

Crossing Cultures:
Liberal Learning for a World in Flux


Insung Jung
Ka Ho Mok *Editors*

The Reinvention of Liberal Learning Around the Globe

 Springer

Crossing Cultures: Liberal Learning for a World in Flux

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Insung Jung · Ka Ho Mok
Editors

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Foreword

The worst global pandemic in more than a century created unprecedented disruption to every segment of society, including higher education. Globally, over 1.6 billion students in 192 countries were impacted by school closures, eroding the post-secondary pipeline and creating the prospect of a lost generation of college students (UNICEF, 2020). Precipitous drops in enrollment were exacerbated by a record number of job losses due to COVID-19, making college less affordable and accessible and by burgeoning skepticism around the value of a college degree. Food and shelter insecurities, the expansiveness of the digital divide, and skyrocketing mental health issues enhanced the barriers for enrollment and completion at higher education institutions of all types. Yet, despite these monumental challenges, a moment of extraordinary opportunity has emerged for revolutionizing higher education in ways that will better prepare students around the world for work, citizenship, and life within a future none of us can fully predict.

At a time when there has been a rush toward narrow vocational and technical training as the best approach to strengthening economies and producing graduates who are immediately employable, the multi-faceted “wicked problems” of which COVID-19 was emblematic instead invite a reinvigorated commitment to liberal education. Pressing questions around how to allocate scarce medical resources in times of crisis; the extent to which it is permissible to curtail individual freedom for the public good; how to tackle the global warming that contributed to the pandemic; and how to respond to increasing polarization and partisanship that has led to a staggering surge in anti-Asian, anti-Semitic, anti-Black, and homophobic hate crimes, cannot be addressed without applying the knowledge and skills foundational to a liberal education.

Indeed, the challenges we are facing as a global community illustrate that a liberal education for the twenty-first century must be one in which the humanities, arts, and sciences are fully integrated. As several authors in this volume note, it is the type of education that mandates the acceleration of active learning by providing students with practice applying their knowledge and skills from across disciplines to real-world problems that matter both to the student and to society. Championing liberal learning also entails being mindful of the dangers of ideological filtering and catalyzing the

independent thinking necessary to discern the truth in an age of misinformation—one in which controlling the narrative seems more important than uncovering the facts. Therefore, liberal education involves engagement with a diversity of perspectives and the fostering of dispositions required for students to move beyond their own viewing points by considering the possibility that some of their most deeply held beliefs might be mistaken. Moreover, an emphasis on liberal learning reaffirms the democratic purposes of higher education by promoting civic engagement and moral reasoning essential to advancing racial and social justice and mitigating authoritarian tendencies (Carnevale et al., 2020).

Many of the chapters contained in this book confirm decades of research, highlighted in Finley (2021), indicating that the outcomes and experiences of a liberal education are also the most effective tools by which to achieve career success and social mobility. For this reason, all colleges and universities should work toward scaling and sustaining a culture of engagement in which every student is given equitable access to high impact practices, such as internships, undergraduate research, and first-year seminars, that promote connections between educational experiences and long-term career success. In addition, assessment of student work must focus on asset-based approaches that encourage a growth mindset and opportunities for continuous improvement that result from grappling with increasingly complex problems rather than adhering to a system of ranking and sorting students based on their perceived deficits.

Consistent with these ideals, the contributing authors present a collective call to action to reimagine liberal education in ways that upend the persistent institutional systems, beliefs, and practices that have privileged some at the expense of others. Their compelling words simultaneously constitute a challenge to those seeking a swift return to normal by foregrounding a consideration of those for whom normal may not have worked at all—confronting directly the question of whether the pressure to get “back to normal” is one that will position all undergraduate students to meet contemporary challenges for a rapidly changing, globally interdependent world. In the process, they provide an exciting, new equity-minded vision for a liberal education for the twenty-first century.

