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The Cultural Construction of Chinese Universities Based on the Perspective of Confucian  
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## **Abstract**

Culture is a source of national cohesion and creativity. In the context of China's national political orientation and higher education development, it has become increasingly important to address the formation of university campus culture, as both a link to cultural tradition and a basis for educating people in the present. The development of Chinese universities has been influenced on the one hand by Chinese culture, especially Confucian culture, and on the other hand by Western universities. However, the integration of Chinese culture and education in universities has not been ideal. Almost all Chinese universities have transplanted higher education systems from the Western English-speaking world, and most of them have not yet formed their own characteristics in development and governance. Hence the role and nature of traditional practices, and their relationship with Western practices, is a subject of great significance in the evolution of Chinese higher education. This dissertation investigates the practice of Confucian culture in universities in China and reviews the cultural origin, construction and improvement of Chinese universities.

This study starts with the concepts of Confucian culture and Chinese university campus culture. It then sets down the methodology, which rests on an interpretive epistemology and constructivist approach. The study combines literature-based research and archival research methods, with qualitative interviews in two universities where understanding of Confucian ideas is relatively advanced: Peking University and Qufu Normal University. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with eight staff from these two institutions. Three levels of coding and text analysis were carried out in relation to the primary data.

The study finds that both Chinese and Western practices emphasized similar functions of university education in the development of Chinese universities. However there was also a collision between Confucian family-based working structures and academic independence, and a conflict between Confucian values of moderation and Western ideas of competition and innovation. The study goes on to summarize the role of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities, in relation to teaching and learning, the campus environment, and organization and management. Looking at the specific practices of Peking University and

Qufu Normal University, it identifies beneficial attempts to integrate Confucian culture into Chinese universities, including the establishment of Confucian research institutes (see Appendix H and I), and the integration of Confucian culture into classes and practical activities. At the same time, it also reflects on a series of problems that have arisen. Some college students have little sense of identity with Confucian culture, and the connection between Confucian culture and the curriculum is not always well established. Finally, based on the above findings, this study discusses how to improve the contribution of Confucian cultural practice in Chinese universities.

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## List of Abbreviations

PKU	Peking University
QNU	Qufu Normal University
Ren	Benevolence
Li	Propriety and rites
ReN	People oriented
He	Harmonious
Yin cai shi jiao	Teaching students according to their aptitude
Tian ren he yi	Harmony between heaven and Man
Zhongyong	Moderate

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In the 21st century, the implementation of China's strategy of being an innovative country, building up its people's skills, requires the development of universities to cultivate high-quality talents. In order to catch up with modern developments, the university should not only pay attention to its external material form but also focus on the cultural strength of the university's spirit and characteristics. Researchers have indicated that as an important carrier of cultural inheritance, dissemination and creation, a university is not only an objective material entity but also a cultural and spiritual creation (Kerr, 2001; Newman & Turner, 1996). Cultural construction is an important part of university development. Yuan (2012) pointed out that for a university, carrying out cultural research and promoting cultural construction is valuable strategic and forward-looking work. However, there are still many problems in current campus culture in some Chinese universities, such as the prevalence of materialism and utilitarianism, the lack of connotation and becoming formalistic in educational activities, and poor teacher-student interpersonal relationships (Li,2020). At the same time, some Chinese universities are facing problems in terms of goal orientation, talent training mode and curriculum setting, which are prominently manifested in the lack of university cultural personality (Liang, 2014). These problems have formed a sharp contrast with China's requirements for colleges and universities to innovate, improve their core competitiveness, and develop their own characteristics. Based on this situation, it is necessary to strengthen the research on the current Chinese university culture construction.

*The decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Several Major Issues Concerning— Deepening the Reform of the Cultural System and Promoting the Great Development and Prosperity of Socialist Culture* (2011) is a programmatic document that guides the reform and development of Chinese culture at present and in the future. It clearly puts forward the strategic task of enhancing national cultural strength and promoting traditional Chinese culture. When Chinese national leader Xi (2013) visited the

Confucius House and the Confucius Institute in Qufu, he emphasized that the excellent traditional culture of China is an outstanding advantage of the Chinese nation, and must be vigorously promoted. China attaches great importance to the development of excellent traditional cultural education, and a series of guarantee documents have been issued, indicating that China has elevated it to the strategic level of the national education development plan. This reflects the urgency of current research on the theory and practice of excellent Chinese cultural education. Hu (2011) pointed out that to comprehensively improve the quality of higher education, universities must vigorously promote cultural inheritance and innovation. As one of the specific manifestations of culture, university culture is a social subculture rooted in a specific social history and natural environment, and the formation and development of its culture will also be influenced and restricted by the regional culture (Wen & Hu, 2019). Confucian culture, as the essence of the Chinese traditional cultural system, is closely related to the development of universities' campus culture. For thousands of years, Confucianism has always taken 'Ren 仁, Humanity and Benevolence; Yi 义, Righteousness, Li 礼, Propriety; Zhi 智, Wisdom and Xin 信 Faithfulness' as the basic moral code for coming to a state of humane wisdom, and the ideological connotations contained in it are still applicable to China's current university culture, its creation and personnel training (Li & Hayhoe, 2012; Tan, 2017). As an important part of social culture, college culture construction and skills training should focus on exploring how to inherit and carry forward the excellent Confucian culture, and how to innovate and find new ways to efficiently integrate the strengths of Confucian culture with the campus culture. It is a major issue faced by universities and a pragmatic move to deal with cultural construction.

## **1.2 Research aims, significance and questions**

In the long river of historical development, different countries were producing ideological and cultural systems that affect social development in different periods. This dissertation focuses on China. China's ideological and cultural system has experienced thousands of years of development from tradition to modernity. Its content covers the material, institutional and spiritual cultural entities and cultural consciousness that have existed in

China's 5,000-year history (Sin-wai, 2019). Among them, China's traditional cultural ideologies specifically include Confucianism, Buddhism, Zhanjia, Zongheng, Taoism, Mohism, Legalism, Jun, Ming and Yin-Yang. As Chang (1973) said that, all of them have had a clear impact on China's development, and are an integral part of Chinese culture. Among them, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have the most direct and profound influence on China, and Confucianism is the mainstream of Chinese traditional culture (Zi, 1987).

The Confucian ideological system takes 'Ren 仁-benevolence', as the highest goal and criterion, the core of which is that "The benevolent has universal love", requiring a person to love not only himself but also others (Luo, 2012). Confucianism contains profound ideas, including a lot of rich practical teaching experience, and it is a historical treasure in Chinese philosophy teaching, which can give new inspiration to contemporary higher education in China.

Universities have the function of, and responsibility for, cultural leadership. The campus culture of universities is a necessary part of the development of universities and incorporates four dimensions: material culture, spiritual culture, institutional culture and behavior culture (Liang, 2014). Studying the construction of university cultural characteristics can promote the construction of the campus system from the perspective of discipline construction and teaching management, and can guide the reform of university education. Studying the practice of Confucian culture in the construction of university cultural characteristics can help campus culture play its due role in school management, knowledge inheritance and talent cultivation, and can promote the construction and advancement of the campus cultural system. It not only optimizes the environment for educating students, but also promotes the reform of China's higher education in line with the requirements of the times, strengthens the ideological and political education of college students, and cultivates high-quality talents for society.

This dissertation looks at Peking University (PKU) and Qufu Normal University (QNU) in China as examples to study the fusion of Confucian practice and the campus cultural construction of Chinese universities at various levels such as material environment, teaching and management, spirit and system. It also analyzes and explores the distinctive measures and practices of Confucian culture in the university campus culture, and discusses how Chinese

universities can build a university culture with a distinctive Confucian cultural heritage. This considers building a positive interactive relationship between regional culture and campus culture, forming a comparative advantage for the development of university culture, and putting forward constructive suggestions for developing high-quality modern university education in Chinese universities and improving the comprehensive quality and ability of college students.

The three main questions addressed by the research are:

*RQ1. Are Western practices in tension with Confucian practices? In what ways are they in harmony?*

*RQ2. What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in Peking university and Qufu normal university?*

*RQ3. How can the contribution of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities be improved?*

Two sub-questions are included in the second question:

*RQ2.1 What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in these two universities, in teaching and learning?*

*RQ2.2 What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in these two universities, in organization and administration?*

### **1.3 Structure of the dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the background, research purpose, significance and research problems of this dissertation. The second chapter introduces the specific concepts of the dissertation. The third chapter summarizes the literature on the study of Confucianism, the study of university culture and

the practice of Confucian culture in higher education. The fourth chapter provides the methodology, includes an introduction to epistemology and methodology, research methods, sampling, data collection and analysis, and an adoption to research ethics. The research results are concentrated in chapters five and six. Based on the related literature, specific documents and website information of Peking University and Qufu Normal University, combined with the interview results, I analyze and discuss the specific practice of Confucian culture in Chinese universities, and provide suggestions for the construction of universities campus culture. The last chapter summarizes this dissertation and points out the limitations of this dissertation and prospects for future research.



## **Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework**

This chapter introduces the concepts of Confucian culture and university campus culture, and also through a discussion of each of these grounds the context of the Chapter 3.

### **2.1 The core idea of Confucian culture**

The Spring and Autumn Period (c.770 to 476 BCE) and the Warring States Period (475–221 BCE) were periods of academic brilliance in Chinese history when hundreds of schools of thought contended. Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and other schools of thought put forward a wide range of ideas, including the principles of governing the country, methods of improving personal cultivation, and discussions on the development of education and culture (Ho,1995). Among them, the content of Confucian thought was adopted by Chinese leaders in successive dynasties. With the changes in and development of society, Confucianism has constantly changed and developed, in content, form and social function.

As can be seen from the Table in Appendix A, the meaning of Confucian culture is rich and complex. Its essence includes pre-Qin Confucianism (221 BC) - Confucius' benevolence, Confucius' filial piety, Confucius' outlook on life, Confucius and his disciples' aspirations, Mencius' theory of good nature and benevolent politics, and Xunzi's theory of evil nature and ritual rule. It also includes the evolution of Confucianism, Dong Zhongshu's Neo-Confucianism, the cultural response of Western learning spreading to the east and the rise of Confucian cultural circles, with Neo-Confucianism promoting modern development and so on. (Goldin, 2014; Tzu, 1966; Yao & Yao, 2000).

Among these ideas, pre-Qin Confucianism takes ethical thought as the core, maintains the 'rule of etiquette', advocates the 'rule of virtue', and attaches importance to the 'rule of benevolence'. Raising the spirit of humanism and taking benevolence as a foundation, Pre-Qin Confucianism built the initial theoretical system of Confucianism, laid the theoretical foundation of Confucianism, and had a profound impact on later generations (Zufferey, 2003). After the 1920s, because the autocratic system that used Confucianism as a political ideology no longer existed in China, some scholars began to take Confucianism as a traditional cultural

heritage on which to undertake academic research. What they were concerned about was how to integrate Confucianism and Western thought, how to improve the quality of modern education through Confucianism, and how to inherit and carry forward the most valuable parts of Confucian culture in order to maintain the independent spirit of the nation. Scholars such as Xiong Shili, Ma Yifu, Qian Mu and Feng Youlan all interpreted Confucianism from the perspective of modernization and developments in Confucianism, and hoped to establish a new Confucianism system. This modern interpretation of Confucianism, together with Marxism and Liberalism, are called the three major trends of thought in modern China (Berthrong, 2003., Makeham, 2003., ROŠKER, 2009).

Therefore, this dissertation selects content from the perspectives of pre-Qin Confucianism and the modernization of Confucianism in the development of Confucian culture, to study how Confucian culture affects higher education and plays a role in the development of colleges and universities. For reasons of space it is not possible to review all periods of Confucian thought, and indeed these two periods are the most important given the research questions I address.

## **2.2 Campus culture of universities**

Campus culture is an intuitive form of social culture in a specific atmosphere, and an important part of mainstream social culture (Shen & Tian, 2012). It is a culture with obvious group characteristics that are reflected in various spiritual, environmental, behavioral, and institutional aspects, and is jointly created on the campus in educational and teaching activities in all the different areas of study. It is a combination of the four elements of spiritual culture, material culture, institutional culture and behavioral culture (Gonondo, 2016; Lawrence, 1994., Levy & Marans, 2012).

In terms of development, the spiritual culture of the university is reflected in what kind of values, moral emotions, psychological qualities, and aesthetic awareness are formed for teachers and students in colleges and universities. Kerr (2001) emphasized that universities should develop their own unique style. Yiqiu Wang, a professor at Peking University (2001) believes that “The spirit of the university should be reflected in the unique mission,

responsibilities and functions of the university that distinguish it from other institutions.” The spirit, study style, and motto of different universities reflect their spiritual outlook and tradition. Therefore, the university spirit expresses the unique temperament of the university, plays a vital role in the development of the university, and helps to enhance the centripetal force, cohesion and charisma of the campus community (faculty, staff, and students) (Stewart et al., 2011).

The material culture of the university includes the campus environment, the planning and layout of the university, and the school buildings and facilities. Although these physical things on campus will not provide educational content in a direct form, the hidden educational role played by the campus environment and architecture with profound humanistic and academic connotations cannot be underestimated (Gonondo, 2016., Wang & Wang, 2015).

Thirdly, in terms of composition, the main actor of university behavioral culture includes three categories: faculty, staff, and students. The behavioral culture of a university is expressed as the mental state, behavioral ethics and cultural taste displayed by university actors in the process of teaching-studying-learning, scientific research, academic exchanges, study life, and cultural activities (Glenn, 2004; Kluckhohn, 1962). The behaviors of these university actors are all refracted by the university spirit and values and are the dynamic embodiment of universities’ educational philosophy and spiritual culture.

In terms of understanding the institutional culture of the university, Sui (2020) believes that the institutional culture of the university has a strong, distinct normative and organizational nature. This shows that the institutional culture of the university is mainly reflected in the various systems formulated by the university and the norms for implementing the system, including the university's development strategy, training objectives, teaching system, leadership system, school rules and disciplines. It expresses the general requirements for the behavior of its actors during the operation of the university. The purpose is to provide a fundamental guarantee for the smooth running of educational activities (Shen & Tian, 2012).

In general, university campus culture is the sum of spiritual and material achievements such as the philosophy behind the running of the university, the spiritual outlook, academic

atmosphere, rules and regulations, value standards, student style, and school environment. These are all gradually formed by a university through historical accumulation in the development process. The essence of campus culture is a humanistic environment and cultural atmosphere, which can have an impact on the ideological and moral qualities of college administrators, teaching staff and students, and can promote the formation of teachers' and students' values, and cultivate healthy psychological quality and aesthetic awareness.

## Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature on Confucian culture and university campus culture. First, we will discuss the Confucian culture side. As indicated in Chapter 2 and Appendix A, Chinese Confucian culture has undergone updates in different periods. Among them, Confucianism in the pre-Qin period, as the origin of Confucianism, laid the theoretical foundation of Confucianism. The modernization of Confucianism is in a new development stage where the Confucianism system is most closely connected with the current era. It affirms that traditional Chinese culture can also develop modern ideas such as democracy and science. It is an effective integration of Chinese culture and social modernization.

The second section will discuss the related research on the creation of campus culture in Chinese universities. The third section will specifically discuss the integration of 'Confucian culture' and 'university campus culture' theory and practice, and review the literature on the integration of Confucian cultural practice into university construction in China's higher education field.

