
Chinese University Diploma: Can its International Image be Improved?

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INTRODUCTION

As of 1999, China had more than 800,000 public schools, primary through college, (www.umich.edu) churning out over 2.5 million College graduates each year (*Xinhua News Agency, 3/27/02*) with the numbers still on the rise. A different report claims that China currently has 1.35 million schools and an enrollment of 320 million students. (China Daily.com, 10/30/02) In 2001 the class of entering college freshman swelled to 2.6 million, 800,000 more than in 2000, (China Daily, 11/28/01) with a total college enrollment of 11.75 million in 2002, 8.02 million more than in 1990. (China Daily, 10/30/02) As of 1999 there were more than 13 million teachers serving more than 71 million students. (www.umich.edu) Accurate, up-to-date figures do not seem to be readily available, which may be attributable to the sheer magnitude of the educational system.

In its quest to make up for lost time, China is mass-producing university graduates like a modern factory assembly line produces consumer goods. Educating a Nation of 1.3 billion people is a monumental task beyond belief. As with any production process, educating China is not without its problems and defective products do occur. (Qiang/Wolff/Teng/Gregory, "Can You Get A First Class Education At A Third Tier College in China?", *Progress in Education Vol. __*, in press) Without adequate quality assurance the end product may be unacceptable in the marketplace. Such is the case with so many diplomas from Chinese universities and colleges; they just do not garner the international respect and admiration to which they aspire. There may be multiple factors contributing to this phenomenon (Qiang/Wolff, "EFL/ESL Teaching in China: Questions – Questions – Questions, in press) but we are here concerned with but one aspect of the problem, the integrity of the diploma and its holder. Was the diploma earned or received through "guanxi" (The art of developing relationships and then using them to obtain unjust or undeserved favors, i.e. cheating as a way of life)?

Students cheating on tests, students engaging in plagiarism, students manufacturing fake diplomas and credentials, and school administrators' falsification of students' records are rampant practices throughout China's universities and colleges, both public and private. Of this there is neither doubt nor dispute. The question is: Why?

We will explore the various types of cheating and their historical justification or excuse; the extent of current cheating and the underlying reasons that cheating continues to be acceptable even though

officially deplored.

Finally we will make a recommendation that may surprise many who labor to read through this entire article, it surprised us!

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

From the Chin Dynasty until this century, Confucianism was the leading force in shaping social ethics in China. (Chen Ying) Confucius taught that a peaceful and prosperous society was possible if everyone from pauper to prince adhered to the same virtues of honesty, courtesy and loyalty. (China Daily, Hong Kong Edition, 6/02)

However, from the Han period through to the Qing dynasty, the Imperial examinations for civil servants proved the breeding grounds for “guanxi”. The zeal to succeed and become a civil servant caused many a person to resort to cheating on the Imperial examinations, which required rote memorization for honest success. (Crozier, Justin 6/02) The Imperial examinations were the key to a person’s life success or perceived failure e.g. fail the examinations and fail in life. A great deal of pressure was placed upon the individual to pass the examinations by any means available. Cheating became endemic.

Confucianism ended when Mao Tse-Tung unified China and verbalized a new concept of morality, “morality begins at the point of a gun.” — Mao Tse-Tung, 20th-century revolutionary founder of modern China.

When the Communist Party came into power in China it brought with it the socialist philosophy of Hegel and Marx, which is completely devoid of any concept of social morality. (Katsiaficus, George 4/79) Marxism holds that economic structure determines everything in human society, including morality, ethics, and the right to private property; the only thing shaping society is the material forces of productivity. (Caldwell, Joseph George, 2003) The concept of personal integrity and social responsibility was transformed into a socialist collective mentality where the work unit shouldered the moral responsibility rather than the individual within any particular unit. “Guanxi” survived the unification of China under Mao.

The social morality of Confucius, tempered by “guanxi,” was replaced with “amoral” politics and law tempered by “guanxi.” Moral education was replaced with political education (Chen Ying) described by John Zane (pseudonym) (Universitat Oldenberg) as “Communism here is seen as a sort of morality which sets norms for behavior. To be a communist or Marxist is the same as to be a good person. Based on communist ideas, the Chinese government tries to educate people to be collectivistic. During the whole process of political education, individualism and “capitalist liberalization” are severely criticized. The model of a good person is the one who is loyal to the party, is ready to sacrifice himself for the party and the people, and dedicates himself to the cause of “socialist construction.”) Then the

"campaign against the four oldies" denied all morality. (Chen Ying op. cit.)

In 1980, with the founding of the Society for the Studies of Ethics at Wuxi, Jiangsu, China entered a period of socialist market morality, which is still developing today. (Chen Ying) This market morality is just an extension of what is considered to be Marxism. Today, China is classified as a developing Country, which normally refers to its economic status in the world community. However, China is also developing its social society (Qiang/Wolff, 4/03) and in this social development context is searching for the moral compass by which it will chart its future course for the development of a society with "high ideals and morality." (Chen Ying op. cit.)