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Part I

Setting the Scene

Chapter 1

Introduction: Redefining Liberal Arts Education in a Time of Crisis



Insung Jung and Ka Ho Mok

Abstract Over recent years, higher education institutions including small liberal arts colleges have been faced with various challenges including a decrease in the number of applicants and subsequent financial shortages. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified their difficulties and revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of liberal arts colleges and their programs. This chapter discusses a few of the challenges and difficulties that liberal arts colleges are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic that are drawn from academic literature and the media. It explains how this book is prepared and organized to explore the unique approaches to overcoming such challenges adopted by several selected world liberal arts colleges, and it goes on to redefine liberal arts education for the future in a specific sociocultural context.

Keywords Educational reform • Liberal arts education • Liberal education • Liberal learning • Online education

1.1 Introduction

The authors have in combination spent almost three decades teaching and researching in liberal arts colleges: The International Christian University or ICU located in Tokyo, Japan, in the case of the first author and Lingnan University in Hong Kong in the case of the second author. During our careers, we have observed that our undergraduate students get full attention from faculty and staff and engage in interactions with faculty and peers both inside and outside classrooms, which would be rare in large research universities. We have also observed that our students are constantly encouraged to be critical, creative, and collaborative and to develop a “service mind” and global citizenship via small group discussions and experiential

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learning programs, while building English and other language competencies to be able to communicate with the world. All of this has resulted in our colleges obtaining high evaluation from students and external evaluators, with our graduates being known to play leading roles, especially in academia and international communities and to have higher earnings compared with graduates from large public universities in the respective communities. Like our colleges, many liberal arts colleges have generally produced more graduates who advance to PhDs (especially in science and engineering areas) than other larger research universities (Tachikawa, 2016; Volk & Benedix, 2020) and have achieved a four-year graduation rate two times higher than that of public universities (Docking & Curton, 2015), and the earnings of those who graduate from liberal arts colleges are known to be higher than those from other types of higher education institutions (HEIs) (Carnevale et al., 2020).

All these could lead one to believe that liberal arts colleges have been doing well. But the reality is that, despite their quality education and practical achievements, small liberal arts colleges, particularly private ones, have faced various challenges and difficulties more serious than larger research and/or public universities. As Moner et al. (2020) succinctly summarize, “Institutions [*small liberal arts colleges*] are struggling to maintain viability, sustain revenue, and assert value in the face of changing demographics, dramatically increasing costs, neoliberal re-imaginings of higher education as a factory to produce skilled workers and ... (p. 1).” With the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation seems to be getting worse. In the USA which has the largest number of small private liberal arts colleges in the world, we hear that several small private liberal arts colleges have closed completely or announced their intention to close the entire institution or end their undergraduate program in a couple of years (Aspegren, 2021; Gordon, 2021; Seltzer, 2020). It is said that small liberal arts colleges in the USA are under greater pressure compared with their counterparts in other countries (Marber & Araya, 2017; Moner et al., 2020). To a lesser degree, small private liberal colleges in Asia and other regions have also furloughed their staff and hired more part-timers and used endowment funds for emergency purposes, seen a rapid decrease in donations, and/or expanded so called practical programs, while public liberal arts colleges and larger universities remain in a better financial situation.

As Jung et al. (2016) argued, the story, of course, is not all one of doom and gloom. Despite the deteriorating financial situation and the decline in enrollment, there are still liberal arts colleges that attract good students and continue to thrive: there are still students, parents, and employers who appreciate the contribution of liberal arts education to the individual, business, and society as a whole, and many HEIs and governments that promote integration of liberal arts education into their curricular. Several liberal arts colleges have survived and thrived by adding vocational and professional programs, expanding liberal arts education into their graduate programs; through the strengthening of their linkage with business and real-world sectors, and more rigorously promoting fund-raising campaigns, increasing tuition fees, admitting more students, and generally diversifying their programs and services (Ferrall, 2011; Jung et al., 2016; Kirby & van der Wende, 2016). Many liberal arts colleges have

sought cost-effectiveness of their expensive personalized education by collaborating with other HEIs at bilateral, national, regional, and international levels.

