

# A Comparative Analysis of Liberal Arts Models in Three Institutions from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

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**Abstract.** This research aims to examine the liberal arts models of three institutions in three Chinese societies. The theoretical framework for the study is the capabilities approach. I use a qualitative method of document analysis to examine educational goals, missions, and curricula in the three institutions. The research finds that, with a focus on whole-person cultivation, liberal arts education in the three institutions follows the global model, but their curricula and understandings of liberal arts education are influenced by their social contexts and specific political, cultural, and historical factors. The study contributes to research regarding the diversification of university models at a time when the global research university dominates all ranking systems.

**Keywords:** capabilities approach, Chinese societies, Confucianism, East Asia, general education, liberal arts education, whole person cultivation

## Introduction

The social challenges in the 21st century have triggered increasing concern about how education could cultivate students with capabilities for an uncertain future (Harari, 2018; McKay, 2016). Notably, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is recognized that, more than ever before, we need social responsibility and collaboration from both individuals and nations to cope with global challenges (Harari, 2020). The new challenges and uncertainties of both the workplace and future life require that a person should be educated in an all-round way, with a sense of social responsibility, moral reasoning, innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and a capacity for lifelong learning. These capabilities and qualities have been long argued as the outcome and purpose of liberal arts education (LAE) (Jiang, 2014; Jung et al., 2016; Nussbaum, 1998).

The past decades have seen a global increase in LAE programs in many countries outside the United States, and there is a stronger presence of LAE in Asia (Godwin, 2015). The emergence of

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LAE worldwide is mainly driven by the pursuit of excellence in undergraduate education in response to global challenges (Van Der Wende, 2014). However, the uneven expansion and variability of LAE models around the globe goes beyond the simple explanations of isomorphism and loose coupling (Boyle, 2019, 2020), and LAE models and implementation are context-dependent, subject to local traditions and political, economic, and social contexts (Mou, 2020a). In East Asia, some scholars are concerned with the challenges of implementing LAE in East Asian societies with a specialized education system (Chai, 2016; Huang, 2016; Shi & Lu, 2016), while others argue that LAE could be adapted into the East Asian societies as it resonates with the educational goal of whole-person cultivation from the Confucian tradition (Jiang, 2014; Yang, 2016). LAE's aim of cultivating an actively engaged citizen with ethical judgment and self-reflection synergizes with the Confucian educational ideal of cultivating a Junzi (君子), similar to the sense of an actively engaged citizen, who will be devoted to self-development and social responsibility (De Bary, 2014). Besides, the educational goal of learning for oneself and broad learning in ancient China (Lee, 2000) corresponds to that of the LAE tradition in the West (Newman, 1982).

The study examines how three institutions in the Greater China region design and implement an LAE model based on their respective social contexts with the same Confucian tradition. I selected three institutions in three Chinese societies with unique LAE features: Yuanpei College at Peking University in mainland China, Lingnan University in Hong Kong, and Tunghai University in Taiwan. The research questions of this study are: 1) what are the LAE models in the three institutions? 2) how are their LAE models designed to cultivate students in an all-round way with capabilities for the three social contexts? By examining literature and analyzing documents on educational goals, missions, and curricula, I explore the similarities and differences of LAE models in the three institutions. Looking through the lens of the capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2010; Sen, 1993), I further examine how LAE is understood and implemented towards capabilities cultivation by incorporating local traditions and features of social contexts. The study contributes to the exploration of LAE models in non-Western societies and offers implications for pursuing diversification of university models at a time when the global research university dominates all ranking systems.