### 3.1 About Confucianism

#### 3.1.1 Pre-Qin primitive Confucianism based on the 'Ren' and 'Li'

As noted, Confucius lived in China's late Spring and Autumn Period, at this time, China was in a turbulent period characterized by the decline of the royal family and the hegemony of vassal states. Confucius focused on the basic situation of the social structure at that time and put forward the perspectives of Ren (benevolence), Xiao and Ti (filial piety), Zhong (loyalty), Xin (integrity), Li (propriety and rites), Yi (righteousness and integrity), Zhi (wisdom), Lian (being incorruptible) and Chi (learning to be ashamed). These views have had an important impact on that era and on current Chinese society (Hall & Ames, 1987). According to the *Grand View of Chinese Confucian Culture* (2001), Ren (benevolence) and Li (propriety and rites) are the two most important concepts in Confucius' system. After Confucius's time, these were transformed and developed by Mencius and Xunzi, becoming more suitable for the needs of Chinese society at that time. Li (Propriety and rites, 礼) is the

moral order of society. Ren (benevolence, 仁) is a moral category with an extremely wide meaning: specifically, it means that individuals overcome their own excessive selfish desires, make their behaviors conform to the behavioral norms generally recognized by society, and maintain the etiquette and order of human society. In the Confucian world outlook, 'Ren' first has a stage of self-restraint, and secondly, it can achieve the effect of satisfying 'Li' (Li, 2007). *Ci Hai* (1990) explained that Confucius's theory takes benevolence as the core, and propriety is the norm of benevolence. Confucius believed that self-restraint and propriety are perfect virtues. "If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him." (*Analects*, Chapter 12., YEN YUEN). The inner self-cultivation is 'Ren', and the outer expression of this is 'Li', and is conditioned by the overall principles of society. Statistically 'Ren' and 'Li' appear at least 177 times in the Confucian work *The Analects*. The relationship between the two is very close, forming a 'creative tension'. Since it is also the focus of scholars and experts who have studied Confucius's thought in the past century (Li, 2007), this section of the dissertation analyzes research on the relationship between Ren and Li in Confucianism in the pre-Qin period.

Regarding the relationship between benevolence and propriety, Confucius seems to be caught in a circular argument: to achieve Li one must exhibit Ren, and to achieve Ren must conform to Li. In fact, the Ren and Li mentioned by Confucius are two aspects of the same thing. 'Propriety and rites' are concerned with the social system, 'benevolence' emphasizes the ethical relationship. Benevolence does not break through the rule of propriety, but consolidates propriety ideologically. In Fingarette's view (1972), Li is the norm of an ideal society and is necessary to maintain the basic value and dignity of human beings. For humanity, especially the virtues or strengths that are peculiar to human beings, the ability to act according to 'Li' is the most basic. Compared with Li, Western scholars generally regard Ren as a psychological term, which emphasizes individual, subjective characteristics, emotions and attitudes (Zhang & Chang, 2005). Fingarette thinks this is a misunderstanding, and that Confucius' terminology must not be psychologized. He believes that Ren is to behave in accordance with etiquette and the basic norms of society. The main purpose of Confucian thought is not to emphasize the discovery of the ultimate importance of the individual, but to

illustrate that human nature can be grasped through the image of Li. For example, it is being good at learning rites and customs that distinguishes humans from animals. As Chan (1955) summed up, "The whole philosophy of Confucius...is to realize oneself and create social order."

Confucian 'Li' emphasizes the natural expression of feelings between people, and Classical Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism argued that rulers should not rely on violence and power but instead should rely on individual motivation and pay attention to individual rights. The views of De Bary et al (1998) on Ren and Li expressed that Confucius affirmed human dignity and value for the first time, self-control and self-management are emphasized by Ren, and the realization of self is 'benevolence'. The establishment of social order is Li-ritual, that is, the necessary norm to maintain human values. They also believe that Li is the norm of civilization, and is similar to the role of 'Rights'. The term 'Rights' has more of a Western legal colour. Both the legal concept of 'Rights' or the ritual concept of 'Li' are closely related to the emotional aspects of human nature. Rites and Rights cast human emotions in different ways but both make them part of the public domain. Rite and custom was also valued in early Western civilization, however in modern times, in order to achieve internationalization and globalization, society puts more emphasis on the law.

Ren is the highest realm of life, which endows Li with meaning; Li can be regarded as the externalization of Ren under specific social conditions. It is extremely important to maintain the dynamic balance between the two, and Confucius's proposal to eliminate the conflict between Ren and Li lies in maintaining 'the creative tension' between the two, by humanizing Li. Tu (1968) discussed the two concepts of Ren and Li in Confucius and Confucianism and believed that there was a 'creative tension' between the two, implying their mutual dependence. In addition, The connotations of the Ren and Li are equivalent in terms of quality—both are love. In terms of quantity, they are also equivalent—both are different levels of love. However, if this quantity is further considered as a vector quantity, then Ren is the extension of love, and Li is the restraint of love. In this sense the two are opposites. Therefore, as Liu (2006) believes, after verified the historical process of the formation of the

two concepts of Ren and Li, the core theoretical content of Confucius' theory of Ren-Li lies in seeking harmony in differences and keeping differences in harmony.

From a socio-political perspective, Li is the institutional norm of a patriarchal hierarchical society. It emphasizes that individuals of different ranks should abide by the social system according to their rank, so as to achieve order according to seniority. Ren has a broad ethical meaning, it emphasizes benevolence among people. But if there is only benevolence and propriety is neglected, the natural respect between the old and the young will be confused, and there will be benevolence without order. If there is only propriety but no benevolence, there will be too much emphasis on rank and status, thus deepening the conflict between the ruling class and the ruled class. From the perspective of ethics, Li is the norm for regulating an individual's behavior, and it is an external constraint and norm; Ren is the inner moral cultivation, the inner consciousness of self-cultivation and love for others. If society is regulated is only by external 'Li' without the internal moral consciousness 'Ren', then the humanity of society will be lost. If there is only internal virtue 'Ren' to regulate and no external norm 'Li' to restrict, society will become disordered. Therefore, whether it is benevolence or propriety, either one is incomplete, and it is complete only if the two are reconciled and unified with each other (Feng,1985., Guo, 2002., Kuang, 1990., Liang,2010).

### **3.1.2 The development of Confucian modernization**

Since the 1980s, the relationship between Confucianism and modernization has undergone a development process of negation and affirmation. There are broadly two types of views on this. The first is that Confucianism is no longer suitable for a modern society. In the relationship between Confucianism and modernization, the first thing to face is 'Weber's proposition'. Weber believes that the ethics in Chinese Confucianism cannot give birth to the 'spirit of capitalism, and that traditional Chinese social culture seriously hinders the development of modern capitalism in China. This proposition directly implies a separation between Chinese tradition and 'modernity' (Ku,2010., Pezzutto, 2019). Weber compared Confucian culture with Protestant ethics and came to the conclusion that the conservative and closed nature of Confucian culture hindered the start of China's modernization and was not



conducive to the development of China's modernization (Adair-Toteff, 2014). Levenson (1972) proposed that Confucianism had with the disintegration of feudal society become an exhibit in a history museum, and there is no inspiration in it for modern people's thoughts – it has no role in an ideological era. Yu (1998) put forward the theory of wandering souls, namely that with the collapse of the feudal system, Confucianism has lost its foothold in real life, and the connection between Confucianism and modern life has been completely cut off. Li (2012) believes that Confucianism is a 'very feudal theory' that will not promote the construction of socialism in China. The above scholars' views are one-sided and truthful and typify the mainstream understanding of Confucianism in the modern world by scholars who hold negative views on Confucianism. However, it should also be noted that not all scholars support these views.

The second research point of view is that Confucianism can through its modern transformation adapt to modern society. The rapid economic rise of some East Asian countries and regions in the 1960s created a model of modernization that is different from that of the West, the so-called 'East Asian Model'. The 'Asian Values' which were put forward have Confucian traditional ideas as a cultural background. This prompted discussions on Confucianism and modernization (Rošker, 2017., Walker, 2005., Yang & Lim, 2007). Jiang (2004) believes that at the end of the 20th century, and especially in the 21st century, with the acceleration of the modernization of Chinese society, emphasis on developing cultural identity and cultural self-confidence in a rising China will inevitably promote an awareness of national culture. Huang (2018) believes that Confucianism is good at constantly absorbing other different cultures to achieve change. In every era Confucianism responds to the problems of that era and 'walks with the times'. Confucianism and modernity are not opposed, and the process of China's modernization cannot be separated from the modernization of Confucianism.

The western modern Neo-Confucian group makes a special contribution to the modernization of Confucianism. Fingarette (1972) broke through Weber's 'classic' view of Confucius and combined the core concepts of Ren and Li in *the Analects of Confucius* with contemporary Western mainstream philosophical thoughts. This gave birth to a brand-new

modernization model and declared the bankruptcy of Weber's proposition. In a series of studies, western scholars realized that if Confucianism was interpreted in accordance with Western logic and models as the norm, it would be difficult to reach a consensus of Eastern and Western cultures and ideas (Tu, 1996). The early missionaries who came to China were aware of this problem, so they tried to explain the thought and culture of China from the Confucian classics. James Legge is the most typical example, and his translations of *The Analects of Confucius*, *The Works of Mencius* and *Chinese classics* are still hailed as classic by the community of European Sinology (Pfister, 1990).

These Western Neo-Confucians combine the reality of China, and explain and analyze Confucianism from different cultural standpoints. They basically hold an objective and positive attitude towards Confucianism represented by Confucius. What they criticize is the practice in later generations of re-interpreting and tampering with Confucianism, in order to use historical ideas for modern political purposes. They emphasize that instead of fixing Confucianism in a specific historical period two thousand years ago, Confucianism should be practiced according to current circumstances of social development (Liu, 1971., Tu, 1998., Cheng, 1991., Yü, 2016). Tu (1996) furthermore believed that Confucianism must undergo a modern transformation in order to survive. De Bary (2009) believes that this is the biggest challenge that Confucianism faces in postmodern society, namely how to objectively and impartially use the essence of history for current situations, so that Confucianism can play a positive role in society. Yü (2016) believes that in modern society, the sources of morality and knowledge are diversified. Although the era when Confucianism dominated the field of Chinese spiritual values has passed, Confucianism has a unique role in China's culture. If the Chinese need to build their own modern identity, it is necessary to absorb spiritual nourishment from Confucianism.

Based on this emphasis on Confucian practice, from the perspective of higher education in China, in recent years academic studies have paid increasing attention to how Confucianism can be applied to the educational process. This focus has produced a group of scholars to study it. Li (2014) argues that Confucius's theory of human nature and of the view of heaven as the basis of educational ideals actually overlaps with the current humanistic

trend of education based on talent and personality, and the ultimate goal is to "show people's natural potential freely and perfectly". Tian (2011) writes from the perspective of discipline construction and, taking the teaching of *The Analects of Confucius* as an example, analyzes the transformation of the Chinese general education curriculum as regards teaching objectives, the choice of teaching methods and the ability of the teaching staff in Chinese universities. Based on the perspective of university professional construction and regional cultural integration, Lou (2013) proposed that higher education should use the Confucian method of "internalizing in the heart and externalizing in the practice" to enhance university staff's consciousness of competence, and to improve the pertinence and practicality of the formation of scientific research organizations, academic atmosphere and interpersonal relationships in various majors.

In addition, the relationship between Confucianism and modernization is a dynamic process. In the process of modernization, Confucianism played an active role in the economic recovery and development of modernization in Southeast Asian countries, such as the Korean Peninsula, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Kelley,2006., Marginson, 2011., Tu & Du.,1996.,Tu,2017). It has been proved that Confucianism can adapt to modern society that is undergoing transformation, so the modernization of Confucianism itself is more widely accepted.

### **3.2 The campus culture of Chinese universities**

Writing on university culture in China began with the emergence of the modern university system and was first scattered in the speeches and collections of the presidents of famous universities such as Tsinghua University and Peking University. Cai (1912) advocated imitating the German university system, and proposed that universities should give equal attention to liberal arts and sciences, and should be governed by faculty and democratically managed (Yang, 2011). In his speech in Taking Office as Peking University Principal he declared "the university is a place to study profound knowledge" (Cai, 1917., Lin, 2012). These concepts gradually contributed to the free-thinking and inclusive culture of Peking University. Mei (1931) emphasized that Tsinghua University should maintain an admirable

school spirit of simplicity and studiousness. He also formulated the general education idea that “General education is the foundation, specialized education is the result” (Yu & Sun, 2018). In the mid-1980s, in the context of higher education reform and the expansion of autonomy in running universities, Shanghai Jiao Tong University first proposed the concept of "university culture" in China, and the upsurge of Chinese university culture research officially began. In the 21st century, as China's higher education has accelerated toward the goal of popularization, universities need to find an element that plays a dominant role in the university system and management model — the spirit or soul of the university.

In the past twenty years, Chinese scholars have discussed the concept of university culture from different perspectives, mainly focusing on the content and form, characteristics and functions of university culture. First of all, regarding the discussion of the content and form of campus culture, Shen & Tian (2012) writing from the perspective of hierarchy theory, divided the university culture into material culture, institutional culture and spiritual culture. Zhao and Zhang (2018) systematically expounded on the cultural connotation and university spirit of modern universities from the perspective of theory. At the same time, they also stated that the content of campus culture should embrace the construction of the campus environment, the cultivation of students' moral education, and the development of extracurricular activities.

Secondly, in the exploration of the characteristics of university culture in China, Liu (2009) believes that college culture should be academic and creative, and that the university cultivates students' comprehensive ability through a competitive academic atmosphere. He also argues it should have the characteristics of service and interaction. The development of campus culture is affected and restricted by social culture, and the function of universities can also react to the development of society. Moreover, with the development of education internationalization and China's emphasis on ethnic diversity, universities' campus culture is increasingly characterized by openness and diversity. Xiao (2018) said that university culture the integration of multi-cultural coexistence, the dependence on national construction as the leading role, and the utilitarian nature of the practical orientation of the academic operation mechanism.

The third perspective is the discussion on the purpose and function of university cultural education. Scholars' attention has gradually turned to the discussion of university concepts and spiritual issues. Zhang (2011) divided college campus culture into educational function, social function and emotional function. He also shows a high degree of connection between ideological education and cultural construction. Wang and Jiang (2015) further divided the campus cultural functions into basic functions (guiding, motivating, cohesive, controlling, and brand functions) and special functions (probation, education, creation, and inspiration). Zhang (2016) divided the basic functions into inspection and interpretation, education, standardization, cohesion, and innovation. Bie (2020) adopts the identification strategy, significance and value of the university as an organization from the perspective of organizational culture. He thinks University culture is mainly divided into two categories, one is subject culture, the other organizational culture, which in turn includes five values which are morality, knowledge, politics, administration and economy.

### **3.3 Confucian cultural practice in Chinese universities**

The relevant research on the practice of Confucianism in higher education is mainly in relation to the teaching of teachers and students, and the organization and management of colleges and universities. The relevant research on the influence of Confucian culture on teaching and learning shows that there is a relationship of opposition and unity between the states of teachers and students. Confucian thinkers realize that teaching is the result of the activities of both teachers and students, and that teaching must give full play to the enthusiasm of both parties to achieve the desired effect. On the one hand, Confucius emphasizes that good teachers are "Willing to teach and good at teaching", and on the other hand, he emphasizes that good students are "Willing to study, adept and enterprising". The absolute authority of teachers constrains and restricts students' initiative and innovative spirit. At present, Chinese higher education theoretical circles are still exploring the organic combination or unity of teachers' leading role and students' dominant position. A student should improve his or her ability through continuous learning. Confucius advocated "Let every man consider virtue as what devolves on himself. He may not yield the performance of

it even to his teacher” (*The Analects of Confucius*, Chapter 15., WEI LING KUNG). He believed that students can surpass their own teachers. Wang (2022) emphasized that as a teacher, the relationship between teachers and students should be properly handled with the goal of “Learning without being satisfied, teaching students without getting tired.” (*The Analects of Confucius*, Chapter 7., SHUH URH). From the perspective of the principle ‘Yin Cai Shi Jiao (teaching students in accordance with their aptitude)’ of Confucianism, Zhang (2020) and Chen and Sun (2009) explore how to lead the changes in teaching style through the application of Confucian culture, and analyze how to reform the teaching content and methods with “the unity of knowledge and action” of *the Analects of Confucianism*, so as to fully combine Confucian ethics with the moral education of college students. Yan (2012) said that the current relationship between teachers and students in Chinese universities shows a return to the Confucian educational idea of ‘Education for All Without Discrimination’ and ‘Audience-based Education’, emphasizing the equality of teachers and students and the democracy of the teaching process, and establishing the empathy between teachers and students with modern educational methods and scientific and technological means.