This chapter will further consider the above-mentioned challenges most liberal arts colleges have been experiencing, especially during the recent crisis. It will then introduce the book's chapters and explain the steps some successful liberal arts colleges have taken to redefine and reform their liberal arts education to overcome such challenges. We discuss the problems, opportunities, and good practices from: (1) the diverse perspectives of the authors from different regions (e.g., Africa, North and South America, Asia, Europe, and Middle East), (2) the emerging body of literature on higher education, liberal arts education, globalization, and technology-based learning, (3) our own work on higher education and liberal arts education (Jung et al., 2016, 2018, 2021; Mok, 2016, 2017; Mok & Montgomery, 2021; Mok et al., 2021a, 2021b, 2021c), and our collective experiences and collaborations with colleagues from liberal arts colleges in numerous countries including China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Nepal, the Philippines, the UK, the Netherlands, the USA, as well as countries in Africa and Latin America.

In our book title, we use *liberal learning* as a term that highlights the main purpose of liberal arts education and as a general term which represents other similar concepts such as liberal education, general education, and liberal arts and sciences liberal arts and sciences education. Across the chapters, however, we let our authors make their own choice of the terms to fit their unique contextual features and views on liberal arts education. In many cases, these related terms will be used interchangeably. In other cases, a particular term will be used to highlight a certain aspect of liberal arts education.

1.2 Experiencing Challenges and Difficulties During the Crisis

We live in a world in flux where technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution are advancing at an unprecedented rate, the young population is sharply declining, the education and research market is becoming increasingly international, collaborative and at the same time highly competitive, and lifelong learning is becoming the norm to prepare people for multiple careers and future jobs that are not yet existent. Even the best institutions are not immune to these rapid changes, and small liberal arts colleges are more greatly affected. Serious challenges faced by liberal arts institutions in different parts of the world and possible directions are extensively discussed in several recent publications including Ferrall (2011), Chaves (2014), Jung et al. (2016), Kirby and van der Wende (2016), Moner et al. (2020), Roth (2014), and Volk and Benedix (2020), and we will therefore not reiterate those in this chapter. Instead, we will highlight a few serious issues that are experienced or at least perceived by small liberal arts colleges especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Money has been the most serious issue of small liberal arts colleges as Docking and Curton (2015) frankly pointed out: as indicated above, with the COVID-19 pandemic, small private liberal arts colleges are confronted with more seriously decreased revenues and unexpected expenditures. Nietzel (2020) and Smola (2020) report the difficulties that several liberal arts colleges in the USA have faced since the pandemic broke out, including another round of budget cuts, laying off of employees, and downsizing or terminating programs. Pomona College, one of the top liberal arts colleges in the USA known for rich resources, had to do temporarily furlough its non-faculty staff during the pandemic. Similarly, Smith College and Dartmouth College furloughed their employees or cut working hours. Doane University (Nebraska), Ohio Wesleyan University, and Illinois Wesleyan University eliminated, consolidated, or downsized several academic programs due to continuously declining enrollments and the financial strain due to the pandemic. There is no doubt that, with only a few exceptions, large-scale research universities and public universities have also faced financial issues. However, small private liberal arts colleges across various regions have generally suffered more due to their limited sources of financing, diseconomies of scale, and more spending on infrastructure and training for online education at institutional and individual levels.

Besides financial difficulties, many residential liberal arts colleges have also seen technological and pedagogical issues while teaching and learning online and dissatisfaction with online course delivery, as reported by their students and faculty during the pandemic. For example, STEM faculty and students at Wesley College in the USA expressed strong preference for face-to-face classroom sessions even though various teaching and learning supports were provided during emergency remote teaching (D'Souza et al., 2020). Their dissatisfaction with new changes is understandable as liberal education values close contacts and communication between faculty and students and among students in a residential community of learning while enjoying teaching and learning in high-context small classes. In a Japanese context, faculty members of the International Christian University (ICU) reported a range of issues with emergency online teaching during the pandemic: among which were students' lack of motivation and competencies for self-directed online learning and faculty members' difficulties in utilizing hardware or software for online instruction (Jung et al., 2021). Similarly, a study led by Lingnan University, a liberal arts college in Hong Kong (Xiong et al., 2020) reported that more than 60% of the university students perceived online education to be worse than face-to-face instruction mainly due to lack of in-class and after-class interactions and unstable internet connections. Increased institutional support, such as training workshops and manuals and on-demand troubleshooting, updated infrastructure, faculty's increasing experience with online education, and students' quick adaptability, did result in these colleges reporting increased student satisfaction and faculty adjustment (Anstey et al., 2020; D'Souza et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2021).