### **Liberal arts education in the East Asian context**

LAE has its origins in the idea of the examined life and reflective citizenship in Greco-Roman philosophy. In contemporary society, it refers to "a higher education that is a cultivation of the whole human beings for the functions of citizenship and life generally" (Nussbaum, 1998, p.9). It aims to free a person from the constraints of ignorance, sectarianism, and myopia to become a wise citizen with social responsibility who pursues a fruitful life. Borrowed from the English model, LAE in the United States has discarded the notion of the aristocracy and has been re-invented to train free citizens for a civil society with an emphasis on democracy (Nelson, 2020; Shen, 2016). Later, different

versions of LAE have been developed into the multi-tier higher education system in the US (Labaree, 2017). In this age of globalization, scholars commonly recognize that LAE could prepare students with critical thinking, innovation, moral reasoning, and a sense of social responsibility in different societies (Jiang, 2014; Jung et al., 2016; Nussbaum, 1998). With its aim of cultivating whole persons, LAE has been used interchangeably with general education by some scholars (Godwin, 2015; Jiang, 2014). While acknowledging their similarity in educational goals, I would base the argument of this paper on the distinction that LAE has a tradition in the humanities while general education focuses on the curriculum paradigm (Miller, 1988; Zayed, 2013).

Although it is often regarded as a distinctive feature of American higher education (Godwin & Altbach, 2016), LAE has gained popularity in East Asia in recent decades. In mainland China, since the 1990s, general education has been promoted to counteract the shortcomings of specialized professional education and prepare graduates with capabilities with the same aim as LAE (Jiang, 2014). In recent years, LAE or general education has been experimented with in some elite universities, such as Peking University, with residential LAE colleges for undergraduate students (Shi & Lu, 2016). As a former British colony, Hong Kong followed the British system of specialization in higher education, training professionals, such as lawyers and doctors (Chai, 2016; Postiglione, 2016). In 2012, the eight public universities in Hong Kong extended the undergraduate degree's length from 3 to 4 years by adding general education requirements following the US model in higher education reform (Jaffee, 2012). The purpose of LAE or general education reform is to counteract pragmatism and utilitarianism in Hong Kong and meet the needs of globalization with critical thinking, communication skills, global citizenship, and leadership that advocate improving the human condition (Chai, 2016). In Taiwan, since the 1950s, higher education has been developed with a parallel system of general education and technical vocational education (International Affairs Office, 2016), and this has been supported and influenced by the United States (Chang, 1991). Many higher education institutions were developed as comprehensive universities with higher education expansion in the 1970s. General education has also been promoted by the government in the 1990s in comprehensive universities (Huang, 2016).

Many scholars have studied the challenges of LAE implementation in comprehensive research universities in the contexts of East Asian societies (Chai, 2016; Huang, 2016; Jiang, 2014; Kirby, 2017; Postiglione, 2016; Shi & Lu, 2016; Yang, 2016). For example, Li and Shi (2013) researched course offerings, extra-curricular activities and administrative structures at some leading mainland universities. They contended that challenges for implementing LAE towards the goal of whole-person cultivation lie in the impact of the market economy on students' choices of courses and programs, and undergraduate program development in contemporary Chinese society. Furthermore, by examining the LAE curriculum in three comprehensive universities in Shanghai, Jiang (2014) found that the core values of LAE do not correspond well with the Communist Party's ideology embedded in the LAE core curriculum. Some critics have asked whether LAE could be implemented

in a socialist society (Kirby, 2017; Postiglione, 2016). Also, Wang (2015) did a case study of the Yuanpei program—the general education curriculum innovation at Peking University—and identified that the source of conflict during the implementation process lay in the differentiation of roles between Yuanpei and other colleges, including incompatible values, contested resources, and structural constraints. She argued that the ideas embodied in the Yuanpei program tends to be more social-oriented and vocation-oriented than whole person focused. In Hong Kong, a practically and professionally oriented society, the LAE curriculum has been criticized as too theoretical (Chai, 2016). In Taiwan, Huang (2016) examined the LAE curriculum at National Taiwan University and found that only a limited number of LAE courses are offered, and there is a strong influence of pragmatism and utilitarianism in academic culture. Therefore, to reach the ultimate goal of LAE, there is still a long way to go in the three societies where short-term economic returns are valued more highly than whole person development over the long-term. Although Mok (2016; 2017) studied the LAE model of Lingnan with its fit-for-purpose education by seeking to meet local and global needs, there has been little research on comparing LAE models in the three Chinese contexts by focusing on institutions with unique LAE features. In this study, I examine how LAE models are designed and implemented into different societies in East Asia with a shared tradition of Confucianism, and how LAE contributes to whole-person cultivation with capabilities for these societies.

