.2.4 Development of critical thinking

If education is to accomplish its historical mission, it should focus its education on the training of students' independent thinking ability: to teach them not only to observe with their own eyes, to judge with their own brains, but to decide with their own minds. The history of human beings is a history full of doubts and criticism, and a history to pursue the freedom and independence of thought as well. Premier Wen Jiabao expressed his idea: "A good university is good because it has its unique soul, namely, independent thinking and free expressions." (Zhao Chen, 2010) Ideological freedom is beneficial to students' growth and the development of their creativity. The particularities of teachers' colleges require that more emphasis should be placed on the cultivation of students' critical thinking ability, which enables students to learn both scientific and cultural knowledge and identify the complexities behind the surface information so as not to disorient themselves in the complicated world (Kong Lingcui, 2001:85). They make

students learn how to think critically and form their own perspectives and thoughts. Teachers in those institutions should pay special attention to protecting the students' initiatives for critical thinking, not only with wisdom but also with the courage to face students' different ideas, doubts, as well as even negations to their own perspectives. Students should freely express thoughts, because it is those thoughts that can lead to free creation. Those institutions should not only guarantee and protect students' freedom of critical thinking with freedom of speech included, but also teach them to enjoy such freedom (Zhang Chuting, 2004:15), and at the same time not to abuse the freedom. Students in teachers colleges and normal universities have to form clearer moral values, and the identification and construction related to their teaching professions through questioning and reflecting on themselves. Consequently, they will be more willing to devote themselves to education, the most brilliant career in the world.

7.2.5 Strengthening of life education

True humanistic spirit is to help people to value life. Every country and society should respect and protect the right to life of each member, as should each individual. Reflecting on the current education, It is not hard to see that there is a great shortage of life education. Children have been expected by their family to bring glory to their ancestors, are seen as score-making machines by their teachers and wealth-making tools by the society. What has been ignored is that they are not regarded as people with flesh and blood, happiness and sorrow. College teachers should first teach students how to live and survive, to master more survival skills because to live is far more important than to learn. Furthermore, college teachers should teach students how to face one another's life with their souls and communicate with students with their own life experiences and insights on life. At the time when students are facing psychological problems, when they feel perplexed, when they are alone, when they are going to take extreme actions, teachers should actively and sincerely embrace and comfort those whose souls are injured, giving them meticulous life care and guidance at the spiritual level so that students can become mature adults physically as well as spiritually, and have a correct understanding of the meaning of life and its true values and better know how to hold fast to their spiritual home (Zhang Chunyu, 2009).

7.2.6 Creation of a favorable environment for humanistic education

It is quite needed for teachers' colleges to establish cultural incentives and build a harmonious cultural campus environment with good teacher-student relationship and tolerance which will glow students' humanistic vitalities with university spirit, create dense campus atmosphere full of inspiring and striving spirit, pursuing to achieve the educational effect of "coming with the wind in the evening, the rain moisturizes everything silently." To reach that goal, corresponding evaluation approaches index systems should be developed and the development of humanistic qualities should serve as an important part to measure comprehensively the quality of students. Informal systems such as ethics, values, cultural concepts and so on should also be applied as a whole to play a role in the creation of a favorable environment for humanistic education (Gong Yizu, 2004:81).

7.2.7 Integration of humanistic knowledge and practice

The humanistic instillation should not be limited to humanistic knowledge nor empty talks. The learning of humanistic knowledge is only the means while the cultivation of humanistic spirit is the goal. That is why when we stress the spiritual aspects of the humanities, we should pay equal attention to the practical aspects. Students should engage themselves in social practice actively to tell the true, the good and the beautiful from the fake, the bad and the ugly and to get to know the gap between the ideal and the reality so as to stimulate themselves to be positive participants and builders of the society. Humanistic education should serve as the tool of life and the tool to perform the obligations of life. Therefore, college teachers should ask their students to integrate learning with thinking and knowledge with practice so that students can not only learn humanistic knowledge, but also practice what they learn, by which they come to know how to be good men and how to do good things (Wen Jiabao, 2009). So it is necessary for teachers to record and evaluate how students behave themselves in specific practice and experience to spur them to develop proper humanistic habits. Only by doing so, can humanistic education be completely implemented and reach its goal.

8. Curriculum-based humanistic education for English majors of teacher training

Teacher-training students majoring in English language and literature have the unique advantages of humanistic education, in that it can be blended in the subject knowledge; namely in their courses, to students' temperaments in a silent way, which is quite beneficial to promote humanistic knowledge education filled with rich and multi-cultural connotations so as to cultivate students' healthy personalities and humanistic spirit. First of all, such courses as *University Chinese*, *Selected Readings of Chinese and Foreign Classics* and lectures on Chinese traditional culture can be used to instill cultural knowledge, shape students' personalities, improve their humanistic accomplishments and cultivate their humanistic spirit. Secondly, the outstanding foreign cultures in the specialized courses are fully and deeply tapped, and knowledge education and humanistic education are integrated so that the potential significance of education can be introduced into the curriculum to provide discipline knowledge and humanistic education for students at the same time. Research-based learning, seminars, lectures and other teaching forms are used to help students appreciate the profound cultural heritage, promote the understanding of the multi-cultural world and learn the essence of all human cultures, enrich their own spiritual world, enhance their literary accomplishments and cross-cultural communicative abilities so that students can develop better qualities and noble characters. Courses like *Advanced English*, *American & British Literature* and *English Reading* can be used to widen students' reading of classics and broaden their vision. Students can enjoy the pleasure of reading, enrich their thoughts, open their minds, and their sentiments so that they can enhance their humanistic qualities and carry the humanistic spirit. Thirdly, second classrooms and covert courses are applied to guide students in their readings of classical

works home and abroad with the introduction of morals, values and politics and help them draw ideological and spiritual nourishment. Students can have chances to interview the masters in the history of human civilization in their reading. On the one hand, students can have a good understanding of our outstanding traditional culture; on the other hand, they can have a more systematic understanding of the spirit and traditional culture in western countries; both of which will be quite helpful for improving their humanistic qualities as well as humanistic spirit (Xue Yong, 2003:70). In this process, students are encouraged to put forward new and unique viewpoints, to question some ready-made arguments proposed by teachers or in their teaching materials and to express their own ideas at the same time, especially for those “taken-for-granted” and matter-of-course ideas and theories. In addition, students are encouraged to have a respect for authority rather than have blind faith in authority, to believe the truth but not follow it without thinking so as to develop their critical thinking, bold questioning, profound reflection and courageous innovations. Fourthly, while the humanistic education with traditional sense is paid attention to, the modern humanistic spirit with characteristics of the times should be stressed so that students can base spiritual growth on both traditional and the modern cultural values (Zhou Guoping, 2009).

9. Conclusion

The mission of higher normal education should be humanistic education. The declining humanistic spirit calls for the return of the humanistic education and the resumption of the original integrated education in order that humanistic spirit can be integrated into students’ blood and penetrated into their bones. By doing so, China’s higher normal education can better accomplish its historical mission. The role teachers’ colleges play in the whole education system has defined their highlight and special status in humanistic education. Approaches to and focuses on humanistic education in different teachers’ colleges may not be the same; however, they can still achieve the same effect: to promote the dissemination of the humanistic knowledge, and improve the humanistic qualities, and humanistic spirit of all citizens.

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