Another challenge that universities in general have faced is increased mental health issues of their students. Several studies have been conducted across the world to investigate the mental health of students in large universities; for example, those of Fruehwirth et al. (2021), Li et al. (2021), and Wang et al. (2020) which have revealed

increased stress and anxiety of students during the pandemic. Similar mental health and well-being issues have been reported in liberal arts colleges. Flame University, a liberal arts college in India, conducted a survey with 570 college students (mostly female) which revealed that around 37% had serious depression and about 28% had moderate or severe anxiety (Shankar & Bhutada, 2021). Another study conducted by ICU (Center for Teaching and Learning, 2020) with 1208 students who took online classes in Spring, 2020, reported increased volumes of physical and mental issues that students experienced while taking online courses. Common issues included backache, eye strain, headache, tinnitus, and psychological stress with the main causes of these issues reported as excessive screen time, difficulties with staying motivated, and lack of interactions. There is a fear that disruptions of campus life and mental health during the COVID-19 may cause more serious problems, such as a decrease in the number of applicants to small liberal arts colleges.

1.3 Redefining Liberal Arts Education

The various challenges and difficulties discussed above have affected HEIs, including liberal arts colleges around the world. While the core function of higher education remains unchanged, the needs of society, students, and HEIs are constantly emerging and evolving in response to changes in demographic, sociocultural, political, and technological sectors. To survive and thrive, HEIs must innovate to adapt to the changing needs of different stakeholders. Over the recent years, especially since the pandemic broke out, several liberal arts colleges have disappeared completely, some have been forced, or have decided, to embrace vocational and professional education more widely, yet others have cut their already tight budgets, laid off employees, and/or terminated majors or programs (see Baker et al., 2012; Ferrall, 2011; Jung et al., 2016; Nietzel, 2020; Smola, 2020, for examples). Some liberal arts colleges have even begun to redefine the liberal arts for the coming years. When the pandemic is over or indeed becomes endemic, there might be fewer liberal arts colleges and programs left, and those both surviving and thriving will most likely be those colleges that have successfully handled the challenges and difficulties and have made adjustments and changes in their goals, curriculum, and teaching methods. This leaves the important question for liberal arts educators and policymakers of: *how should we maintain our core values of liberal arts education during a time of urgent social, technological, and economic pressures and at the same time, how should we rethink and redefine liberal arts education for the future?* To address this question, we have invited authors who have actively led research in and practice of liberal arts education and higher education to share their unique experiences and knowledge for the future development of liberal arts education by penning their own chapters in this book.

The premise of this book is that a liberal arts education is an approach to preparing students to develop skills in creative problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, while aiding in the development of a moral and civil character (Chopp, 2014), in addition developing “a well learned and highly ethical person (Ma,

2018, p. 3)” as well as an undergraduate learning process across all fields of study. The book will highlight that the aim of liberal arts education should not be to teach an array of humanities courses, but to bring *liberal learning* to students by encompassing both arts and sciences including practical and professional areas. Liberal learning happens when learning is broad and deep, open to different ideas, people, and experiences, and consciously and reflectively engages in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary learning trajectories.

We have been observing both a decline in liberal arts enrollments and the emergence of a wide range of new models and approaches to liberal arts education experimented with by traditional liberal arts colleges and other types of liberal arts programs around the world. Now is the right time to understand these trends in liberal arts education, discuss the challenges and opportunities they bring, and explore the innovative models and initiatives for new liberal arts that are being created by forward-thinking colleges and universities.