The research on the influence of Confucian culture on the organization and management of colleges and universities can be specifically summarized in terms of the following three perspectives. First, from the perspective of the significance of the formation of a ReN 人 (People-oriented) campus culture, universities should form a service approach that combines traditional virtues and modern ideas based on modern educational thinking, emphasizing the importance of service management consciousness and means. Sima Guang, a famous historian of the Chinese Northern Song Dynasty, pointed out that respecting individual development and cultivating talents is an indispensable part of the education process (*Zizhitongjian*, Chapter 1., ZHOU JI). Liu (2021) also stressed that in the management of colleges and universities, educational institutions should adhere to people-oriented principles and give full play to people's wisdom and talent as the ultimate goal of management. In this ‘people-oriented’ campus culture, Zhang (2016) believes that the Confucian idea of Ren (benevolence) and Li (propriety and rites) are key to the management of colleges and universities. Wang (2013) said that taking ‘Virtue’ (as emphasized by

Confucianism) as the primary criterion for employing people has great importance for the formulation of the standards for the management and selection of talents in modern colleges and universities.

Secondly, ‘Yi jiao wei xian 以教为先(Education must be placed first)’ is an important part of Confucianism (Tan, 2017). From the perspective of the formation of the material and spiritual culture of the campus, existing literature shows that the sound management of colleges and universities not only creates an organisation with sensible rules but also pays attention to ideological education. The dictum “Do not overexploit” (*The works of Mencius*, Chapter 1., LIANG HUI WANHG) illustrates the intergenerational justice of the use of natural resources and emphasizes strengthening the awareness of environmental protection. on this basis, Huang (2019) analyzed the university in the light of the Confucian concept of ‘Tian ren he yi 天人合一 (Harmony Between Heaven and Man)’. He shows how the construction of campus material culture can follow the Confucian idea of ‘Have Love for the human and Cherish All-Natural Things’ to build a conservation-minded campus. Based on the Confucian ‘Li’ idea, Chen (2010) emphasizes the value of ‘self-cultivation’ (self-control, introspection, practice spirit, and emphasis on practice) in the construction of university behavioral culture. Based on the perspective of cultural synergy, Xiao (2018) stated that improving university governance should fully integrate Confucian culture into the governance process in the fields of political culture, administrative culture, academic culture, campus culture, and external culture to form a combined governance force.

There are other literatures that proceed from the perspective of combining specific practice and application. Tan (2021) selected five universities in Jiangsu Province, China, to explore ways to integrate Confucian culture effectively into higher education through questionnaires. She found that the common problems in the integration process are that students from a diverse background have insufficient understanding of the best elements of Confucian culture. Online and offline courses were both in the same format. Teachers attached importance to professional knowledge teaching but ignored cultural education. Therefore the integration strategy she proposed recommended that colleges and universities

should strengthen students' cultural identity, increase teachers' vocational training, and pursue innovative online course design.

In another case study Liang and Su (2010) took Shenyang Normal University in China as an example. They set out to construct the university culture education mechanism from the four aspects of spirit, environment, management and emotion, and put forward a specific implementation strategy for this. They emphasized university culture construction should form a symbiotic university political culture that integrates thinking with the idea of 'tian ren he yi', and an administrative culture integrating the service concept with 'People-oriented' thought.

### **3.4 Summary**

This chapter reviews the literature from three perspectives in connection with the research themes. Firstly, from the perspective of Confucian culture, I selected the two most representative stages in the development history of Confucianism to analyze related literature, which are the pre-Qin period and the development of modern Confucianism. Confucian culture in the pre-Qin period became a system through the ideological development of Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi. 'Ren (benevolence)' and 'Li (Propriety and rites)' are two of the most important concepts, and the relationship between the two is the focus of academic research on Confucian culture in the pre-Qin period. The literature on the development of Confucian modernization focuses on whether Confucianism is appropriate for modernization. Scholars' opinions are divided into two groups, with broadly a negative attitude in the early stage and a positive attitude subsequently. The relationship between the Confucian culture and modernization is dynamic and constantly adjusted. Given the fact that Confucianism has played a role in promoting the modernization development of Southeast Asian countries, the idea that Confucianism can be adapted to modern society has gained wider acceptance. From the perspective of the development of campus culture, this dissertation analyzes literature from the localized campus culture in China. The main focus of the analysis includes the content and form, characteristics, and functions of Chinese university campus culture, which is developing towards a forward-looking trend of continuous innovation with the changing



times. Finally, this chapter analyzes the relevant research on the specific practice and application of Confucian culture in Chinese universities.

## **Chapter 4: Research design and Methods**

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology. Led by the overarching research question, it presents the methods used in data collection and analysis as well as the details considered including practical implications and ethics.

### **4.1 Epistemology: From interpretive and constructive perspectives**

Epistemology is the explanation of how individuals know everything they know and deals with the nature and formation of knowledge (Hamlyn, 1995). It is seen as the underlying rationale behind research methods, and it determines the philosophy of knowledge acquisition and how we can ensure the adequacy and rationality of research (Maynard, 1994). This study adopts both an interpretivist and a constructivist approach. In order to investigate at the level of daily life in higher education institutions, it is essential to adopt multiple approaches, avoiding limiting the research by an unimaginative approach.

In this research, an interpretivist approach has been adopted. Complex societies and organizations are structured and understood variously by different individuals. According to Bailey (2018), people tend to experience natural and social reality in different ways. Hence interpretivism is appropriate to this research which draws on multiple perspectives. It played an essential role in designing the interviewing method, which examined the integration of Confucian culture into Chinese university formation. By interviewing university administrators and faculty members, this research aimed to uncover local and specific constructed realities by exploring the personal world of the respondents (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 109). Introducing those respondents view of Confucianism can produce a valuable sample, which may point to a new hermeneutical space for the study of Chinese university campus culture.

Social Constructivism believes that the meaning of things and knowledge is not discovered, but is constructed by objective existence and people's thoughts (Crotty, 1998). This approach helped formulate the questions in the process of designing the interview, during which I pre-simulated the dialectical interaction between interviewees and public

assumptions. The questions looked at participants in the context of exploring the tension between their personal view and public role. The participants were encouraged to express critical opinions and extend the reflexive willingness with abundant examples in the 5<sup>th</sup> interview question (see Appendix B: Interview outline). Half of them provided detailed feed-backs in this section. This research intended to gather, and succeeded in gathering, plenty of information from eight university administrators, academics, and staff members working at Peking University and Qufu Normal University. The interactions between the participants and the investigator were examined in a constructivist perspective throughout the interview process.

## **4.2 Research methods**

The research methods used in this study are literature research, archival research and semi-structured interviews.

The literature research method can assist an understanding of the research history and current research situation regarding the Confucian culture and the development of Chinese universities. Through the literature research method I was able to focus comprehensively on the research problems. As pointed out by Snyder (2019), the literature research method is directed towards a certain research purpose or topic. It involves the investigation of literature to obtain data, so as to comprehensively and correctly grasp the problem to be researched. It also helps form a clear overall view of the research object (Burns and Groove, 2014). In this research, I mainly examined the practical effects of Confucian culture at Peking University and Qufu Normal University in China. The reasons for choosing these two universities will be explained in the next section (4.3). Besides the literature research method, in order to obtain more intuitive information and enhance the integrity and robustness of the research (Ventresca & Mohr, 2017., Das et al., 2018), I also used the archival research method. Due to the epidemic, it was unrealistic to go to the two universities to view archives, so the research mainly focused on digital archives, through access to documents and texts published online by the two universities concerning the practice of Confucian culture in the universities.

Having decided on literature and archival research methods, I chose to use

semi-structured interviews in order to gain a more intuitive and in-depth understanding of the practice of Confucian culture in Chinese higher education. The interview is based on two-way communication. While it is guided by the interview outline (Appendix B), the focus of the discussion depends on the answers of the interviewees, giving a certain degree of freedom. And as an individual with a Chinese background, I also have personal study experience in a Chinese university. Therefore being the moderator of interviews I can to a certain extent reduce the natural wariness of the interviewees (Srivastava,2006). Respondents were able to provide a variety of information for my research based on their own experiences, adding valuable unique personal insights for the final data of the dissertation. As noted by Dunn (2000) and Seidman (2013), while the interviewer prepares a series of research-related questions in advance, the semi-structured interview is conducted in the form of conversations, giving participants a chance to explore the information they find important. This can more thoroughly present the interviewee's experience as it is, and allows participants to make open-ended answers rather than 'yes or no' type answers. However, it is undeniable that as a research tool, interviews have limitations as interviews, data transcription and analysis are all time consuming. Also it is impossible to avoid respondents being influenced by interviewers (Delamont et al., 2012). Despite all of those limitations, interviewing is still among the most valuable methods. Based on a thorough consideration of the pros and cons of interviewing, I designed a semi-structured interview as the best way forward.

#### **4.3 Collection and management of data**

This study was carried out in a research university and a normal university in China, Peking University is the first national comprehensive university in China, with a profound heritage of Confucian traditional culture and Confucian research (MOE of PRC, 2014). Most of the famous and important Confucian scholars in China in modern times, such as Cai Yuanpei, Xiong Shili, Hu Shi, and Liang Shuming, are related to Peking University. At the same time, as an important center of China's national academic research and ideological innovation, Peking University has fully tapped into the resources of Chinese traditional culture and carried out research and innovation in all aspects of university construction.

Qufu Normal University is a first-class undergraduate normal college in China, rooted in Qufu, the birthplace of Confucian culture. Combining this unique geographical and cultural advantage, and relying on Confucian cultural resources, it chooses Confucian culture as the school's characteristic (QNU, 2016), which provides superior human resources and intellectual support for regional cultural development in China.

As interviewees, faculty members with university management and teaching experience can meet the needs of this research better than can students. At the same time, in order to ensure the diversity of interview samples and the disciplines they represent, interviewees from the two universities were divided into the following three categories:

- 1) *Faculty leaders, include the dean of social science and dean of humanities;*
- 2) *Experienced university teachers, from a mix of science-based fields and others;*
- 3) *An experienced administrator who is not a teacher.*

In order to ensure the accuracy of the interview data, realize the mutual verification of diverse subjects and information, and maximize the effectiveness of the research, the 'snowball sampling' strategy was used to determine the sample range. The number of samples in this study is determined based on theoretical saturation. In the end, they consisted of three subject leaders, four experienced university teachers, and one experienced administrator. The ratio of male and female participants is 3:5, and more than half of the participants have worked over 15 years. Details can be found in Appendix C: information form of the interviewee.

The author transcribed the contents of the interview recordings as soon as possible after each interview. The aim was to carry out the interview analysis promptly, then modify and optimize the interview outline, adjusting the interview questions appropriately, so that each

interview can provide improvements and new ideas for the next. Regarding the interviewee number, The initials 'P' and 'Q' of the two universities mark the interviewees. For example, the first interviewee of PKU is 'P1', and the third interviewee of QNU is 'Q3'.

The interview outline had 10 questions. These included the interviewee's self-introduction, general feelings about working in PKU or QNU, views on the current situation and problems of integrating Confucian culture practice into university construction, opinions on the impact of Confucian culture on teaching-learning and management systems, and their views and suggestions on the development of the integration of Confucianism and higher education. (See the appendix B for the interview outline). All respondents were asked these questions, but the order of the questions was based on respondents' responses, and some more detailed questions were also asked to further explore respondents' experiences.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

The interviews were conducted and recorded with an online platform (Tencent meeting room or WeChat) because of Covid-19 restrictions on travel and face-to-face activities. Both the interview transcript and interviewees' body language and feelings were also recorded, using notes. The interview length is approximately 30 minutes to an hour. The steps of analyzing the interview text data were as follows:

- 1) Transcribe the interviewee's voice;*
- 2) Read and proofread the original data;*
- 3) Search for 'local concepts';*
- 4) Establish a coding and filing system.*

The audio was recorded online and transcribed verbatim using a Chinese transcription tool 'Feishu' with a non-disclosure agreement, and manually edited in Nvivo for data analysis. I conducted open coding, axial coding and selective coding on the data. Firstly I carried out open coding of data based on the view of open coding of Strauss and Corbin (1997). I repeatedly used the original data with an open mind, looked for meaningful content in the

data, and tagged original contents. Then I classified the data according to their characteristics and degree. Secondly, on the basis of open coding of the original data, I established connections among the numerous data units, so as to reveal the intrinsic connections between meaningful contents originally scattered in the data. As shown by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), the interrelationships between open coding and axial coding form a relational web. Thirdly, the purpose of the selective coding was to link all the categories found in the axial coding together, distinguishing the level of abstraction among the existing categories, and distilling into a 'core category'. This last step is emphasized by Strauss (1987): “select those few more general categories as the core to guide all the content.” (The final coding result can be found in Appendix D).

#### **4.5 Ethical framework**

As shown in Appendix E: Ethical Approval Form, this research was approved by the Department of Education Research Ethics Committee (DREC) of the University of Oxford and the study complied with ethical guidelines. Before conducting the interview, interviewees received a participant information form and a written consent form via WeChat or email. These documents were re-emphasized to ensure that potential respondents understood the purpose and process of this study before they responded to the questionnaires and participated in the interviews. (Appendix F: Participant Information Form, Appendix G: Consent Form). Before each interview, I also emphasized the purpose of this research and the confidentiality of the interview (see Appendix B: Interview outline), and confirmed that interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis. Participants could withdraw from the process at any time during the study. If any questions arose, participants could contact the researchers.

All types of data were transcribed to a computer, and safely stored in an encrypted folder. The interviews recorded by the computer and the interviewees' personal details were not shared. All non-anonymized data will be stored securely for three years after completion of the study and then the file destruction software Ty2y will be used for permanent destruction. The record of participant names and participant contact details will be erased after the completion of the study. Interview data have been anonymized and a separate record kept of

the list of interviews. Only anonymized data has been used. The anonymized data were backed up on a secure folder within a mobile hard disk and also SharePoint OneDrive.

Interviews started with building a rapport and chat about everyday matters to ensure participants felt at ease. No video was required, so respondents could easily talk while maintaining anonymity and privacy. In fact, audio-only interviews can help respondents speak more freely. The interviewer's camera was always on, simulating the real situation, in order to gain the interviewee's trust. Overall, the study basically did not involve ethical risks. Participants generally expressed their willingness to engage in this interview to share their thoughts, and some interviewees are willing to participating in further research.



## **Chapter 5: Findings**

Based on the interview results, as well as website information, public news, and the related archives and documents of two universities (PKU and QNU), this chapter conducts a comprehensive analysis of the research questions. Firstly, it explores Confucian practice and Western practice in contemporary Chinese universities from the perspectives of conflict and fusion. Secondly, it explores the findings on the role of Confucian cultural practice in these two universities from three aspects: teaching, university campus environment and management. Then it analyzes the findings concerning the achievements and problems of Confucian cultural practice in PKU and QNU.