### **Theory and methodology**

I draw upon the capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum to construct the analytical framework for this study (Nussbaum, 2009; Sen, 1993). In contrast to human capital approaches, which are limited to a focus on skills, the capabilities approach is concerned with a broader conception of wellbeing and human flourishing (Nussbaum, 2001; Sen, 1999). Capabilities are not only related to a person's inner abilities but go broader to the social context and opportunities for freedom. Nussbaum (2010) argues that LAE aims to cultivate a free person in society by following the perspective of the capabilities approach. In this paper, I explore how LAE contributes to whole-person cultivation in the three institutions by taking the context into account.

In terms of the purposes of LAE in the current society, there have been several arguments which share some core values in common. Nussbaum (1998) proposed that the aim of new LAE in this age encompasses critical thinking, self-examination, respect for the humanity and diversity of others as a world citizen, together with the preparation of professional and technical knowledge for a career. Similarly, Chopp (2014) maintained that the fundamental principles of LAE are critical thinking, moral and civil character, and using knowledge to improve the world. The purposes of LAE in global and cross-cultural contexts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century include cultivating broad knowledge, developing the powers of the mind, and fostering ethical and civic societal responsibility (Jung et al., 2016). Based on these arguments, the aims of LAE can be summarized in four points: training broad

knowledge, developing the power of the mind, fostering moral and civic character, and cultivating a sense of social responsibility through the model of a general education curriculum, residential colleges, small-class teaching, mentorship programs, and social activities. I use this common model and agreed purpose of LAE as the global model against which I will compare and contrast the specific situations of LAE in the three institutions.

This study is a qualitative study using document analysis to explore how historical, cultural, and political factors influence the missions, goals, and curricula of LAE in each institution. In this study, I selected three institutions for comparison: Yuanpei College of Peking University in mainland China, Lingnan University in Hong Kong, Tunghai University in Taiwan. The three cases are selected because they exhibit distinctive features of LAE and are historically related to the former Christian universities in mainland China. Peking University inherited the campus and some academic programs of a former Christian university, Yenching University (Ng, 2020). Yuanpei College was founded to promote LAE within Peking University in 2007. Tunghai University was founded by the United Board to maintain the heritage and tradition of the 13 Christian universities from mainland China. Lingnan College was established in Hong Kong in the 1960s to carry on the tradition of the former Lingnan University in Guangzhou in mainland China.

## **Findings and analysis**

LAE in the three institutions is compared from the perspective of their history and missions, LAE models, general education curricula, and unique features.

### *History and mission*

Table 1 shows the comparison of the three institutions in their history, missions, and goals. Yuanpei College is a liberal arts undergraduate residential college within Peking University, an elite university in mainland China. Yuanpei College is named after a previous president Cai Yuanpei of Peking University, who advocated the educational principle of "freedom of thought, inclusivity of ideas." Founded in 2007, Yuanpei College has been exploring a form of LAE with Chinese characteristics and the specific features of Peking University. Yuanpei College admits a small number of students each year. Since 2015, Apartment 35 has been allocated to Yuanpei students for residence and the underground public space is used for extra-curricular activities. This was a landmark event in the construction of a residential college. Yuanpei aims at cultivating a sound personality with LAE, which emphasizes the integration of openness and inclusion by drawing on the world's most advanced knowledge and inheriting traditional Chinese culture. As is advocated, the confluence of Chinese and Western civilizations and the fusion of the spirit of humanities and science are the direction of general education development at Peking University, intending to form students' independent views on

themselves, on society, and towards the world.