1.4 Organization of the Book

This book will address questions including, but not limited to:

- What changes or lack of changes have been observed in the core values, concepts, and models of liberal learning across different contexts and in different institutional settings?
- How can we relate such values, concepts, and models to liberal (and broader) learning?
- Have we observed tensions between the existing models of higher education and liberal arts and sciences education?
- What difficulties/challenges have liberal arts colleges and programs in each region faced and how have those issues been addressed?
- How are various types of institutions, in different parts of the world, addressing the challenge of preparing their students for an unpredictable, uncertain, and inter- and cross-cultural future?
- What are some newly emerging and successful models of liberal learning, linking learning to a vocational and professional education?

Each chapter will address one or more of these questions. We discuss the chapters below, grouping them into three themes. The chapters include theoretical and conceptual discussions, case studies and lessons learned from different regions, research implications, and practical and policy advice to help practitioners/educators and policy leaders in rethinking and improving values, goals, and practices of their liberal arts education.

1.4.1 Part I: Setting the Scene

Part I of this book discusses the traditions of liberal arts education and recent changes in higher education as these topics are the critical foundation necessary in redefining and reinventing liberal arts education.

Two editors of the book, Jung and Mok, open this chapter with a discussion with a broad context of the difficulties/challenges that small liberal arts colleges and programs have faced and how those difficulties/challenges have been addressed in the subsequent chapters.

In Chap. 2, Jiang explains liberal arts traditions in the East and the West using two specific cases: in China and the USA, and compares respective traditions and discusses how they have shaped the concept and practice of liberal arts education in each society. He then offers recommendations for policymakers, educators, and researchers who wish to develop or reform liberal arts education.

In Chap. 3, Yonezawa and Shimauchi focus on so called international liberal arts education that is spreading especially outside of the USA, based on case studies of five countries with different geopolitical contexts, namely the Netherlands, Australia, Malaysia, South Korea, and Japan. Their chapter helps readers understand an important change that has happened in undergraduate education and liberal arts traditions in the Asia-Pacific and Europe.

1.4.2 Part II: Diverse Approaches to Reinventing Liberal Learning

Part II, across its 10 chapters, considers diverse approaches that liberal arts colleges and universities in Asia, North and South America, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East are taking to both redefine and reinvent liberal learning in their own individual context.

Schneider opens Chap. 4 with an explanation of historical backgrounds and the key concepts embedded in the Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) for liberal learning and how the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) identified those ELOs. She goes on to examine the ELOs' implications for both civic and career-related learning and explores the possibilities of applying the ELOs and other AAC&U strategies to the development of frameworks for achieving liberal learning in contexts beyond the USA.

In Chap. 5, Mike explores the concept of “the Development University”, a foundational notion that the American University of Nigeria (AUN) in Africa has adopted in planning and developing its curricular, pedagogy, and research activities. She discusses AUN's approach to reinventing its liberal arts program in which all students must be trained in three areas: entrepreneurship and marketing, arts and sciences, and information technology, to promote liberal learning across both traditional liberal arts subjects and practical fields of study. She further discusses AUN's development

strategies including the Feed and Read Program which was created in support of Boko Haram refugees and other sustainability support initiatives and women empowerment schemes.

In Chap. 6, Zalles, Montúfar, and Velasco shift attention to the approach taken by Ecuador to reinventing liberal learning based on critical analysis of recent challenges that higher education in South America has faced. They discuss how Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ) has responded to those challenges and through which it has become an outlier within the local and regional higher education system. They attribute USFQ's provision of affordable high-quality liberal education to its unique approaches such as combining the liberal arts philosophy and an entrepreneurial spirit in the curriculum, maintaining quality faculty via continuous professional development and research support, and internationalization of the campus.

Moving to South Korea, Lee examines how liberal arts education is integrated in law in Chap. 7. While integrating liberal arts into a practical field is, to say the least, quite challenging, Lee presents evidence to realize this vision of Christian Jurisprudence as a liberal art, despite initial difficulties and incompetence. The passion and capacity building of its faculty are indicated as one key factor to produce successful results in liberal arts education in law.