### **5.1 Confucian practice and Western practice in contemporary Chinese universities——Integration and conflict (Response to RQ1)**

Since the end of the 19th century, China, which was lagging behind in the process of modernization, began to learn from the West in order to speed up its development. Taking the development of higher education as an example, since the late Qing Dynasty China's modern university system has imitated the Japanese model, the British-American model and the Soviet model (Li, 2012). It can be said that China's modern universities originated in the West and were established based on the Western higher education system in the context of local traditional culture. The social change in modern China from traditional to modern has greatly promoted the growth of universities, but at the same time, it also brings conflicts around higher education values due to the different cultural backgrounds of China and the West. Taking one of the traditional Chinese cultures, Confucian culture, as an example, the long history of Confucian culture in China has proved its strong adaptability (Lin & Ho, 2009). With the development and progress of society, the foundation of the system on which Confucian culture depends has undergone fundamental changes, and traditional Confucianism is facing a transition from Chinese feudal orthodoxy to a multicultural environment. But in a cultural context, Confucian culture and the governance of contemporary Chinese universities

are relatively independent cultural bodies in time and space (Fan, 2011). Confucian culture takes the ethics of traditional Chinese society as its core, and starting from self-cultivation explores the principles of dealing with individuals and things. As an orthodox ideology of a feudal society, it still has an important impact on all aspects of contemporary Chinese society.

The governance of contemporary Chinese universities is rooted in the rational-dominated Western social system, and a governance system is built on the principle of separation of powers and co-governance to achieve checks and balances among stakeholders (Li, 2020). Therefore, achieving the coordinated development of the good parts of Confucian culture and modern educational concepts in the field of higher education is a realistic need for cultural inheritance and innovation.

This section provides a response to RQ1 in the light of the literature review and the findings of the interviews. RQ1 is as follows:

*RQ1. Are Western practices in tension with Confucian practices? In what ways are they in harmony?*

### **5.1.1 Conflict between ‘family culture’ versus academic independence**

Combining the results of the interviews with relevant literature and reports, it can be seen that there is a specific conflict between the family standard and academic independence in the cultural construction of contemporary Chinese universities. Confucian culture advocates the governance pattern under the state of ‘Tian ren he yi’, the social order guided by the isomorphism of the family and country, self-cultivation, aligning the family, governing the country and the world, and treating the whole of society as a big family (Giskin & Walsh, 2001). The spiritual core of the culture of realizing the home produces invisible constraints on social individuals, which is also reflected in the development of universities. Most respondents express this in terms like these ‘A university is a big family in China, and the social roles and responsibilities of individuals are interpreted as the internal order of family ethics.’ This is contrary to the rationalized spirit of university independence advocated by university governance in the western higher education system—academic freedom and

independence. Regarding the family-based view reflected in the cultural construction in the university, respondents P3 and Q2 said,

*"The concept of harmony, mutual love and shared responsibility advocated by family culture helps to strengthen the relationship between teachers and students, the group of students, and the relationship with people in the university's management system. The formation and maintenance of this relationship will promote the improvement of teaching quality and the management of university order."* P3

*"The practice of Confucian culture not only stops at the level of students' lives, but also extends the concept of 'home' to the cultivation of students' social responsibility, effectively expanding the cultural education model of universities."* Q2

The results of the interview indicated that, in the context of Chinese culture, family culture contributes to a certain extent to the development of university culture and the improvement of teaching and management quality. However, the group unity required by the family-based thinking within the university should also pay attention to the derivation of negative behaviors such as academic 'inbreeding' and utilitarian academic teams, which is not conducive to maintaining the freedom of academic research.

*"Under the influence of Chinese family-style traditional culture, the emphasis on 'family' and 'filial piety' in Confucian culture makes it easy to form an academic team around an older scholar in the development of Chinese disciplines. Taking the older scholar as a guide, for example, building a subject of research, it may lead to a situation in which the old leads the new, and the teacher's appointee's effectively 'inherit' the position. This is related to our family-style culture. It can bring benefits at one time, but it also conflicts with the essence of academic freedom. If we only emphasize the authority and influence of the elders in the team, competition in academic research and individual academic innovation may be difficult to create."* Q3

In the contemporary sense, the university system based on the west takes as the fundamental task the cultivation of independent university character, and critical and skeptical academic spirit (Li, 2020). In this conflict between family culture and academic independence, the challenges facing the development of Chinese universities are how to reasonably

coordinate the relationship between academic power and administrative power within the university, break through the ideological constraints of home-based thinking on university autonomy, and define the functional and governance boundaries of universities and social organizations.

### **5.1.2 Zhongyong (Moderation-The golden mean of the Confucian School) versus innovation and competition**

Confucianism permeates the cultural genes with the mode of thought and behavior represented by Zhongyong 中庸(moderation), self-denial and maintaining propriety (Yao & Yao, 2000). This combination of morality and responsibility-oriented culture-first and feudal autocracy makes conservatism the ideology and belief of the Confucian tradition. It has also influenced individual thoughts and lifestyles in Chinese social life in different eras. It is prominently reflected in obedience to authority and the avoidance of change (Ames & Hall, 2001). When doing things and solving problems, individuals should understand all viewpoints and avoid extremes, stressing the spirit of tolerance, and pursuing the harmony of things (Li, 2009). The perceptions of respondents B1, B2 and Q3 are:

*"Confucian culture has established a prudent, conservative, stable and peaceful spirit for Chinese university culture." P1*

*"If the university as a whole emphasizes a relatively stable atmosphere, it may not want to have an unstable element." P2*

*"Chinese universities place great emphasis on harmony. We expect that there will be no conflict between various departments and colleagues in the school, and we hope that everyone can coexist in harmony. Emphasis is placed on the harmonious coexistence between teachers and students, teachers and leaders, administration and academics." Q3*

With the rapid development of Chinese society, this tendency towards stability is indispensable to the environment of university governance, but when new development trends emerge and the environment remains static, this cultural spirit may create a strong hindrance. The famous 'Needham Question' asks why modern science originated in Western Europe

rather than China or other civilizations which do not share a Western perspective (Lin, 1995). Needham (1954) believes that "the reason why modern science has not emerged in China" is related to the static thinking and conservative tendencies that only focus on morality in the Chinese Confucian academic tradition. This perspective also implicitly reflects the conflict between Chinese and Western cultures in the make-up of Chinese universities. One of the distinctive features of the Western higher education system is that competition among universities is very fierce (Naidoo, 2015). The competition among universities is comprehensive, with competition for teachers, students, funds and even sports teams. According to the interview results, Chinese universities will inevitably face the conflict between 'conservatism' and 'competition' if they take the western university system as the blueprint for their development. And the 'doctrine of the mean' in Chinese university culture is not conducive to creating a spirit of competition and the development of individual talents. The establishment of a competition mechanism can enable individuals and groups to burst into vitality, give full play to human potential, and demonstrate human talents. Therefore 'competition' must not be abandoned on the grounds of 'harmony': 'harmony and competition should coexist'.

*"The culture of Chinese universities emphasizes the golden mean and care for individuals. The golden mean (zhongyong) actually brings disadvantages in some aspects. For example, elimination is rarely implemented in the academic assessment system, because the tutor can't bear the students not getting the degree. In the evaluation mechanism of faculty and staff, it is also very important to help examinee, the first consideration is not to eliminate an examinee who fails to meet the evaluation requirements. But it will lead to the university being unable to reward talent, and there is no way to take the advantage of the modern education system that brings progress through competition. Sometimes the phenomena of lax examination have a lot to do with culture. "*

P4

*"The practice of Confucian culture in universities places emphasis on the hierarchy, including the idea of respecting nature, monarchs, elders and teachers. The hierarchical system is manifested in many aspects. For example, in the teacher-student relationship, it is emphasized students should respect teachers. This advantage means that there will be some tacit understanding between teachers and students, but at the same time, it will also lead to stifling the spirit of students' innovation. Students may not query some views of teachers or [may feel] it is difficult to query teachers."*

Q1

In their role as the core of knowledge innovation and as guides of the developing social ethos, universities need to be in tune with the spirit of the times. The cultural complexion of Chinese universities and the development of individual teachers and students should also display innovative ideas and have the courage to keep pace with the times. In developing a university structure, universities should adopt traditional ideas that are appropriate to the modern Chinese context, and discard ideas in traditional culture that restrict competition and innovation. This is the real task facing the construction of Chinese universities.

### **5.1.3 The integration of Confucian practice and Western practice in Contemporary Chinese Universities**

The interview findings indicated that, although Chinese and Western universities have their own unique cultural characteristics and forms of cultural expression, the spiritual essence of pursuing truth and cultivating talent is the same. The cultivation of talent referred to here is by no means limited to the teaching of knowledge and skills but is based on the scientific conclusion (Koula, 2015) of "cultivating people with all-round development", which is also the same as the 'ReN (people-oriented)' concept in Chinese Confucian educational thought. The educational function of university culture is reflected in the guidance, moderation, encouragement, shaping and inspiration of students, as well as the process of forming a consensus of ideas and values in a subtle way. 'Educational function' is the common cultural core of Chinese and Western university culture.

*"The concept of emphasizing personal development in Western university culture coincides with the people-oriented concept of "Ren-benevolent governance" in Confucian culture."*

*P4*

*"Remaining people-oriented, considering what students and teachers are like as individuals,*

*and what needs each person has as a human being, the function of university culture in this regard is also quite important."*

*Q4*

Where Confucian culture has enjoyed a role in Chinese universities it can encourage a restraint and balance of the individual values of core stakeholders. Through the process of negotiation and interaction of common decision-making, participants accept mutual consultation based on the purpose of win-win, the integration of interests and the acceptance of joint decisions. In contrast the institutional foundation of Western university governance lies in the equality, independence and autonomy of stakeholders, which reflects the extension and implementation of the humanistic spirit within the scope of higher education (Zhou, 2020). In general however, although there are individual differences and conflicts between Confucian practice and Western practice in Chinese universities, they have similar functions and missions. Therefore, the current cultural construction of Chinese universities should look at the difference between the two rationally and objectively, so that Chinese and Western university cultures can come closer together, deepening the common understanding of the nature of universities and the practice of running them.

## **5.2 The role of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities (response to RQ2, RQ2.1 and RQ2.2)**

This section explores the role of Confucian cultural practice in the process of teaching and learning, the construction of the campus environment, and university organization and management in Chinese universities. It makes use of official documents, and the university website dynamics released by PKU and QNU, as well as relevant interviews with faculty and staff. In this manner it responds to RQ2, and RQ2.1 and RQ2.2. These research questions are as follows:

*RQ2. What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in Peking university and Qufu normal university?*

*RQ2.1 What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in these two universities, in teaching and learning?*

*RQ2.2 What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in these two universities, in organization and administration?*

### 5.2.1 Building a ‘yin cai shi jiao’ teaching model (response to RQ2 and specifically RQ2.1)

Confucian scholars pay great attention to developing flexible and diverse teaching methods, including primarily the enlightenment and guidance method, teaching students according to their aptitude, learning through practice, the implicit teaching method, and teaching by analogy (Xie & Chen, 2013). This is, in most respondents’ opinion, undoubtedly of great benefit in overcoming the singularity and rigidity of teaching methods in modern Chinese higher. Taking individualized teaching and heuristic teaching methods as an example, these have been practiced in China as early as the Spring and Autumn Period (770 to 476 BCE) and the Warring States Period (475–221 BCE). *The Analects* preserves a large number of records of commentary personalities, such as, "Shan (student's name, the same below) is very courageous...Ci is very knowledgeable... Qiu is versatile" (*The Analects of Confucius*, Chapter 6., YUNG YEY). "Chai is simple, Sin is dull, Sze is specious, Yew is coarse", "distinguished for their virtuous principles and practice, there were Yen Yuen, Min Tsze - k'een, Yen Pih-new, and Chung-kung; for their ability in speech, Tsae Go and Tsze-kung; for their administrative talents, Yen Yew and Chi Lu; for their literary acquirements, Tsze-yew and Tsze-hea."(*The Analects of Confucius*, Chapter 11., HSIEN TSIN). These show that Confucius took different guiding and teaching measures for students with different personality characteristics, and provided targeted teaching according to the strengths and weaknesses of the students, which laid the foundation for ‘teaching students according to their aptitude - yin cai shi jiao因材施教’. In summarizing Confucius's educational practice, Zhu Xi also put forward the statement that "Confucius will combine different characteristics of students to make a targeted guide" (Gardner, 2003). In general, Confucian teaching thought points out that teachers should start from the actual situation of students’ individual differences and other specific situations, and carry out differentiated teaching so that each student can take advantage of their strengths, circumvent weaknesses, and obtain the best development.

At present, in order to meet the development requirements of students' personalities and interests, the implementation of a tutor system, flexible credit system, major conversion



system, elective courses, multimedia teaching, and other means in China's higher education system provides students with more opportunities to choose a suitable method of study. 'The Buffet-style educational supermarket' will provide more opportunities for teaching students in accordance with their aptitude.

One can look at undergraduate education at Qufu Normal University and Peking University as examples. Qufu Normal University, combining its own characteristics and the needs of industry, has built a 'study and practice integration' education platform of 'research institute + studio + practice base + temporary employment platform', realizing the deep integration of professional education and practical education (Q3).

At Peking University the Confucian teaching idea of 'Yin cai shi jiao' is applied to the content and form of education, combined with the needs of professional training, with overall planning for different grades and different time periods, focusing on individualized and hierarchical design. Undergraduate training in the first and half of the second academic year are oriented by subject interest, with the main goals of improving knowledge level, ideological cultivation, personal quality and practical ability. Areas of focus include military training, practical education in ideological and political theory courses, professional course practice, volunteer services, lectures and forums, and community activities, to create a basic and systematic educational pattern. The second half of the second academic year and the third and fourth academic years mainly focus on cultivating students' scientific research ability, professional skills, innovation and entrepreneurship ability, and professional attitudes (P1, P3, P4).

*“Hierarchical design can not only meet the individual development of students, but also improve the students' employability through impartial assessment of practical education, and promote the common development of practical education in depth.”*

*P1*

PKU also released the *Enrollment Guide for the Strong Foundation Program* (Admissions Office of Peking University, 2020., 2021., 2022), which formulates both universal and individualized teaching plans and training programs for selected students. The aim is to fully implement the tutor system, organise academics and professors, appoint

outstanding scholars to serve as tutors and supervisors to teach students, and implement the "1+X" tutor system to equip each student with a professional tutor and multiple interdisciplinary tutors. In terms of teaching methods, large-class lectures and small-class seminars are used to promote the transformation of teaching-learning methods and create a multi-level teaching platform.

### **5.2.2 Creating a unique physical environment reflecting Confucian cultural Practice (response to RQ2)**

Confucianism expects nature and man to be a unified and harmonious whole. (Confucius, & Legge, 2018). Since ancient times, China has attached great importance to creating an educational environment. Most of the ancient academies were set among mountains and rivers, in order to use the natural scenery to nurture the mind. Likewise, in the Soviet Union Sukhomlinsky (1981) said that "every wall of the school should speak." In the Western tradition Goethe (1977) also wanted architecture to be 'frozen music'. Whether the campus environment is harmonious or not is the concrete manifestation of the relationship between man and nature in universities (Michael & Boyer, 1965). The environment created by the campus and its psychological effect on individuals has an impact on the physical and mental health, emotions and aesthetic outlook of teachers and students, and thus directly or indirectly on their behavior and way of thinking.

Taking the physical environment of the campuses of Peking University and Qufu Normal University as examples, interviewees said that the campus environment not only meets the functions of teaching but also combines the concepts of 'tian ren he yi' and 'harmony and unity' in Confucian culture. Careful planning and design fully reflect the perfect combination of education and artistry, so that teachers and students feel comfortable rather than tense or oppressed.

The campus of Qufu Normal University fully reflects the regional characteristics of Confucian culture in its construction. Seizing the geographical advantage of its location (Qufu

being the birthplace of Confucianism), elements of Confucian culture and ideas are injected into the construction of the campus environment. Through interviews, it was found that the design of green landscape, sculpture and stone carving often foster creative ideas guiding students in their studies and encouraging them to go forward. This can effectively avoid a rigid and uninteresting environment, relieving the anxiety of teachers and students caused by excessive work pressure or fatigue.