Lingnan University is the only liberal arts university among the eight public universities in Hong Kong. Its history can be dated back to the former Christian College in Guangzhou, founded in 1888. After several periods of relocation during the second world war and the closedown in mainland China in the 1950s, Lingnan College was re-established in Hong Kong in 1967. Lingnan developed as a degree-conferring institution and acquired university status in 1999. Lingnan has a vision of becoming a leading Asian liberal arts university with international recognition, focusing on teaching, learning, scholarship, and community engagement. Combining both Chinese and Western liberal arts traditions, Lingnan is committed to providing quality whole-person education. It aims at nurturing students to achieve all-round excellence and imbuing them with its core values. Besides, it encourages contribution to society through research and educational work by faculty and students. Its motto is “education for service.” Its core values are building a collegial community of learning and discovery for students and scholar-teachers, whole-person cultivation and all-round development, and community engagement and social responsibility.

Tunghai University is the first in Taiwan to provide a well-rounded LAE. In 1955, Tunghai University was founded with support from the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (UB), with a strong liberal arts tradition. The UB had supported the former Christian universities in mainland China before the 1950s, which adapted American LAE into the Chinese context (Mou, 2020b). Tunghai follows the ideals of the founding spirit of Christianity and cultivates students as free persons in knowledge and as servant leaders in society. It emphasizes holistic education and the fostering of students' educational, academic, and service development. Its goals are to cultivate graduates not only with professional knowledge but also with critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and high moral standards. Its motto is “truth, faith and deed.”

**Table 1. History, mission and goals of Yuanpei, Lingnan, and Tunghai**

	<b>Yuanpei</b>	<b>Lingnan</b>	<b>Tunghai</b>
History	2007: Yuanpei College	1967: Lingnan College 1999: Lingnan Univ.	1955: Tunghai University
Mission & Goal	cultivate a sound personality with independent views	whole-person education, all- round excellence	holistic education; skills & moral standards; a free person in knowledge and servant leader

### *LAE models*

As mentioned in the previous section, the purpose of LAE can be summarised in four points: training broad knowledge, developing the power of mind, fostering moral and civic character, and cultivating social responsibility. These points are aligned with the capabilities proposed by Sen and Nussbaum. These four points are intended to promote substantive freedom to be and do (capabilities), and achieve

forms of being and doing that we have reason to value (functionings) (Spreading, 2013). These capabilities are cultivated in the training mode, including a general education curriculum, residential colleges, small-class teaching, a mentorship program, and social activities. This model has been adopted in different cultures and societies. This section discusses how this model has been adapted into the three institutions with their specific features. Table 2 shows a comparison of the LAE models in the three institutions.

**Table 2. LAE models in Yuanpei, Lingnan, and Tunghai**

<b>Global model</b>	<b>Yuanpei</b>	<b>Lingnan</b>	<b>Tunghai</b>
General education curriculum	core general education curriculum covering 5 areas	common core courses; 5 clusters of elective courses	core courses in 3 domains; elective courses in 7 areas
Residence	student residence for four years	fully residential campus	Poya school residence for one year
Small-class teaching	big class lecture with small class discussion	small class	small class in Poya school
Mentorship	academic mentor system	mentor system	mentor for students at Poya school
Social activities	social internship program in bases located in provinces	active community service	social service activities; student labor program
Internationalization	international exchange programs	global learning opportunities	overseas learning experience
Other features	free choice of majors and courses; interdisciplinary program	internship and workplace connection	six-arts module in Poya school

Yuanpei features its model of free choice of majors and courses and interdisciplinary programs. Its LAE model includes a residential college, mentor system, general education basic courses, international communication, and social internship program. The residential building, Apartment 35, accommodates all Yuanpei students. In pedagogy, Yuanpei follows the style of the "big class lectures with small class discussion" model in Peking University, under which professors give lectures in a big class, and teaching assistants are employed for facilitating small class discussions. Yuanpei provides students with academic mentors for consultation and suggestions. The college encourages students to participate in international exchange and provides funding for students' overseas exchange and scientific research. Also, Yuanpei has established several social practice bases across the country by cooperating with local governments and enterprises to cultivate students' sense of homeland and social responsibility.