Mok opens Chap. 8 with a review of the foundation of the Alliance of Asian Liberal Arts Universities (AALAU) co-launched by 15 Asian universities in 2017 and asks such questions as: why and how have traditional research universities in Asia tried to introduce liberal arts education as an approach to higher education reform and how successful and effective the reform has been in their own context. Mok further discusses the major challenges and opportunities for the development of liberal learning in Asia in the post-COVID-19 era, drawing implications for policy leaders at major comprehensive universities when engaging in integrating liberal arts education into their education system. Mok also discusses how regional cooperation and collaboration among Asian universities will become a growing trend both during and post-COVID-19.

In Chap. 9, Al Lail tackles an important issue facing HEIs and women's education in the Middle East by analyzing the case of Effat University located in Saudi Arabia. She examines the unique forms of liberal education Effat offers in order to advance female empowerment in the region and discusses how Effat's liberal education has contributed to female education and the expected increase in their participation in the workforce to 25% by 2030, as set in the National Transformation Program.

While many liberal arts colleges focus on undergraduate programs, Xiong examines views on having graduate programs in liberal arts colleges in Chap. 10; based on thorough review of related literature and case studies in different regions. He focuses on two types of graduate programs at Lingnan University in Hong Kong, examining their features and internal and external challenges. He proposes possible approaches to the sustainable development of graduate programs which integrate liberal arts characteristics and seize opportunities in the future.

Now shifting to Europe, in Chap. 11, Abrahám examines the emergence of three models of liberal arts colleges since the return of liberal arts education to Europe by the Bologna Process in 1999. The three models are: the independent model,

the University College model, and the integrated model. Based on the overview of about 80 HEIs in Europe that are identified as a liberal arts college or inspired by a liberal arts model of education, the author discusses how these HEIs collaborate at the European Consortium of Liberal Arts and Sciences and respond to ECOLAS' Manifesto Calling for reform of the current undergraduate model of liberal arts education.

In Chap. 12, Hastings examines a new partnership model that has been created between the International Christian University in Tokyo and the Japan ICU Foundation in New York. While regional partnerships (e.g., AALAU in Chap. 8 and ECOLAS in Chap. 11) are important for reform and reinvention of liberal arts programs and members' capacity building, this bilateral partnership between a college and an independent foundation located so far from each other sheds light on the understanding of a new partnership model that is grounded in global citizenship education and in the service of the common good. The author discusses JICUF's initiatives including Global Link, the United States Scholars Initiative, and the Syrian Scholars Initiative that have recently begun applying this new partnership model and concludes the chapter with advice for policy leaders and educators for future partnerships to promote global liberal learning.

In Chap. 13, Ke and Zhang examine how five leading liberal arts colleges and liberal arts programs within large comprehensive/research universities in East Asia have developed and implemented innovative approaches to enrich student learning experiences online since the breakout of COVID-19. Virtual exchange programs, short-term international academic conferences and cultural events, and collaborative online international learning or COIL are among those effective strategies to enhance students' global learning and communication opportunities when in-person visits are limited. Problem-based learning or competency-based learning is found to be promising in motivating students' engagement in discussions and collaborative work.

1.4.3 Part III: Toward the Future

Part III considers the future of liberal learning in the post-pandemic era by examining crisis leadership in liberal arts colleges and the possibilities of online learning reinventing liberal arts education and exploring possible scenarios for liberal arts colleges in the post-pandemic future.

Gigliotti, author of a recent book titled *Crisis Leadership in Higher Education: Theory and Practice*, opens Chap. 14 with a snapshot of possible crises facing liberal arts colleges in and outside the USA. He then discusses three effective leadership themes for liberal arts colleges together with effective risk and crisis prevention, management, and communication during the multiple phases of such crises based on related research and theories. He argues for a values-driven approach to crisis leadership and urges policy leaders of liberal arts colleges to clarify and reinvent the unique mission of their colleges as they engage in both immediate actions and

strategic, long-term, and sustainable development for the future of their respective college.