*“From the construction of campus, its cultural hardware, we are the first place in China to have **the Analects of Confucius** in stone carvings on the university, that is, displaying the 100 classic quotes in **the Analects of Confucius** in stone carvings. Every teaching area, dormitory area, and canteen at the university has stones with the famous sayings of the Analects. We want to immerse our students in turning the meaning of these quotes into a way of life. Another one is that as soon as you enter the university gate, we have the largest Confucius statue in any Chinese University, donated by Mr. Ke from Hong Kong.”* Q3

Taking the stone carvings and sculptures in the campus cultural environment mentioned in the interview as an example, as a kind of ideological carrier, campus sculpture has the characteristics of words and embodies the role of using words to convey emotions (Nzoiwu & Azuka, 2018). The stone sculptures with the Analects as the theme can enable teachers and students to feel a sense of identity and resonance with the essence of Confucianism. For example, "Learning without thought is labor lost, thought without learning is perilous." (*The Analects of Confucius*, Chapter 2., WEI CHING). This naturally encourages students to learn to reflect and be proactive. "Words must be believed, actions must be fruitful" (*The Analects of Confucius*, Chapter 13., TSZE-LOO), this requires actions to be better than words, and urges the unity of knowledge and action. "Don't do unto others what you don't want others to do unto you" (*The Analects of Confucius*, Chapter 12., YEN YUEN) sets out the principle of getting along with others.

### **5.2.3 Forming a management value of ‘people-oriented’ and ‘harmony comes first’ principles (reponse to RQ2 and specifically RQ2.2)**

The Confucian ‘tian ren he yi’ not only emphasizes the harmony between man and nature but also emphasizes the mutual coordination and unity of the management subject and the object (Confucius & Legge, 2018). At the same time, it also inspires us to ‘follow nature and respond to people’ in management. We must respect and act in accordance with objective laws, but also conform to the will of the individuals and care for the interests, requirements and wishes of teachers, students and employees. The organic combination of the two will inevitably promote the development of the school in the direction of harmony and health. Chinese Confucianism advocates that "Governance depends on people" (*Zhongyong*, Chapter12). This when applied in the organization and administration system of universities is essentially the embodiment of the idea of ‘humanism’.

We may take the official document on wages and benefits issued by PKU as an example. There have been many documents on ‘treatment of visiting relatives’, ‘treatment during sick leave’, ‘bereavement treatment’, ‘work injury treatment’ and ‘health allowance treatment’. (*Measures for the Administration of Workers under the Labor Contract System of Peking University*, Peking University Personnel Department). If a university is seen as a ‘unit’, in a sense a university is actually a family-style organization in China. In addition to paying staff wages and salaries, it is also responsible for day-to-day matters such as housing, medical care, and children's education. There is no doubt that this organization and administration system reflects the ‘ReN(people oriented, humanism)’ emphasis.

At the same time, Peking University also implements the development strategy of ‘Driving the transformation of universities through the reform of faculties and departments’. Each department has established academic committees composed of outstanding teaching staff and professors who are responsible for various academic affairs. Elected teacher representatives participate in major decisions at all levels of departments and in the formulation and modification of the system at university’s all levels (*Articles of Association of the Academic Committee of Peking University*, The 12th Party Committee and President's Office of Peking University). This kind of benevolent governance not only improves the

enthusiasm of teaching staff, but also avoids the imbalance between administrative management and academic management, thus creating a positive academic atmosphere for the development of universities.

In Confucianism, Ren and Li are interlinked, and it is required to use education in etiquette to achieve harmony and unity of various relationships. Thus, the core feature of Confucian management thought is that ‘He (harmony)’ is most valued (Li, 2006). In the management of Chinese modern universities, the spirit of harmony has become a basic management idea. A harmonious interpersonal relationship within the management of universities improves team cohesion and reflects the aim of ‘group consciousness’. Analysis of methods of application and selection of teaching staff and scientific research projects, and of the evaluation methods of post appointments and the various reward and punishment systems of Peking University and Qufu Normal University all made clear the requirements for ‘teamwork’, ‘team spirit’ and ‘united colleagues’. For example, *the teacher's manual* issued by the Personnel Department of Peking University emphasizes that in their relationship with colleagues, teachers should maintain and advocate cooperation, establish harmonious team relationships, and take responsibility for managing academic institutions together with other teachers. The performance rewards and appointments established on these foundations are management systems that take into account group awareness. Therefore, as mentioned above, the ‘ReN (people-oriented)’ management philosophy encourages the personal development of faculty and staff, while ‘He (harmony) comes first’ is paramount and emphasizes the value of individuals in the overall interests.

Harmonious cooperation can fully mobilize the enthusiasm of administrators, faculty, and students, thereby forming a benign atmosphere for administrative, academic and student management.

*“ We are determined to value harmony, and a management team is a community. Taking the Department of Education as an example, everyone closely focuses on the idea of being people-oriented. All our decisions are negotiated, very harmonious, everyone works together like a big family.”* Q1

*“The communication between teachers is to discuss teaching and academic issues*

*on an equal basis.”*

*Q3*

*“In the ‘Harmony’ student management method, each of our majors has a dedicated life counselor to ensure contact and communication with students, pay attention to students' ideological dynamics, put themselves in the students' shoes, and always handle students' disputes in a peaceful way.”*

*P2*

The interview results also found that the ‘He’ of Confucian practice is also reflected in leadership styles in university organization and administration. In contemporary leadership theory, Confucianism fits well with transformative leadership behavior (Podasakoff et al., 1996), which is an active form of leadership that emphasizes close contact between leader and subordinates. Based on the Chinese cultural background, this Confucian style of leadership tends to create a ‘family atmosphere’ of harmony and loyalty. It emphasizes the coordination and harmony between leaders and followers (Bass & Avolio, 1993), and this sense of shared interests and interdependence between leaders and subordinates can increase subordinates' sense of mission, thereby further enhancing group cohesion.

*“In terms of the university's overall guidance strategy or leadership style, taking my department as an example, I feel that the leadership style tends to be Confucian. Our dean is very humble and kind, and often chats and eats with us in daily life.”*

*P4*

*“I don't think our leaders are condescending to the staff, they are very good at creating a harmonious atmosphere of common progress and ensuring that all members are in a positive state.”*

*Q2*

At the same time, when applying the ‘He’ of Confucian practice to the management process, attention should be paid to avoiding blindly seeking common ground. Universities should respect differences in the process of managing students, so that students with different personalities can fully express their true ideas and different opinions. In the administrator's management of the teaching staff there should be a correct evaluation of the characteristics of different teachers. Their differences should be accepted and cultivated, so as to allow the formation of a teaching style with distinctive characteristics and promote the development of

teaching.

### **5.3 Achievements and Problems of Confucian Cultural Practice in Chinese Universities —— Take Peking University and Qufu Normal University as examples**

This section mainly combines the official websites and interview results of the two universities to understand the achievements and problems of Confucian practice in the process of integrating that practice into these two universities. It responds further to RQ2, and also begins the response to RQ3, to the extent this is possible within the limitations of the study. RQ 3 is also further addressed in the next section. RQ2 and RQ3 are as follows:

*RQ2. What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in Peking university and Qufu normal university?*

*RQ3. How can the contribution of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities be improved?*

#### **5.3.1 The Full Integration of Confucian Culture into the University Curriculum**

Taught courses are the main way students receive knowledge. According to the interview findings, the main way to integrate Confucian culture into colleges and universities, and to strengthen the influence of Confucian culture in the campus cultural atmosphere, is to combine Confucian culture with college courses. At present, the two most common ways of curriculum integration in PKU and QNU are firstly to combine Confucian culture with general education courses, and secondly to create special Confucian culture courses. The general undergraduate education course ‘*Ideological and Moral Cultivation and Legal Foundation*’ at Peking University is an example. Interviewee P1 said that “teachers will appropriately add Confucian culture about personal ideals and beliefs, learning methods, laws and regulations, and attitudes towards others in their course explanations, so as to increase the diversity of course content and help students establish a correct outlook on life and values.” Teachers will use some Confucian ideas to assist course teaching. For example, when explaining the relationship between individuals and the state, they usually cite Confucian dicta such as ‘rule the country by virtue’ to introduce new lessons. The students are

encouraged to talk about their understanding of the relationship between the individual and the state according to Confucian thinking, to give full play to the students' central role in the teaching of general courses.

Specialized Confucian culture courses in colleges and universities are more targeted. Taking Peking University as an example, the department of Literature and History develop elective courses such as 'Contemporary Values of Confucian Culture', 'Talking about the Way of Confucianism' and 'Universal Values in Confucianism'. Open courses lead students into the Confucian culture, letting them experience the attractions of traditional Chinese culture through interactive communication in the course, and improving students' moral and cultural knowledge. At the same time, teachers can also conduct their own independent learning in the process of preparing lessons, which promotes the common progress and development of teachers and students.

*"It is the most effective way to integrate cultural influences into education through curriculum setting. When students choose a course, they have to read, write home-work and take the course exam, which means that they naturally acquire knowledge. If teachers have not done their own preparation, the teaching effect of the class will not be good. So here, teachers and students are developing together."* P3

Qufu Normal University focuses on the integration of Confucian practice into the curriculum in compulsory courses. The interviewees said that the Department of Literature and Religion, Department of History, Department of Education, Department of Law and Department of Business all offer compulsory courses on Confucian culture. When Confucian culture is integrated into compulsory courses this increase students' attention to the study of Confucian ideas, and also enhances students' enjoyment of traditional culture. (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4).

*"Confucianism runs through Education, history, literature, law, physical education and other majors. For example, law majors also study the thoughts on the law of masters in the archives of Confucius."* Q1



*“In our curriculum, all students are required to take traditional culture courses, which cover Confucius and the **Analects of Confucius**, and an Introduction to Mencius’s **Doctrine**. In the department of Education, we have separately designed two compulsory courses, one is on the quintessence of the **SISHU** of Educational Thought. The second course is on selected readings of Chinese educational treatises, mainly the works of traditional culture and Confucian classics.”*

Q2

### **5.3.2 Actively promoting the construction of Confucian practice in college culture**

The key to understanding the attraction of traditional culture in practice, and promoting the construction of the cultural education system in universities, lies in the innovation of a ‘practice platform’. In a variety of activities, teachers and students can make up for not having studied the content and form of traditional culture, and can feel the benefit of Chinese traditional culture in the form of 'seeing and touching'. This can enhance cultural identity through combining learning and action.

*“Taking the department of History and Culture as an example, it has had a traditional activity project for more than 20 years, called Confucius Culture Month. The time is from September to October every year.”*

Q3

*“Taking the department of Education as an example, there is already a traditional program, that is, as soon as freshman enter the university, we send each student a copy of the **Analects** in both Chinese and English.”*

Q1

Qufu Normal University augments course teaching content by creating campus cultural activities. Confucius Culture Month is held annually and includes education content based on the 'six arts' of Confucian culture — etiquette, instrumental music, calligraphy and arithmetic, archery skills and horse racing. Students carry out activities aimed at experiencing and appreciating the traditional activities of calligraphy and painting, tea art, instrumental music, and sports competitions.

*“Every year, we send many student volunteers to important events such as the World Confucian Forum, Confucius and Socrates Thought Exchange Meeting, etc. Volunteers also listen to reports, enjoy opportunities for dialogue and exchange with other scholars, and gain a different kind of academic growth.”*

Q2

*“Qufu Normal University is active in foreign exchanges among universities in China. We have unique advantages in foreign exchanges. That said, while there are many ways in the world to gain an understanding of China, one cannot avoid the discussion of Confucius and Confucianism. Therefore, international scholars who come to Qufu will naturally communicate with us. The annual Confucius Forum, ‘Confucius Meets Socrates’, is a global international forum. The exchange of relevant research findings and academic advances is also a good platform for popularizing and disseminating the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, especially the Confucian spirit.”*

*Q3*

Some respondents said that these practices also foster inter-individual relationships and develops students' social skills while enhancing their academic abilities. Qufu Normal university organized the original drama performance ‘Confucius’ by teachers and students; and held a variety of activities such as the *Confucius and Socrates thought exchange*, which can also promote international academic exchanges and enhance the international influence of Confucianism.

### **5.3.3 A Problem encountered: Culture shock — college students lacking a strong sense of identity with Confucian culture**

The students' sense of identity is the logical starting point for exploring identity in ideological and political education, and has a profound impact on individuals' subjective judgments and behavior choices (Li & Zhu, 2013). In order to make students receptive to Confucian culture, we must first enhance their sense of identifying with it. The multicultural impact of the internet prevents many students in the current university campus from forming a strong Confucian cultural identity. While the internet broadens individuals' horizons and brings convenience to human lives, its low attention threshold leads to Confucian culture being overwhelmed by a flood of information.

*“The openness of the world and the development of the internet have connected all parts of the world. Some contemporary college students follow the trend and are full of curiosity about Western culture, but they are not very enthusiastic about Chinese Confucian culture and cultural history.”*

*P1*

In addition, an unsympathetic view has led some college students to regard Confucian culture as 'feudal thought'. Some hierarchical concepts in Confucian culture, such as patriarchy and small peasant consciousness, are contrary to the social concepts of democracy and equality in today's society. Some students unilaterally regard Confucian culture as a relic of feudal times, which has no merit for modern development.

#### **5.3.4 A Further Problem: The relationship is fragmented—the connection between Confucian culture and its application in class is not in place**

The general education course is the main channel of moral education for college students, focusing on cultivating their political, humanistic and psychological qualities. It is the key to successfully teaching Confucian culture (Glynn et al., 2005). Practical activities also play a key role in educating people. They combine with general education and promote students' growth and development (Meltzer, 2018). But in actual teaching, there is a phenomenon of poor integration between theory and practice. In the teaching process of some general education courses, some teachers do not fully appreciate the role of practical activity in promoting students' learning of Confucian culture from the perspective of practical education. The integration of Confucian moral culture into the ideological and political education of college students can then be only superficial. Specifically, when general teachers in universities confine themselves to textbook-based teaching the result can be students are less interested in Confucian moral culture. Students then chat in class, play with mobile phones (P3), and it is difficult to achieve the purpose of 'value leadership' in general education. Some students simply focus on learning theoretical knowledge, which cannot effectively connect Confucian culture and real life. This makes it difficult to realize the 'experiential' cultural utility of general education courses and the purpose of practical education.

Secondly, while some current college students have high scientific cultural attainments, they cannot match this in their moral practice.

*“While affirming that the overall moral quality of college students has shown good development, there is also a phenomenon that is less encouraging. Nowadays*

*some college students are greedy for pleasure and do not want to make progress. Some students are obsessed with material possessions and interests, personal vanity, and love comparing possessions. Some students have a weak sense of honesty and integrity, plagiarize dissertations, and cheat in exams.” Q2*

College students' recitation of famous Confucian sayings may be perfect, but they are only learning words and do not necessarily use these words to improve themselves. College students need to think about how to apply what they have learned and focus on cultivating social morality and using Confucian culture actively to reflect on their own behavior.

## **Chapter 6 : Discussion: How to Improve the Contribution of Confucian Cultural Practice in Chinese Universities**

Confucian culture is able to last for thousands of years because it can keep pace with the times and constantly adapt to the requirements of social development. In order to achieve this, in the new era of university life it is necessary to creatively promote Confucian culture in university campuses in multiple ways, to give full play to the educational value of Confucian culture, and to educate student with that culture. This section further addresses research question R3, to the extent possible within the limitations of the study. RQ3 is as follows:

*RQ3. How can the contribution of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities be improved?*

The capacity of the study to fully address RQ3 is limited by the fact that the field work took place in only two universities in China. Some issues and problems arising in other contexts cannot be comprehended by the empirical work. However, the literature review is able to operate at a more inclusive level, and the findings from the two cases can be considered to be at least suggestive of issue arising in many institutions.