Lingnan focuses on developing its own unique feature of LAE. It has eight key elements: 1) broad-based curriculum; 2) close staff-student relationship; 3) fully residential campus; 4) rich out-of-class learning experiences; 5) active community service; 6) multi-faceted workplace experience; 7) strong alumni and community support; and 8) global learning opportunities. This eight-feature model is structured in detail and is more specific than the common model of LAE. Adding to the global model, Lingnan extended its focus on internationalization, a spirit of service, community engagement, and workplace interaction.

In the 1970s, Tunghai expanded into a comprehensive university during the higher education expansion in Taiwan. Due to the pressure from funding and other external environment factors, Tunghai discarded its liberal arts style of small-class teaching. However, it still tried to keep its focus on quality teaching after the expansion. In 2008, Tunghai established Poya (the translation of liberal arts in Chinese) school to re-emphasize its LAE tradition. The purpose of the school is to develop students' ability to integrate cross-disciplinary knowledge and free learning. Each year, around 100 first-year students are selected across different departments and faculties in Tunghai to join the Poya school. The Poya school offers various required courses, residential dormitories across majors, small classes, and mentors for students. It provides students with opportunities for social service activities and overseas learning experience. Like Lingnan, Tunghai's model goes beyond the four elements, covering internationalization and social service. All the courses and activities of the school aim both to restore the LAE, and to innovate, cultivating students with core knowledge, actions, and attitudes. To enable overall development, Tunghai adopts the six-arts tradition of Chinese Confucian ethics to unify students' life and learning, promoting ritual, music, archery, chariot-riding, calligraphy, and mathematics through various activities.

### *General education curriculum*

The general education curricula in the three institutions covers the fields of humanities, sciences, and social sciences for broad knowledge. Table 3 shows a comparison of the curricula between the three institutions.

**Table 3. Comparison of curriculum in Yuanpei, Lingnan, and Tunghai**

	Yuanpei	Lingnan	Tunghai
Classification	general education courses in 5 major areas	common core & elective courses in 5 clusters	general education courses in 7 domains
Categories	1 Western Classical Civilization 2 Chinese Classical Civilization 3 Modern China 4 Modern World 5 Modern Science and Technology	1 Creativity and innovation 2 Humanities and the arts 3 Management and society 4 Science, technology, mathematics and society 5 Values, cultures and societies	1 Humanities 2 Natural sciences 3 Social sciences 4 Civilization & classics. 5 Leadership and ethics 6 Logic thinking and basic programming 7 Interdisciplinary and multi-faceted issues.
Courses of local feature	Chinese society: structure and evolution; China's economic reform and development	Hong Kong today; China in World History; Popular Culture and Hong Kong Society of the 50s and 60s	Seminar on History and Culture of Taiwan; Interdependence of Taiwan and Japan in Modern East Asian History



Yuanpei offers a free choice of majors and courses. Yuanpei students are free to choose any course for each specialty of the school as long as the teaching resources are available. After learning about Peking University's disciplinary status, specialty setting, and training goals, Yuanpei students will choose their majors independently in the third semester based on their abilities and interests under their mentors' guidance. Also, Yuanpei integrates high-quality educational resources across the school and establishes interdisciplinary majors to provide more possibilities for students' free development. The interdisciplinary majors that have begun to recruit students are paleontology; philosophy, politics and economics; foreign languages and foreign history; integrated science; and data science and big data technology. The core curriculum of general education at Yuanpei College comprises five major areas, including Western classical civilization, Chinese classical civilization, modern China, modern world, and modern science and technology. The special features are that classical courses and political ideology courses are the core courses of general education at Yuanpei College. According to its mission, to cultivate qualified citizens for Chinese society, the political lessons guiding students to establish correct values are regarded as a basic premise for LAE at Peking University.