In Chap. 15, Einfeld explores innovative ways of creating online learning environments in order to reinvent liberal arts education and improve liberal learning based on a review of perceptions, practices, and lessons learned from online liberal arts education before and during the pandemic. He further articulates various approaches to promoting virtue and civic engagement in a digital age, combining in-context and online learning, and also providing lifelong learning and micro-credentials in the future.

Jung opens Chap. 16 with a discussion on opportunities and positive experiences which liberal arts colleges have accumulated during the pandemic that could be used strategically to reinvent the colleges at the institutional level. She proposes six possible scenarios for liberal arts colleges in the post-pandemic future: *Back to normal*, *Blended learning*, *Flex curriculum*, *Learning online and Experience in residence*, *Open networking*, and *Lifetime liberal learning*. She argues that in selecting and adjusting a scenario, or a combination of scenarios, policymakers must carefully examine the extent of disruption that their college is both willing and able to make for the uncertain future in consultation of key stakeholder groups.

Finally, two editors of the book, Mok and Jung conclude this volume in Chap. 17 with the integration of the key takeaways from the previous chapters and discussion on remaining issues and future development agendas.

1.5 Concluding Remark

We think that the greatest strength of this book is in the wide diversity of perspectives and experiences presented by our international authors who have examined issues of liberal arts education in their own unique contexts. We hope these diverse perspectives and approaches engage our readers in further discussion of the challenge in examining and exploring possible directions for future liberal learning.

In the last two years, higher education systems across the globe have confronted the unprecedented global health crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic: teaching and student learning have been adversely disrupted especially when faculty and students have been forced to utilize an online environment. Notwithstanding, the crisis has also created new opportunities for academics to seriously reflect upon the value of face-to-face interactions in teaching and learning in higher education environments. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, various international surveys have repeatedly reported on student dissatisfaction with having online teaching and learning as the only platforms available (Amoah & Mok, 2020; Bergan et al., 2021; Mok et al. 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). Although we cannot entirely discard the value of introducing technology-enabled platforms for university teaching and learning, it is obvious that learning experiences cannot be fully maximized without face-to-face interactions, especially in higher education and learning which go beyond cognitive dimension and include social, emotional, and mental aspects

(Aoki et al., 2022). According to Selingo (2021), three simultaneous forces are driving demand for enhancing student learning for the post-COVID-19 period and higher education leaders must pay sufficient attention to these forces; (1) student well-being, (2) appropriate adoption of technology in teaching, and (3) marketing to the post-COVID-19 generation.

How would HEIs convince the post-COVID-19 generations to pay the high fees to learn and obtain higher education degrees? Does higher education still matter to them in the post-COVID-19 era? What benefits could they obtain from HEIs if online learning remains the primary mode of teaching? Critical reflections on the value of liberal arts education are needed with special emphasis on whole-person development, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach in knowledge creation, together with experiential learning forming a core dimension of higher education. The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed created space for leaders in higher education to critically revisit the importance of liberal arts education with a core objective of nurturing and preparing leaders for the uncertain future. Whether we are believers in liberal arts education or not, colleagues working in higher education must critically reimagine the future having been confronted with the COVID-19 crisis (Locke, 2021; Mok, 2022). HEIs must become more proactive in responding to rapid social, economic, political, and geopolitical changes because the future is very uncertain. HEIs also need to engage future generations in exploring new knowledge emerging from hybridity, intertwining innovation with the arts and sciences for an “integral education”. Moreover, HEIs should go beyond teaching hard knowledge to students and engage them in education with a strong emphasis on human dimension for promoting “education with a soul”, particularly when the whole world has tried very hard to push for STEM education (UNESCO, 2021). For a better future, we have a task to prepare our future generations to keep abreast of hard sciences and innovation in technology while at the same time not losing sight of the strategic importance of preparing our future leaders in caring for human betterment. Liberal arts education would then serve the uniquely significant role in higher education to nurture *Caring Leaders with Glocal vision* who can think globally and act locally to develop a better world. This book shares success stories and challenges that liberal arts colleges in diverse contexts have experienced while nurturing such leaders.