### **6.1 Deepening the connection between general education, practical education and Confucian culture**

As the soul of general education teaching, teachers should actively read Confucian classics such as The Analects of Confucius and Book of Rites in their spare time, deepen their understanding of Confucian culture, and deepen their own knowledge. The Confucian ideas of benevolence, filial piety, and integrity are integrated into the teaching of ideological and political courses. When educating students on the subject of Confucian culture, the course model of ‘compulsory + elective + cultural salon’ can be adopted to incorporate Confucian culture into various teaching models; The teaching mechanism of ‘teacher guidance + group discussion + exchange and sharing’ is adopted, and teachers divide students into groups. Each group selects a Confucian culture section for discussion. Group members assign tasks to collect text, pictures, and video materials, and then each group puts together the data collected

for inter-group communication, sharing the experience of learning Confucian culture, and finally summarizing the Confucian cultural connotation by the teacher.

At the same time, universities also need to strengthen the humanistic qualities of managers at all levels and types. This humanistic quality should not only be that of traditional Chinese culture, including Confucianism, it should be a modern, open, globalized and internationalized humanistic quality. This means that while developing universities' own cultural educating role, universities should also strengthen international exchanges and follow up on international frontier topics, so as to improve the breadth of knowledge and experience of teachers and managers. Improving the humanistic quality of teachers can improve the quality of teaching and management. For example, when teachers conduct moral education in the course, they can tell students about the Confucian classics and the essence of Western ideas in the same period or same field, and enable students to think about the similarities and differences; When managers use Confucian management ideas for personnel management, they can also refer to the applicable aspects of advanced Western management systems, and deal flexibly with problems and crises in the management process.

## **6.2 Relying on the construction of campus culture, publicizing Confucian culture**

The influence of culture on human society is subtle, far-reaching and lasting. Campus culture has an invisible power, and a positive campus culture can nurture the thoughts of college students and guide them to be active (Shen & Tian, 2012). Relying on the construction of campus culture, publicizing Confucian culture through multiple channels and angles, and integrating Confucian culture into various literary and artistic activities of college students, can enable students to identify imperceptibly with Confucian culture. Offline, universities can organize Confucian cultural and literary activities, imitate CCTV's 'Chinese Poetry Conference', 'Readers' and other cultural programs, and hold events such as 'Confucian Poetry Conference' and 'Confucian Classics Readers' cultural activities at universities. Chinese and foreign experts can be invited to hold Confucian culture forums to

analyze and explain Confucianism in combination with current events and topics of concern. By carrying out offline cultural activities, college students' enthusiasm and participation in Confucian culture can be improved.

As regards online, full use can be made of the resources of the internet, such as fast communication and a wide audience. MOOCs and educational software can be used to develop intelligent cultural activities such as 'Interpretation of Confucian classics' and 'Confucianism in practice'. Breaking the time and space constraints, students anywhere and at any time can learn the most complete and latest Confucian culture. It is also possible to carry out the 'Daily Lecture' activity on Confucian traditional culture through public social platforms, such as the university's WeChat public account, so that students can learn about Confucian moral culture in their spare time. In these ways universities can develop innovative cultural communication, combining online and offline, tradition and modernity, and bring Confucian culture into modern life. Social media has the characteristics of strong information dissemination ability and wide coverage (Tess 2013).

Compared with traditional media, social media is not constrained by time and space, and can reach out to a wide public throughout the year, improving on the shortcomings of traditional media. If internet and social media are used to strengthen the content dissemination of Chinese traditional culture, this dissemination method is more easily accepted by students, and can directly reflect students' views and tastes. Also by setting up interactive options, universities can for the first time get feedback, and then make easy adjustments to enhance the educational effect. Universities can set up a special section and an interactive area on the official website to introduce Confucianism culture, so that students can leave messages and interact. Students can be encouraged to actively learn Confucianism, through reading the best ancient classics, reading aloud and presenting this in the form of short videos or audios. The university can display outstanding work of this kind on a Weibo or WeChat public account, and reward the participating students. The construction of a cultural education system is inseparable from new media communication tools. Traditional culture should move on from its single way of publicity and learn to take advantage of social media communication, adopt

the new media, and develop cultural expression with the methods that will reach college students.

### **6.3 Extended thinking**

Everything has two sides. When contemporary Chinese universities promote the process of integrating Confucian practice into higher education, they also should think about what Confucian culture has brought them. They should not overemphasize its good qualities, and should also reflect on what negative things this culture has brought us. In the development of China's modern university system so far, there is actually no information to prove that we have made great contributions in academic research and technological invention; in the humanities and social sciences, there is no important theory that shocked the world in the study of human culture (Interviewee P3; Zhang, 2011). Chinese universities need to appreciate this gap. When they see the gap, they must reflect on how the gap originated. This does not mean reducing the role of Confucian culture in China's higher education system, but it also cannot over-exploit it. Some universities require that the departments of literature, history, education, sports, politics, economics, and foreign languages should all offer a master's degree in the direction of Confucianism. This is good, but it is somewhat far-fetched to have many departments do it (Interviewee Q1, Q2).

At present, because Chinese leaders vigorously advocate and promote traditional Chinese culture, the government has pursued policies that are conducive to the development of traditional culture in many fields. This kind of policy drive is obviously beneficial, but while propagating traditional culture (such as the Confucian culture discussed in this research) through political orientation, the utilization of Confucian culture should also be respected, not consumed. The government and universities should integrate Confucian culture more into academic activities, not just use it as a tool for superficial political propaganda.

Culture is a product of the human spirit. We aim to further develop the spiritual nourishment of campus culture and Confucian culture, and restore culture to the field of higher education, whether it is material, spiritual, institutional, or current digital culture. All of these should be not just an external form but something that nourishes the human heart.



## Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter is divided into three parts. First of all, the overall content of the research is summarized. Secondly, it considers the limitations in the research process and outlines the significance of further research. I end with final thoughts on of the study.

### 7.1 Summary

The research questions for this study are as follows:

*RQ1. Are Western practices in tension with Confucian practices? In what ways are they in harmony?*

*RQ2. What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in Peking university and Qufu normal university?*

*RQ2.1 What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in these two universities, in teaching and learning?*

*RQ2.2 What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in these two universities, in organization and administration?*

*RQ3. How can the contribution of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities be improved?*

Detailed responses to the research questions were provided in the previous chapter. In summary, the study looks at Chinese higher education and aims to understand the development of Chinese universities influenced by Confucian culture. It first describes the core ideas of Confucian culture, considering particularly the two most iconic stages in the evolution history of Confucianism, namely the pre-Qin period and the modern age. It then considers the concept of university campus culture, at the spiritual, material, behavioral and institutional levels. Next it reviews the literature on Confucianism and Chinese university culture and on the practice of Confucian culture in Chinese universities. Following the analysis of the literature, the researcher conducted interviews with 8 current teaching staff at PKU and QNU. Combining the literature, the research data obtained and the official digital archives published by these two universities, this study has the following findings.

First, and in relation to RQ1, the study found that the development of Chinese universities is faced with both the conflict and fusion of tradition and modernity. The formation of modern Chinese universities was adapted from the western higher education model (Mok, 2009), and based on Confucianism (Marginson, 2011). In this unique educational model of ‘combining Chinese and Western’, Chinese universities have educational functions and missions similar to Western universities in the English-speaking world, but they also feature a family culture and collectivism, which are different from the academic independence emphasized in Western practice, and tendencies of moderation and conservatism which are in conflict with innovation and competition.

Second, and in relation to RQ2, this study explores findings about the role of Confucian cultural practice in Chinese universities. Confucian culture can promote innovation in teaching, in content and form. Confucian culture can create a campus environment with its own educational effect. It can also influence the organization and administration of universities through the elements of ReN (People-oriented), Ren (Benevolent), He (Harmonious) and Leadership style.

Third, and in relation to RQ2 and the beginnings of the response to RQ3, the study examines the current situation of Confucian cultural practice, both the achievements and problems. From the perspectives of course content and nature, teachers' abilities, students' participation, class atmosphere and effects, the research findings comprehensively explain the current situation and problems of integrating Confucian culture into general education courses. And interviewees generally made positive comments on the actions of the two universities to offer special courses related to Confucianism. At the same time, the research also found that in the process of Confucian practice, there were problems when some students had a low sense of cultural identity and lacked the ability to apply Confucian knowledge.

Based on the research findings, and again in completing the response to RQ3, this dissertation discusses how to improve the contribution of Confucian cultural practice in Chinese universities, from the connection of Confucian culture with general education and practical education, and the organization of online and offline campus cultural activities. The study concludes with wider and deeper consideration of Confucian practice in Chinese higher education.

## 7.2 Limitations and Implications of Further Research

Regarding the collection of research data, due to the travel restrictions caused by the epidemic, it was impossible to travel to China for data collection. The entire research process was completed in the UK, and the interviews were conducted online. If the researcher could have travelled to both PKU and QNU for fieldwork and conduct face-to-face interviews, the data quality might have been improved to some extent.

In addition, there are general limitations to the current research. Since the practice of Confucian culture in the PKU and QNU is more well-established, the research horizon and sample selection are mainly based on these two universities. But there are differences between university types, and whether the findings are applicable to all Chinese universities, both public and private, remains to be considered. For this reason, as noted, it is not possible to completely answer RQ3.

Finally, when transcribing and encoding, one needs to reflect on the constraints imposed by translation issues. The process of transcription and coding was based on the interview content in Chinese, which was translated into English. Due to cultural differences, some Chinese expressions in the interview cannot be translated into appropriate English concepts. In order to avoid mistranslation caused by semantic problems, researchers usually use Chinese spelling supplemented by specific English descriptions to help to understand. For example, 'Yincaishijiao' - means teaching students according to their aptitude. The proofreading of translation takes up a lot of time in the data analysis process. In future in-depth research of this nature, researchers will need to carry out more professional training in relation to translation problems.

Taking into account the constraints of energy, time, and the length of postgraduate dissertations, the research methods selected for this study are literature research, archival research and interviews. The interviews selected university staff with teaching experience and management experience. In future in-depth studies, a more rigorous study design could be undertaken, increasing the number of interviews and widening the types of disciplines in which the samples belong to improve the representativeness of the samples. Incorporating a questionnaire survey, with students as samples to conduct mixed-method research, would enhance the diversity of the research sample, the generality, reliability and validity of the research results, and provide a new perspective for the research content.

Moreover, in order to give people a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the application of Confucian culture in the field of higher education, there are still many possibilities for

in-depth research on this topic in the future. A study might investigate university Confucian cultural practices in ‘Confucian’ countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Alternatively, starting from the collision of Chinese and Western practices in the research findings, a study might look at a global comparison, examining the differences between universities dominated by liberalism in the English-speaking world and comprehensive universities characterized by Confucian traditions in East Asian countries. Alternatively, a study might take China’s national conditions as an entry point to study the interaction of Confucian culture, socialism and neoliberalism in Chinese higher education. A study taking the Confucian concepts Ren (benevolence), Li (Property and rites) or He (harmony) as the starting point could examine the relationship between each of them and Chinese higher education. Lastly, taking the curriculum reform highlighted in these research findings as an entry point, a study could look specifically at the teaching of Confucian heritage culture classes in Chinese universities.

### **7.3 Closing thoughts**

The development of Chinese higher education is inseparable from the inheritance and innovation of its own culture. At this moment of transformation in the long history of traditional Chinese culture, Confucian culture has an undeniable influence on the development of education in China. Although Confucian ideas conflict in some respects with the ideas underlying modern education in Chinese universities based on the Western higher education system, putting the positive part of the Confucian culture into practice in the development of Chinese universities can bring new enlightenment to Chinese higher education.

From a macro perspective, the essence of Confucian culture can help improve the quality of university campus culture, enhance the running of a school in practice and can provide new research perspectives and suggestions for improving the management and teaching of Chinese universities. At a micro level, it is of great value to incorporate Confucian culture into college students' moral and ideological education, and this in turn helps educators re-examine what is cultural education. It is hoped that this study will contribute to enhancing the cultivation of good character and self-cultivation among university teaching staff and students. It is a preliminary investigation. Its contribution will be maximized if the content and results lead to more systematic doctoral research.

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## Appendix A: Chronological table of Confucianism in history

Chronological table of Confucianism in history (derived from Yao & Yao, 2000)

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The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The figure was sourced at Yao, X., & Yao, H. C. (2000). *An introduction to Confucianism*. Cambridge University Press.



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## **Appendix B: Interview outline**

### **Part One: Introduce themes**

1. Thank the respondents for their participation:

"Hello, thank you very much for your willingness to accept this interview."

2. "I am Haixin Liu, a master's student from the University of Oxford, majoring in higher education, and I am doing research on the application of Confucian culture in the construction of university culture in China. I would like to study from your perspective to understand your specific views on the current situation of university culture construction in Peking University/Qufu Normal University and how to guide the development of universities in combination with Confucianism."

3. Explain the voluntariness and confidentiality of the interview;

"This interview is mainly conducted in the form of open questions, and the content of the interview is strictly confidential."

4. Explain the recording and repeat the point about confidentiality:

"I want to record today's interview so that I can find relevant information when I write a dissertation afterward, is it okay?"

If the interviewee expresses hesitation about this request, the request can be politely made again during the interview. If the interviewee refuses, the content of the interview can be recorded in the form of taking notes.

### **Part two: Questions**

1. **Can you briefly introduce yourself?**

2. (From your introduction, I learned that you have many years of teaching/management experience, and at the same time have been deeply involved in the direction of xxx....)

The interviewer should ask questions according to the answers of the respondents and naturally lead to the following questions.

**In the process of education and teaching, what do you think of the campus atmosphere of Qufu Normal University/Peking University?**

(such as teacher-student relationship, teaching effect, academic atmosphere, etc.)

**Sub question: Do you like this campus atmosphere? If you like/dislike it, please explain why.**

3. **What advantages do you think Peking University/Qufu Normal University has in the cultural environment?**

(For example, well-known academic masters, teaching mode, scientific research level, characteristic professional construction, etc.)

**Sub question (1): What factors do you think affect the campus cultural environment construction of Chinese universities?**

**Sub question (2): Do you think the current campus cultural environment of Chinese universities is influenced by Confucian culture?**

4. **In your opinion, in what aspects does the cultural construction of Peking University / Qufu Normal University contain elements of Confucian culture?**

Such as the top-level design and evaluation system of the university, the quality and ability of teachers and teachers, the effect of teaching and practical teaching, the attitude and evaluation of students, the construction of teacher-student relationships, etc.

**Sub question: What impact does Confucian culture have on teachers and students in these aspects?**

5. **Do you think that the creation of the campus environment of Peking University/Qufu Normal University focuses on Confucianism?**

If so, what are the main aspects; If not, please give examples.

**6. Do you think the management model and system construction of Peking University/Qufu Normal University embody Confucianism?**

If so, in what aspects? If not, please give examples.

**7. In addition to the courses involving professional knowledge, what kind of activities/courses do you think the university can play a role in cultivating students' comprehensive quality and values?**

**8. What problems do you think Peking University/Qufu Normal University still has in cultural construction combined with Confucian culture?**

**9. Talking about all higher education in China, what impact do you think Confucian culture has on Chinese university culture?**

**10. In your opinion, How can the contribution of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities be improved?**

### **Part three: Finish**

#### **Show appreciation and build a lasting connection**

"Thank you so much for your participation. In the conversation just now, is there anything else you are interested in that you can discuss with me?"

"If you have any additional questions about my research, please feel free to contact me."