Lingnan offers degrees in the areas of arts, business, and social sciences. The undergraduate programs feature an integrated and balanced curriculum. This broad curriculum covers an array of general education and interdisciplinary courses. The purpose is to broaden and enrich the scope of students' learning. The core curriculum is a cohesive, humanistic, and all-around education cultivating students with a set of critical and transferrable skills for contemporary Hong Kong. The elective course covers five areas: creativity and innovation; humanities and the arts; management and society; science, technology, mathematics and society; values, cultures and societies. Among the five clusters, three are related to the current society and applied skills, while the other two are more theoretical, one on creativity and the other on humanities and arts. The special feature of the courses is that they are more applied than theory and philosophy based.

Tunghai's curriculum covers both general and professional knowledge. The purpose of the curriculum design is to develop a well-rounded character in students. Students have the chance to take a wide range of interdisciplinary courses. Students take general education courses from the three domains: humanities, natural sciences, social science. The elective courses cover seven areas: humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, civilization & classics, leadership and ethics, logical thinking and basic programming, interdisciplinary and multi-faceted issues. Among the seven domains, there is one domain with applied knowledge, that is, logic thinking and basic programming. One domain, civilization and classics, is theory based and follows the traditional LAE curriculum. The special feature of these courses is that there is an emphasis on history, culture, and classics. In the cluster of classics, there are both Chinese classics, such as *Shih Chi* (the Four Books) and *Chun-Chiu* (Spring and Autumn), and Western classics such as Freud and Plato. There are courses on both Asian and Western traditions in the domain of humanities, such as Christian Spiritual Legacy and

Presence and Arts of Living in Confucian Analects.

As a university, Lingnan is smaller than Tunghai and Peking in its scale of discipline and student enrollment. Lingnan has fewer courses in science and natural science. In contrast, situated within the comprehensive research university, Yuanpei shares many resources and practices from Peking University, offering students the privilege of choosing any available course university-wide. While Lingnan's LAE is for all students in the university, Yuanpei and the Poya school in Tunghai have a few majors or courses reserved only for a small cohort of students, such as the cross-disciplinary majors at Yuanpei and core LAE courses at Poya school.

### *The understanding of LAE and their special features*

After the publication of the Harvard Red book *General Education in a Free Society* in 1945, general education has been widely used in the place of LAE. In the Chinese language, the translations of the two terms are boya jiaoyu (博雅教育) for LAE and tongshi jiaoyu (通识教育) for general education, respectively. Bo (博) means broad while ya (雅) refers to the quality of character; Tongshi (通识) means broad in knowledge. Based on the terms they use, the three institutions have different focuses and preferences. The similarity is that they all use general education for their curriculum. In Yuanpei, LAE and general education are mentioned interchangeably. In some cases, the two terms are expressed together in the same place as synonyms. In contrast, Lingnan clings to the term liberal arts education in its mission and goal statement. General education is only used in reference to the curriculum. For Tunghai, LAE is mentioned in most documents. In some documents, general education is specifically defined as part of the LAE model. Furthermore, Tunghai has a general education center for managing curriculum, which is outside of the Poya school and accessible for students across the university.

The three institutions have unique features in LAE related to their tradition, culture, and social contexts. Yuanpei designs its LAE in the context of Chinese socialism. LAE with Chinese characteristics is emphasized in its goal statement. Yuanpei plans to build its social internship programs in its practice bases located in remote provinces across the country. This internship opportunity aims to cultivate students' social responsibility and the sense of building the nation. The terms Yuanpei uses to describe the goals of education include a talented person, a person with skills and talents who can contribute to the socialist society and the building of the nation. Besides, Yuanpei emphasizes socialist theories and values through political courses, which serve as the foundation of its LAE. For Lingnan, it has a unique feature of social service. This spirit, maintained from the former Christian university, features passion, loyalty, perseverance, openness to different ideas and cultures, and a readiness to serve. By combining the best from the Chinese and Western liberal arts tradition, Lingnan emphasizes its commitment to quality whole-person education. Tunghai University has the feature of cultivating students with a sense of social responsibility and a