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Chapter 2

The Liberal Arts Traditions in Higher Education: The East and the West



You Guo Jiang

Abstract Over the last three decades, liberal arts education has become an emerging phenomenon in the East and the West. The revival of interest in liberal arts education in the mid-1990s demonstrates that the governments and the universities have begun to realize that current curricula, with their narrow focus on professional training, are insufficient to enable students to meet today's global needs and challenges. The liberal arts, they are learning, not only lead to broad general knowledge, but also develop skills crucial to critical thinking, creativity, moral reasoning, and innovation. Indeed, the reemergence of liberal arts education is a result of the great need to educate well-rounded global citizens who possess the above-listed skills, as well a sense of social and moral responsibility in the East and the West contexts. Liberal arts education will have economic, political, social, and cultural effects in international society. Globally, liberal arts programs and curriculum reforms have emerged in many countries. This chapter will focus on China as an example for the perspective of the East and on the United States for the perspective of the West.

Keywords Higher education · Tradition · History · East and West

2.1 The Liberal Arts Tradition in the East

The emergence of liberal arts education in China in the last two decades is a new phenomenon (Li, 2006). Nevertheless, higher learning and liberal arts education have a long history dating back more than 2500 years to the Confucian era. For example, in *Analects* (2:15), “the Master said: ‘To study and not think is a waste. To think and not study is dangerous.’” Hayhoe (1989, p. 54) states that “traditional Chinese higher education can be traced back as early as the Eastern Zhou dynasty (771–221 CE). By the Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD), there was a whole range of higher education institutions (HEIs), headed by the *Guo Zixue* (school for the sons of the emperor) and the *Tai Xue* (often translated university or greatest learning and study) which took

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major classical texts of the Confucian school as their curricular content.” Around the tenth century CE in the Tang dynasty, the private academy *Shu Yuan* (“academy of classical learning,” a system of schools in ancient China) was set up in China. With government support, it was the main institution of the Chinese higher education system for the next one thousand years.

Fundamentally, Confucius taught that social harmony could be achieved only if humans were free from deprivation and given proper education, with a sage-king governing the nation. Confucianism emphasizes that the value of education is first of all for individual fulfillment, and then for the purpose of social development. Although Confucius was interested in building an ideal society under the sage-king’s leadership, he also believed that personal moral perfection was the foundation of a good society (Zhang, 2006). Personal education and cultivation were at the very core of Confucian thinking. The intrinsic value of education for personal development has remained the most essential idea in the Confucian tradition, and it exerted a dominant influence on the Chinese educational system until the 1920s. In ancient Chinese culture and Confucian tradition, to promote all-around development, students were required to master six practical disciplines called the Six Arts (liù yì): rites, music, archery, chariot racing, calligraphy, and mathematics. Men who excelled in these Six Arts were thought to have reached the state of perfection: the stage of the sage or gentleman. From the point of view of classical Chinese philosophy, the Confucian tradition provides some roots for liberal arts education; although the Six Arts are not directly related to liberal arts education as it is usually understood today, they can be regarded as an ancient parallel to liberal arts education.

Moreover, Confucian educational ideology emphasized the responsibility of an individual to society and the nation. It is thus conducive to cultivating global citizens, which can be considered as the core value of contemporary liberal arts education. Although Confucius and his teachings stress personal moral development and integration, he was also concerned with the social function of education. For instance, in *The Great Learning*, the eight characters of moral and self-cultivation show how personal integration and social order are closely connected:

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.

In *The Great Learning*, Confucius also stressed five habits: study extensively; enquire accurately; reflect carefully; discriminate clearly; practice earnestly. In the Confucian tradition, liberal arts education emphasizes the purpose of education as becoming a “gentleman or sage” through social, emotional, moral, intellectual, and psycho-spiritual integration. The content of education correspondingly includes broad knowledge.

From very early times, Chinese thinkers and society accepted that Confucian teachings are the center of education. *The Great Learning* requires an internal transformation, a conscious decision to open oneself to possibilities in historical, cultural,