### Appendix C: Information form of the interviewee

<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Institution name</b>	<b>Primary role</b>	<b>Discipline/ Field of Study</b>	<b>Years active as a researcher</b>	<b>Gender</b>
18 April, 2022	Peking University	Professor	Financial Economics	10	F
20 April, 2022	Peking University	Faculty leader, Dean	Education	35	M
26 April, 2022	Qufu Normal University	Faculty leader, Dean	Education	31	M
01 May, 2022	Peking University	Administrator	History	15	F
07 May, 2022	Qufu Normal University	Assistant Professor	Law	9	M
10 May, 2022	Peking University	Professor	physics	28	M
20 May, 2022	Qufu Normal University	Faculty leader, Dean	Confucianism	40	M
27 May, 2022	Qufu Normal University	Professor	Engineering	18	F

## Appendix D: Coding results of interview data

<b>Open coding result</b>	<b>Open coding level</b>	<b>Axial coding result</b>	<b>Selective coding result</b>
Group solidarity	Positive - Negative	Family culture	The conflict between Confucian practice and Western practice in Chinese Universities
Academic freedom	High - Low	versus Academic independence	
Teacher-student relationship	Positive - Negative	Both above and below	
Campus atmosphere	Static-Dynamic	Moderation	
Academic Competition and Innovation	Significant-Non significant	versus Innovation and competition	
Talent development	Consistent - Inconsistent	Similar University Functions and Missions	The integration of Confucianism and Western practice in Chinese universities
Teaching method	Flexible and Versatile – Invariable/fixed	Building a ‘yin cai shi jiao’ teaching model: teach students in accordance	
Personalized instruction	Value - Do not value		

		with their aptitude (Teaching and Learning)	The Role of Confucian Cultural Practice in Chinese Universities
Educational content and format	Layered design - Invariable		
Campus environment design	Value - Do not value	Creating a unique physical environment	
人 Ren (People oriented)	Value - Do not value	Forming a management value of  'people-oriented' and 'harmony comes first' principles	
仁 Ren (Benevolent)	Significant - Not significant		
和 He(Harmonious)	Emphasize-Deempha size		
Leadership style	Positive - Negative		
The Institute of Confucianism at Peking university  The Confucius Institute of Culture at Qufu Normal University	Implemented - not implemented	Concrete construction	Achievements of Confucian Cultural Practice in Chinese Colleges and Universities
Basic literacy and teaching level (Teaching staff)	High - Low	1. Integration of Confucian Culture and General Education Curriculum  2. The offering of Confucian culture characteristic courses	Achievements and Problems
Class participation (Students)	High - Low		
Class atmosphere	Positive - Negative		
Course content and nature	Match - Not match		
Course Resources	Abundant - Non- abundant		
Course effectiveness	Significant - Non-significant		
			Achievements



Extracurricular activities	Abundant - Non- Abundant	Extracurricular Practice of Confucian Culture	Achievements
Internationalization	Significant - Non-Significant		
Ability Improvement (Teachers and Students)	Significant - Not significant		
Cultural Identity	High - Low	The student in Confucian cultural practice	Problems
The ability to apply what you have learned	High - Low		

## **Appendix E: Ethical approval form**

### **1. CUREC Approval Letter**

Dear Haixin Liu

TITLE: The Cultural Construction of Chinese Universities Based on the Perspective of Confucian Practice Thought

REF: CIA-22HT-020

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethics approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted.

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application you should submit details to [research.office@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:research.office@education.ox.ac.uk) for consideration.

Good luck with your research study.

Best wishes

Hamish Chalmers

Member of the DREC

## 2. Ethical approval form

SECTION A: Filter for CUREC 2 application			
<p>This section determines whether the application for ethics review should be made using the this form (CUREC 1A) or the CUREC 2 form (for research with more <a href="#">complex ethical issues</a>).</p>			
Please indicate with an 'X'.		Yes	No
Does the research involve the <a href="#">deception</a> of participants?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Are the research participants <a href="#">vulnerable</a> in the context of the research, or classed as <a href="#">people whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question</a>? For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants aged 16 or under (also answer question A5);</li> <li>• Participants aged 16 – 18 (refer to <a href="#">competent youths</a> for guidance);</li> <li>• <a href="#">adults at risk</a>;</li> </ul> <p>Note the University's <a href="#">Safeguarding Guidance and Code of Practice</a> and its implications for researchers involving young people or adults at risk.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
By taking part in the research, will participants be at risk of criminal prosecution or significant harm?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does your research raise issues relevant to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act ( <a href="#">the Prevent Duty</a> ), which seeks to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism? <a href="#">Best Practice Guidance 07 on the Prevent Duty</a> provides further guidance.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If you answered 'No' to all the questions above, go to Section B. If you answered 'Yes' to any question above, continue to question 5 below.			
Is your project covered by a CUREC <a href="#">Approved Procedure</a> ?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, list the CUREC Approved Procedure(s) you will follow			
<p>If you answered 'Yes' to ANY of questions 1-4, and answered 'No' to question 5, stop completing this form and do not submit it for ethical review. You will instead need to submit a <a href="#">CUREC 2 application form</a>. If you answered 'Yes' to any of questions 1-4, and your project is covered by an Approved Procedure, go on to Section B. If more than one Approved Procedure applies, contact the SSH IDREC or your DREC for advice on whether a CUREC 2 form should be submitted instead.</p>			

SECTION B: Researchers		
Name of Principal Investigator or student's supervisor	Professor Simon Marginson	
Department or Institute	Department for Education	
University of Oxford telephone number	+44 (0) 7876323949	
University of Oxford email address	simon.marginson@education.ox.ac.uk	
Copy and paste the following six rows as necessary to complete for each additional researcher who will be involved in this study, including student(s) and those external to the University.		
Name of researcher or student	Haixin Liu	
Department or Institute	Department for Education	
University of Oxford telephone number	+44 (0) 7562485331	
University of Oxford email address	haixin.liu@education.ox.ac.uk	
Role in research	student	
Degree programme, if student research	MSc	
The whole research team		
Have the researchers undertaken research ethics and integrity training?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please provide details of any research ethics and integrity training undertaken, including the dates of the training. Alternatively state relevant research experience.	During my undergraduate studies, I studied the professional course of educational research methods, and conducted qualitative and quantitative research at the same time. The courses FER 1 and 2 studied at the postgraduate level both carry out the study of research methods, research ethics and integrity training, and maintain regular discussions with	

	supervisors during this period.
State any <a href="#">conflicts of interest</a> and explain how these will be addressed.	N/A

### SECTION C: The research project

Title of the research project	
The Cultural Construction of Chinese Universities Based on the Perspective of Confucian Practice Thought	
Anticipated start date of the aspect of the research project involving human participants and/or personal data (dd/mm/yy).	I will start once ethics approval is obtained.
Anticipated research end date (dd/mm/yy).	10/8/2022
Provide a brief lay summary of the aims and objectives of the research. This should cover the questions it will answer and any potential benefits. (max 300 words)	
<p>Cultural construction is a significant component of the development of universities. In recent years, as universities have paid too much attention to the material construction while ignoring the spiritual culture construction, many problems have emerged in China's universities, such as the lack of humanistic care in the establishment of systems, some teachers' deficiency of benevolent attitude, and the indifference among students in the face of learning materials. Chinese universities are faced with a serious problem of homogeneity in the aspects of goal orientation, talent training mode and curriculum, prominently manifested as the lack of cultural personality, which has aroused widespread concern from people in all walks of life.</p> <p>Chinese traditional culture develops on the basis of Confucian traditional morality. The construction of campus culture, a necessary part of the development of a university, incorporates four dimensions: material culture, spiritual culture, institutional culture and behavioural culture. This study will focus on two Chinese universities and will answer two main questions:</p>	

What is the role of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities, in (a) teaching and learning, and (b) organisation and administration?

How can the contribution of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities be improved?

Through specific analysis of the problems existing in Chinese university culture, this study will develop suggestions for the construction of university culture, including operational solutions, that will make up for the shortcomings in practice. This will help Chinese universities to keep pace with the times and realize the leap to world-class universities. It is hoped that this study will be conducive to re-establishing the life beliefs of teaching staff and students, strengthening unity and harmony within universities; further enhancing the connotation of university culture; and will be of practical significance to the construction of university cultural characteristics.

Please indicate the methods to be used (indicate with an 'X'):

Analysis of existing records	<input type="checkbox"/>
Snowball sampling (recruiting through contacts of existing participants)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Use of casual or local workers e.g. interpreters (refer to guidance in <a href="#">BPG 01: Researcher safety</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant observation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Covert observation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Observation of specific organisational practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant completes questionnaire in hard copy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant completes online questionnaire or other online task (refer to guidance in <a href="#">BPG 06: Internet-mediated research</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using social media to recruit or interact with participants (refer to guidance in <a href="#">BPG 06: Internet-mediated research</a> )	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant performs paper and pencil task	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant performs verbal or aural task (e.g. for linguistic study)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interview (refer to guidance in <a href="#">BPG 10: Conducting research interviews</a> )	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">Audio recording</a> of participant (you will generally need specific consent from participants for this)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<a href="#">Video recording</a> of participant (you will generally need specific consent from participants for this)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photography of participant (you will generally need specific consent from participants for this)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Provide a brief summary of the research design and methods. What will research participants be asked to do? (max 300 words)</p> <p>Please also submit a copy of the questions participants will be asked, if applicable, or some information about the sorts of topics that will be covered.</p>	
<p>This study is primarily a qualitative study and largely based on the analysis of literature in an extended literature review. It will also review university documents, and conduct interviews in two contrasting Chinese universities, Peking University (a top university in China, and a leader of higher education culture) and Qufu Normal University (a lesser tier university more typical of the majority of higher education). Seven (7) participants will be interviewed. The interviewees will be professionals, including faculty leaders, experienced university teachers and so on. It is expected that these interviewees will be able to provide effective suggestions for improving the contribution of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities.</p> <p>The interviews will be conducted and recorded with an online platform (Tencent meeting room or WeChat) because of Covid-19 restrictions on travel and face to face activities. Both the interview transcript and interviewees' body language and feeling will also be recorded, using notes. When analysing transcript, the grounded theory method will used. The transcript will be coded in three stages: open coding, axis coding and selective coding by Nvivo software.</p>	

List the location(s) where the research will be conducted, including any other countries.	Online, interviews in two Chinese universities, Peking University and Qufu Normal University	
Clarify which parts of the research will be conducted in-person and which will take place remotely, e.g. <a href="#">online</a> .	Full remote	
<p>If your research involves fieldwork or travel and your department requires a travel risk assessment, will you have completed and returned a risk assessment form beforehand? Please indicate with an 'X'.</p> <p>(This must be approved by your department before you travel. If you are travelling overseas, you are advised to take out <a href="#">University travel insurance</a>.) Refer to guidance available from your Department, the <a href="#">Safety Office</a>, the <a href="#">Social Sciences Division</a>, and the <a href="#">Humanities Division</a>, and on <a href="#">travel for University business</a>.</p>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Not required in this instance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>In the case of international or collaborative research, explain how you will address any ethical issues specific to the local context.</p> <p>Please provide details of the local review, approval or permission obtained or required. Refer to the <a href="#">BPG 16: Social science research conducted outside the UK</a>. If there will be no local review, explain why not.</p> <p>Please also address any physical or psychological risks for Oxford researchers and local fieldworkers in <a href="#">Section G</a>.</p>		
N/A		
Name of departmental/ peer reviewer (if applicable)		
External organisation funding the research and grant reference (if applicable)		
Please refer to the <a href="#">CUREC Best</a>		



<a href="#">Practice Guidance</a> and list any that have been used to develop your research.	
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### SECTION D: Recruitment of research participants

Number of participants	7	
How was the number of participants decided?	The primary instrument of this study is the literature review. Seven interviews are sufficient to allow the research questions to be explored on the basis of the literature review's outcomes.	
Age range of participants	25-70 years	
Inclusion criteria	<p>Two faculty leaders, such as dean of engineering, dean of business, dean of social science;</p> <p>Three or four experienced university teachers, with a mix of science-based fields and others;</p> <p>(3) Maybe an experienced administrator who is not a teacher, but this third category is not essential.</p>	
Exclusion criteria	The research will just focus on two Chinese universities. (Peking University and Qufu Normal University)	
<p>Indicate with an 'X' all intended recruitment methods</p> <p>Please submit copies of the recruitment material that will be used, e.g. advertisement text, introductory email text.</p>	Poster advert	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Flyer	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Email circulation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Website	<input type="checkbox"/>
	In-person approach	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Snowball sampling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Recruitment sites (e.g. Mechanical Turk)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Existing contacts or volunteer database	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will potential participants be identified and approached?	Personal contacts and their references	
Will informed consent be obtained from the research participants or their parents/ guardians? If not, please explain why not.	Yes	
For each activity or group of participants, explain how <a href="#">informed consent</a> will be obtained from the participants themselves and/ or their parents/ guardians, if applicable. How will their consent be recorded?	The researcher will reach out and delineate the research, providing an Information sheet. A Consent form will be used to manage the recording of consent. This will include reference to the right to withdraw and the right to access the research and findings.	
Provide details of any payments and incentives and the rationale for providing these. Further guidance in <a href="#">Best Practice Guidance: 05 Payments and incentives in research</a> .	The student researcher might mail Oxford University souvenirs to participants, such as stationery, notebooks, mugs, etc.	
Describe how participants may withdraw from the study  may withdraw any personal information they have provided from the study	Verbal and written explanation	

<p>State any limits to withdrawal, for example once the data has been <a href="#">anonymised</a> or at some other specified stage prior to publication. Make sure participants are aware of any withdrawal limits.</p>	
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## SECTION E: Research data

All information provided by participants is considered research data for the purpose of this study. Any research data from which participants can be identified is known as [personal data](#); any personal data which is sensitive is considered [special category data](#). Management of personal data, either directly or via a third party, must comply with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as set out in the [University’s Guidance on Data Protection and Research](#).

In answering the questions below, please also consider the points raised in the [Data Protection Checklist](#) and [Data Protection Screening Assessment](#) and whether, for higher-risk data processing, a separate [Data Protection Impact Assessment](#) may also be required for the research. Advice on research data management and security is available from [Research Data Oxford](#) and your local IT department. Advice on data protection is available from the [Information Compliance team](#).

For guidance on conducting internet-mediated research, refer to CUREC’s [Best Practice Guidance 06: Internet-mediated research](#).