spirit of service, with the student labour program system, borrowed from an America LAE college, Berea College. The purpose of this program is to foster volunteerism and develop students' sense of social responsibility by carrying out environmental services via regular tasks on campus in their daily lives. In its mission, Tunghai mentions its origin as a Christian university and its education with Christian spiritual elements. Also, it mentions the whole person, which combines pioneering service attitudes with the traditional Chinese intellectual spirit of all-round development. In its goal, Tunghai uses the term servant leader, which can find its origin in Christianity.

## **Discussion**

Looking through the capabilities approach, the LAE in all three institutions focuses on cultivating a person with capabilities for their societies, with their models mainly following the global LAE model. Influenced by local contexts, the institutions' LAE models have some differences in their goals, missions, and curriculum. For example, cultivating a talented person is the aim of Yuanpei in mainland China. In contrast, a citizen or whole person is the focus at Lingnan in Hong Kong, and a free person or servant leader at Tunghai in Taiwan.

### *Capabilities cultivation*

The liberal art models in the three institutions focus on cultivating four aspects of capabilities: a whole person, broad knowledge for overall development, interpersonal relations, and a spirit of service and social responsibility. LAE focuses on cultivating students holistically and developing them as human beings in an all-around way. Yuanpei emphasizes the cultivation of a sound character and a good citizen for the social development of the country in its goals, which is aligned with the ideology of the socialist theory that a person is to be cultivated to make a contribution to society as a collective (McKinlay & Little, 1986). Furthermore, both Lingnan and Tunghai advocate that they are focusing on whole-person cultivation in their goals. They aim to cultivate citizens with a spirit of service for their societies.

All three universities emphasize broad knowledge by offering a wide range of general education core courses and elective courses from different disciplines. In terms of cultural tradition, they all have courses related to ancient Chinese Classics in Confucianism, with Lingnan having fewer than the other two. The teaching and learning models of the three institutions encompass not only learning knowledge in class, but also knowledge gained through interaction with people. They have similar residential college systems, allowing students from different majors to live together and communicate for a better understanding of broad knowledge. They all emphasize the close relationship between faculty members and students through a mentorship program. Also, with the residential college, various social and cultural activities and lectures are offered to promote interaction and

communication among students. The difference among them is that Lingnan's residence is for all students in the university, while Tunghai and Yuanpei's residences are privileged for a small selected group. As evident in explicit statements in their missions, all three institutions focus on cultivating students with social responsibilities who are willing to serve their community and society. Yuanpei nurtures students with good character and responsibility for contributing to the building of the country and nation. Both Lingnan and Tunghai offer students after-class activities to participate in community service.

### *Global perspective and local engagement*

The three institutions have adapted the global LAE model into their social contexts. A global perspective and internationalization are important features of the LAE models in the three institutions. Lingnan advocates its global perspective in terms of global citizen cultivation. It offers students many international exchange opportunities. Tunghai has the same vision to promote international cooperation for students' international experience. Yuanpei also offers students international exchange opportunities and encourages interaction with international students on campus. In this sense, they are cultivating whole persons with a global citizen perspective. As mentioned above, all three institutions focus on the local community and society in their mission statement and programs. They encourage students to engage with the local community and their society. Lingnan prepares students for contemporary Hong Kong society. Tunghai focuses on cultivating students for Taiwanese society. Similarly, Yuanpei is cultivating talented people with socialist values for the nation's social and economic development.

### *The influence of culture, history and tradition*

Despite the common goals and similarities in their LEA models, there are some differences resulting from the influence of culture, history, and tradition. For example, Yuanpei has a socialist view of cultivating a citizen to serve the nation evident its social practice program for rural development and basic education in remote areas. In its curriculum, Yuanpei offers courses of Eastern and Western culture, tradition and classics. The political ideology courses, such as *Ideological Cultivation and Fundamentals of Law*, are an integral part of the required general education curriculum and serve as the foundation for LAE in Peking University. Also, Yuanpei emphasizes LAE with Chinese characteristics. Lingnan has the unique feature of developing students for Hong Kong society. One of its common core courses is *Today's Hong Kong*. Moreover, in Lingnan, more courses focus on applied knowledge and practical skills, such as management, business, finance, and economics, than on history, culture, philosophy, and classics. In contrast, in Tunghai, under the humanities cluster, there are many courses related to Chinese culture and tradition, such as the *Research of Li (ritual) in*

*Ancient China, Arts of Living in Confucian Analects, and Lunyu (Analects of Confucius) Connecting with the Growth of Intelligence.* Also, it has courses focusing on Christianity and Western classics.

Besides the differences in the social context, the LAE in the three institutions exhibits some differences from the Christian whole-person perspective and capabilities approach. From the Christian perspective, the whole person's cultivation should include spirituality (Ng, 2017), but the development of spirituality can only be founded in Tunghai's statements. It is noticeable that both Tunghai and Lingnan have chapels on campus. Also, the mottos of Lingnan and Tunghai, "learning for service," and "truth, faith, and deeds," have their origins in and are aligned with the Christian spirit. As for Yuanpei, in the socialist context, it encourages the cultivation of citizens for the nation, without much focus on personal spiritual development. The capabilities approach is related to social equity in the sense that capabilities will enable students to move towards further development and freedom. This cannot be found in the documents of the three institutions. Do students from disadvantaged backgrounds have the opportunity for freedom and long-term development with the capabilities cultivated through LAE? To answer this question, we need further empirical research with interviews or a survey of students and alumni to explore the outcomes of LAE in the three institutions.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored the LAE models of three institutions in three different Chinese societies with the same tradition of Confucianism. The three institutions' LAE models are designed based on the global model under their social contexts. Lingnan and Tunghai focus on cultivating whole persons with LAE, while Yuanpei focuses on cultivating well-developed citizens for the socialist society. Their LAE follows the common model of broad knowledge, residential learning, close student-faculty relationships, and small-class teaching. Besides, they have developed special features in the current society, such as community engagement, interaction with local society, and international perspectives.

Looking through the capabilities approach, the three institutions cultivate students with various capabilities for further personal and career development. Capabilities cultivation includes broad knowledge, interpersonal relation, service and social responsibility, community engagement, and global perspective. These goals are supported by their models and curriculum. All of them have international exchange programs to enhance students' experience. Focusing on the whole person or citizen, they cultivate students in an all-round way, with a spirit of service and a sense of social responsibility. LAE in the three institutions shares a similar model in curriculum and activities, which aims to cultivate actively engaged citizens for their societies. However, their nuances are more influenced by their unique economic, political, and social contexts of mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, which are reflected through the statement of missions, goals, and curricula.

It is noticeable that the Confucian tradition has a more significant influence on LAE in Tunghai than in Lingnan and Yuanpei. Tunghai has incorporated the six-arts model from Confucianism into

its training. Although scholars argue that the educational goal of Confucian tradition aligns with the core values of LAE and the insights from Confucian tradition and its classics can help and contribute to the whole person cultivation of LAE (Jiang, 2014; Yang, 2016), the explicit influence from Confucian tradition has not been found in the LAE models in Lingnan and Yuanpei. Also, the influence of socialist ideology is explicit in the LAE in Yuanpei, which triggers further discussion on the models and values of LAE in the 21st century and the possibility of an LAE model with Chinese characteristics or socialist features. This study leads to further research on the implementation and educational outcomes of LAE in universities in East Asian societies.

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