What data will be collected? (Indicate with an ‘X’)

Screening documents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Task results (e.g. questionnaires, diaries)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent records ( e.g., written consent forms, audio-recorded consent, assent forms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	IP addresses (refer to <a href="#">Best Practice Guidance 09: Data collection, protection and management</a> for guidance)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact details for the purpose of this research only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Field notes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact details for future use ( <a href="#">guidance</a> )	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs	<input type="checkbox"/>

Opt-out forms	<input type="checkbox"/>	Information about the health of the participant (including mental health)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Audio recordings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Previously collected (secondary) data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Video recordings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data already in the public domain. Specify the source of the data:	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Transcript of audio/ video recordings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/>	
During the course of the research, where will each type of research data be stored?	Laptop, secure password  All types of data will be transcribed to a computer, and safely stored in an encrypted folder. Identifiable data (including consent forms) will be transcribed by computer, and the interviews recorded by computer. Personal details will not be shared. All non-anonymised data will be stored securely for three years after completion of the study and then use the file destruction software Ty2y for permanent destruction. The record of participant names and participant contact details will be erased after the completion of the study Interview data will be anonymised and a separate record kept of the list of interviews. Only anonymised data will be used. The anonymised data will be backed up on a secure folder within a mobile hard disk and also SharePoint OneDrive.			
Who will have access to the research data during the project?	Researcher, Supervisor			
Please complete this section if your research involves the use of secondary (i.e. previously collected) data.	Please indicated with an 'X'.		Yes	No
	Are data access agreements in place for access to and use of this secondary data? (If so, please attach these.)		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Did the individuals agree that their data could be used for this purpose?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<p>Could anyone (including members of the research team) link the data back to an individual or individuals? If this is a possibility, please explain how the associated ethical issues will be addressed:</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do you intend to share the research data at the end of the project?	Depositing in a specialist data centre or archive	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Submitting to a journal to support a publication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Depositing in an institutional repository	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Dissemination via a project or institutional website	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	No plans to share the data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How do you intend to report and disseminate the results of the research? (Indicate with an 'X')	Thesis publication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Publication in a peer reviewed journal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Publicly available report	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Conference presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Publication on a website	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Report to a research funder	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Providing participants with a lay summary of the results	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Submission for academic assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Other (please specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Explain what will happen to the data at the end of the research project. This question must be answered for each type of data, including completed</p>			

consent forms.
<p>Identifiable data (including consent forms) will be transcribed by computer, and the interviews recorded by computer. An encrypted folder will be used to store details. Personal details will not be shared. All non-anonymised data will be stored securely for three years after completion of the study and then use the file destruction software Ty2y for permanent destruction. The record of participant names and participant contact details will be erased after the completion of the study.</p> <p>Participant responses will be anonymised (letters and numbers will be used as identification symbols), and a separate record kept of the identity of participants. Only anonymised data will be used in the published research. The researcher may use data from the research in future studies, and to share these data with other researchers (e.g. in online databases), but we emphasise that data retained and used in this way will have been fully anonymised.</p>

**SECTION F: Protection of research participants and their personal data**

<p>How identifiable will the participants be from the <a href="#">research outputs</a>? (Indicate with an 'X')</p>	Directly identifiable from the information included	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<a href="#">Pseudonymised</a> / indirectly identifiable	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Not identifiable – data is <a href="#">anonymous</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>To what extent will the data be <a href="#">de-identified</a>? How identifiable will any individuals be from the research data? Describe any measures you</p>	<p>Before the interview, the purpose and procedure of this study will be explained to the interviewees in Chinese. They will be told that they can stop the interview and retract their information at any time, if they so request, without penalty.</p> <p>The research data will be anonymous, the specific identity of the participants will not be displayed, and letters and numbers will be used as identification symbols.</p>	

<p>will take towards assuring <a href="#">confidentiality</a>, potential risks to confidentiality.</p>	
<p>How will you ensure that third parties (e.g., interpreters and transcribers) are aware of and adhere to the measures described in this form?</p>	<p>Both the transcriber and the translator are the student researcher.</p>

### SECTION G: Risks and benefits of the research

Will the research involve topics that could be considered [sensitive](#)? If so:

Please provide more detail or supporting information (such as the interview questions) to show the range of questions;

Explain what steps will be taken to reduce risk of distress;

Consider seeking advice from within your Department or from the ethics committee including whether the application might benefit from additional ethics review (e.g., via a CUREC 2 application).

N/A

Describe any additional burden or risks to the participants and the steps you will take to address these.

Before the interview, the purpose and procedure of this study will be explained to the interviewees in Chinese. They will be told that they can stop the interview and retract their information at any time, if they so request, without penalty.

Describe any physical or psychological risks to the researcher(s) (including local fieldworkers or research assistants) and the steps you will take to address these.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, I have chosen to do one-to-one online interview with Tencent Meeting Room or WeChat, to remain safe in health terms. For my psychological safety, I will maintain communication with my supervisor.

Describe any benefits of the research, both to participants and to others.

The research will contribute to the scholarly understanding of the role of Confucian ideas in Chinese universities today. This benefit can only be fully achieved if the research is published in both English and Chinese.

Give details of any other ethical issues or relevant information.

SECTION H: Professional guidelines		
Please indicate with an 'X' at least one set of professional guidelines you will follow.		
Research specialism/ methodology	Association and guidance	
Anthropology	<a href="#">Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer Science	<a href="#">ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Criminology	<a href="#">British Society of Criminology Statement of Ethics</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<a href="#">British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Geography	<a href="#">American Association of Geographers Statement on Professional Ethics</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>



History	<a href="#">Oral History Society of the UK Ethical Guidelines</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet-mediated research	<a href="#">Association of Internet Researchers Ethical Guidelines</a> <a href="#">British Psychological Society: Ethics Guidelines for internet-mediated research</a> <a href="#">Association for Computing Machinery Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Management	<a href="#">Academy of Management Code of Ethics</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Political Science	<a href="#">American Political Science Association (APSA) Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Politics	<a href="#">Political Studies Association. Guidelines for Good Professional Conduct</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Psychology	<a href="#">British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social research	<a href="#">Social Research Association: Ethical Guidelines</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socio-legal studies	<a href="#">Socio-Legal Studies Association: Statement of Principles of Ethical Research Practice</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sociology	<a href="#">The British Sociological Association: Statement of Ethical Practice</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visual research	<a href="#">ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper: Visual Ethics: Ethical Issues in Visual Research</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other professional guidelines	List any other guidelines used here.	<input type="checkbox"/>

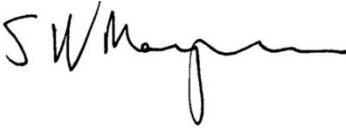
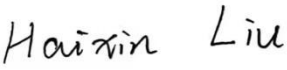
## SECTION I: Endorsements and signatures

Please ensure this form is endorsed by the [Principal Investigator](#) (or student's supervisor), the Head of Department (or nominee) and, if student research, by the student themselves.

The SSH IDREC Secretariat accepts either option below. If you have a [DREC](#), check which signature option it prefers.

### Option 1: direct email endorsements

Each of the signatories should submit an email from a University of Oxford email address, indicating their acceptance of the responsibilities listed below.

<p>Option 2: signatures</p> <p>Please scan the signed form and email it to us as a PDF. Pasted images of signatures cannot be accepted.</p>	
<p>Endorsement by the Principal Investigator/ student supervisor and student, if applicable</p>	
<p>I/ we the researchers understand my/ our responsibilities as Principal Investigator (and student, if applicable) as outlined in the guidance on the CUREC website. I/ we declare that the answers above accurately describe the research as presently designed, and that the ethics committee will be informed of any changes to the project which affect the answers to this form.</p> <p>I/ we will inform the relevant IDREC if the Principal Investigator changes.</p>	
Name of Principal Investigator	Simon Marginson
Principal Investigator's signature	
Date	14 February 2022
Name of student (if applicable)	Haixin Liu
Student's signature	
Date	01 February 2022

Departmental endorsement – from the Head of Department or nominee  
 (Another senior member of the department may sign where the head of department is the Principal Investigator, or where the Head of Department has appointed a nominee. Example nominees include Deputy Head of Department, Director of Research, or Director of Graduate/ Undergraduate Studies.)

I have read the research project application named above. On the basis of the information available to me, I:

- consider the PI and student researcher (if applicable) to be aware of their ethical responsibilities in regard to the ethical issues associated with this research;
- am satisfied that the proposed design and methodology are sound; the research has been subject to appropriate peer review and is likely to contribute to existing knowledge and/ or to the education and training of the researcher(s) and that it is in the public interest.

Signature	
Name	
Role	
Date	

## **Appendix F: Participant information sheet**

### The Cultural Construction of Chinese Universities Using the Perspective of Confucian Practice Thought

#### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference: CIA-22HT-020

#### Introductory paragraph

You are being invited to take part in this research project about the cultural construction of Chinese universities. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

#### Why is this research being conducted?

Cultural construction is a significant component of the development of universities. In recent years, as universities pay too much attention to the material construction while ignoring the spiritual culture construction, many problems emerge in China's universities, such as the lack of humanistic care in the establishment of systems, some teachers' deficiency of benevolent attitude, and the indifference among students in the face of materials. Chinese universities are faced with a serious problem of homogeneity in the aspects of goal orientation, talent training mode and curriculum, prominently manifested as the lack of cultural personality, which has aroused widespread concern from all walks of life. Chinese traditional culture develops on the basis of Confucian traditional morality. The construction of campus culture, a necessary part of the development of a university, incorporates four dimensions: material culture, spiritual culture, institutional culture and behavior culture.

Through specific analysis of the problems existing in Chinese university culture, this study will develop suggestions for the construction of university culture, including operational solutions, that will make up for the shortcomings in practice. This will help Chinese universities to keep pace with the times and realize the leap to world-class universities. It is hoped that this study will be conducive to re-establishing the life beliefs of teaching staff and students, strengthening unity and harmony within universities; further enhancing the connotation of university culture and is of practical significance to the construction of university cultural characteristics.

## Why have I been invited to take part?

Seven (7) participants will be interviewed in two Chinese universities, Peking University and Qufu Normal University. Participants age range from 25-70 years old. The interviewees will be professionals, including faculty leaders, experienced university teachers and so on. It is expected that these interviewees will be able to provide effective suggestions for improving the contribution of Confucian cultural practices in Chinese universities.

## Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the study, without giving a reason, and without negative consequences, by advising me/us of this decision.

## What will happen to me if I take part in the research?

The interview will be conducted and recorded with an online platform (Tencent meeting room or WeChat) because of Covid-19 restrictions on travel and face to face activities. Before the interview, the purpose and procedure of this study will be explained to the interviewees in Chinese. They will be told that they can stop the interview and retract their information at any time, if they so request, without penalty. The interview will take about 20-40 minutes. If you consent, it will be audio recorded to ensure an accurate record of the conversation. Participants can ask to pause or stop the research activities at any time.

Participants are only required to participate in one interview. If further/secondary interview are required subsequently (which is unlikely), the researcher will contact the participants and obtain their further consent.

## What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part?

There are no disadvantages and risks in taking part, as confidentiality will be maintained.

## Are there any benefits in taking part?

There will be no direct or personal benefit to you from taking part in this research. There will be no payment for taking part in this study.

## What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research objectives?

Identifiable data (including consent forms) will be transcribed by computer, and the interviews recorded by computer. An encrypted folder will be used to store details.

Personal details will not be shared. All non-anonymised data will be stored securely for three years after completion of the study and then discarded. The record of participant names and participant contact details will be erased after the completion of the study.

Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the research data.

Research data may be transferred to, and stored at, a destination outside the UK and the European Economic Area. Identifiable data will be removed and any data transfer will be done securely and with a similar level of data protection as required under UK law.

Participant responses will be anonymised (letters and numbers will be used as identification symbols), and a separate record kept of the identity of participants. Only anonymised data will be used in the published research. The researcher may use data from the research in future studies, and to share these data with other researchers (e.g. in online databases), but we emphasise that data retained and used in this way will have been fully anonymised.

Will the research be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other research outputs?

The findings from the research may be written up in a thesis, dissertation, academic publications. The researcher seeks your permission to use direct quotations without identifying you in any research outputs.

## Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the study. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

Who has reviewed this study?

This study has received ethics approval from a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. (Ethics reference: CIA-22HT-020).

Who do I contact if I have a concern about the research or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact Haixin Liu and [haixin.liu@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:haixin.liu@education.ox.ac.uk) or Simon Marginson and [simon.marginson@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:simon.marginson@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please

contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

Include the contact details for the relevant committee:

The Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee;

Email: [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk); Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Boundary Brook House, Churchill Drive, Headington, Oxford OX3 7GB

## Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Haixin Liu

Department of Education, University of Oxford

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY

University tel: +44 (0) 7562485331

University email: [haixin.liu@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:haixin.liu@education.ox.ac.uk)

## Appendix G: Consent Form

### Consent to take part in The Cultural Construction of Chinese Universities Based on the Perspective of Confucian Practice Thought

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) approval reference:  
CIA-22HT-020

Purpose of Study: Through specific analysis of the problems existing in Chinese university culture, this study will develop suggestions for the construction of university culture, including operational solutions, that will make up for the shortcomings in practice.

Please initial  
each box if you  
agree with the  
statement

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, and ask questions. Where applicable I have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point, without giving any reason.

I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored, and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.

I understand the process of data anonymisation and how the anonymised data will be stored and used.

I understand that I will not be identifiable from any publications.

I consent to being audio recorded.



I understand how audio recordings will be used in research outputs.

Use of quotations: Please indicate your preference (select one option):

I do not wish to be quoted at all, or

I agree to the use of quotations in research outputs provided that I am not identifiable.

I give permission for you to contact me again to clarify information.

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

I agree to take part.

I agree that my personal contact details can be retained in a secure database, until the project is over, so that during the researchers can contact me further if additional information is required.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

dd / mm / yyyy  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent

dd / mm / yyyy  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## **Appendix H: Establishing the Institute of Confucianism at Peking**

### **university**

No nation can artificially cut off its history and culture. In June 2010, with the support of the university, the Institute of Confucianism of Peking University was officially established. The first dean of the Institute of Confucianism, Tang (2011) said that the establishment of the Institute of Confucianism was not for ‘retroversion’, but for ‘innovation’. It aims to revive China’s 5,000-year-old culture and reflect the transition from tradition to modernity. It aims to understand the valuable part of Chinese culture, and at the same time to adapt to the new situation of human social development and update the cultural system. The Institute of Confucianism is an integrated platform. Through this platform, the General Compilation and Research Center of Confucian Classics, the Research Office of the History of Chinese Philosophy at Peking University, and the Institute of Chinese Philosophy and Culture will be integrated together to undertake joint projects, lead graduate students, and set up courses on Confucianism. The goal and purpose of the Institute of Confucianism are to "look at the world's cultural trends, inherit the essence of Confucianism, interpret the special concepts of Confucianism, seek the universal value of Confucianism, and create a new system of Confucianism" (Peking University, 2010). Through the establishment of the Institute of Confucianism, the research power of Confucianism at Peking University has been integrated, and the strength of the research team has been enhanced. The development of the Institute of Confucianism not only strengthens the academic nature of research on Confucianism, but also pays attention to the epochal and realistic nature of Confucianism, and addresses important topics facing China's real problems, such as ‘Confucianism and a Harmonious Society’, ‘Confucianism and Harmony’, ‘Confucianism and Moral Construction’ and ‘Confucianism and National Cohesion’. The Confucian Research Institute is not just open to Peking University, but will also expand to the whole country and even the world. This lays the foundation for wider liaison through the power of the compilation of Confucian writings - *The Compilation of The Confucian (Ru Zang)*. In addition to carrying out major research

projects on Confucianism and collation of classics, special academic lectures will also be held. The aim is to fully integrate the essence of Confucianism into the education of contemporary college students, cultivate a group of Confucian research talents according to the purpose and goals of Confucian education, and develop extensive academic exchanges with academic research institutions at home and abroad.

## **Appendix I: Establishing the Confucius Institute of Culture at Qufu**

### **Normal University**

The predecessor of the Confucius Institute of Culture established by Qufu Normal University was the Institute of Confucius Research, which was one of the earliest scientific research institutions specializing in Confucius and Confucianism in modern Chinese universities (Qufu Normal University, 1956). The Institute has obtained the right to confer a master's degree and a doctorate degree in the special history of Confucianism. It is the only specialist doctoral program in China in the history discipline featuring the study of Confucianism. The Confucius Institute of Culture ~~Confucius Institute of Culture~~ has a teaching and research team with an appropriate age and knowledge structure, focusing on Confucianism. More than 40 well-known Chinese and foreign scholars have also been hired as adjunct professors, such as Professor Du of Harvard University, a representative of the third generation of Neo-Confucianism, and Cui Genduk, director of the Sungkyunkwan Museum in South Korea. In recent years, the institute has also undertaken sixteen national-level scientific research projects such as 'Confucian Studies in China in the 20th Century', 'The History of the Dissemination of the Analects of Confucius' and 'Research on Confucian Theory and Its Modern Values'. The construction of the Confucius Cultural Institute aims to elucidate in depth the essence of Confucianism, serve the national governance system, and promote the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese excellent traditional culture. In terms of academic research, it expands the innovative new path of Chinese culture plus university culture through interdisciplinary integration, forms a research matrix with multi-disciplinary focus on Confucianism, and strives to create a philosophy and social sciences centre of excellence with Confucianism characteristics; In terms of education popularization, it is committed to combining the rich nourishment of excellent traditional culture with the fundamental task of developing quality education, in order to 'cultivate morality and cultivating individuals' in the new era of China, and promote the modern transformation of Confucius' educational wisdom in normal universities.