CURRENT POLITICAL POLICY PERSPECTIVE

A review of the Chinese Government's official documents and press releases leaves one with a clear impression that China strives for a moral society, where cheating and corruption, at all levels of society, are the subject of zero tolerance.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China expresses the current political attitude toward morality and ethics in China:

Article 24. The state strengthens the building of socialist spiritual civilization through spreading education in high ideals and morality, general education and education in discipline and the legal system, and through promoting the formulation and observance of rules of conduct and common pledges by different sections of the people in urban and rural areas. The state advocates the civic virtues of love for the motherland, for the people, for labor, for science and for socialism; it educates the people in patriotism, collectivism, internationalism and communism and in dialectical and historical materialism; it combats the decadent ideas of capitalism and feudalism and other decadent ideas.

In a White Paper entitled "China's Population and Development in the 21st Century" published by The Information Office of the State Council on 12/19/2000 the Government stated a strong stance on the need to "raise" and "strengthen" the people's moral standards.

19. In order to raise the people's ideological and **moral standards**, it is necessary to enhance the people's sense of law and their concept of the rule of law. Outmoded regulations and bad habits as well as backward ideology should be changed and superstitions discarded. At the same time, healthy values, **moral standards** and good public opinions on cultural and social practices are to be encouraged. Great importance should be attached to the healthy development of youngsters by providing them with colorful and meaningful cultural and educational

activities. Young people's understanding of **morality** should be strengthened so that their improper behavior is avoided.

Zhong Binglin, Director of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education announced that “Morality and Psychology education will be given equal footing with regular programs.” (China Daily, 6/28/00)

In a speech to the Ideological and Work Conference of the CPC Central Committee on 6/28/00, President Jiang Zemin “stressed the importance of spreading socialist ethics and raising the moral standards of China as the nation is developing the socialist market economy as this would benefit China’s economic development. (China Daily, 6/29/00)

The Government of China is reported to be aggressively pursuing prosecution of corruption cases, which includes school administrators and teachers, with 3,126 dereliction of duties cases handled in the first half of 2000 compared with a total of 3,075 during the combined years of 1998 and 1999. (China Daily, 7/22/00)

One of the most important documents ever concerning morality and ethics was published by the CPC on 10/10/01 titled “Resolution of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee on Certain Important Questions on Promoting Socialist Ethical and Cultural Progress” adopted by the 6th Plenum of the 14th CPC Central Committee. This critically important document lays the foundation for China’s development of market economy moral and ethical standards. The Resolution is segregated into seven major parts:

Contained within a 1999 Ministry of Education Progress Report on the implementation of the Ministry's May 14, 1998 “Educational Reform Action Program” there is scant reference to any moral or ethical inclusion in school curriculum. There is a vague reference to “Concentrating on the 10 basic learning capabilities and skills...” (Ch. 9 b.) And a reference to it being the teacher's responsibility “To promote the concept that every teacher is responsible for counseling students.” (Ch. 11)

The 15th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee approved the keynote report by Jiang Zemin on behalf of the 14th CPC Central Committee at the opening session on September 12, 2001. The resolution, amongst other things, urges the enhancement of ethical progress and places priority on a development strategy for science and technology as well as education and actively promotes the development of various social causes. (Xinhua News Agency, 9/18/01)

1. Promoting socialist ethical and cultural progress is a task of great strategic importance.
2. The guidelines and objectives for socialist ethical and cultural progress.
3. Striving to improve the ideological and ethical quality of a whole nation.
4. Vigorously develop the cause of socialist culture.

5. Carrying out mass activities to promote ethical and cultural progress in an in-depth and sustained way.
6. Taking effective measures to increase input in the promotion of ethical and cultural progress.
7. Strengthening and improving Party leadership over the promotion of ethical and cultural progress. (Xinhua News Agency archives)

A press release from Xinhua News Agency summarizes the “Implementation Outline on Ethic Building for Citizens” in the following way:

“The outline says that socialist ethic building should make serving people as its core with the basic demand of loving the motherland, people, labor, science and socialism. ... socialist ethic system, which is in accordance with the socialist market economy, is very important for establishing normal social order, ensuring healthy development of the socialist market economy, improving the overall quality of the country’s citizens pushing forward construction of socialist endeavors with Chinese characteristics.” (China Daily, 10/24/01)

Outgoing Chinese President Jiang Zemin made an impressive and inclusive swan song speech at the 16th Communist Party Conference in November 2002 in which he reiterated the Government's quest for enhanced ethical standards.

III. Objectives of Building a Well-off Society in an All-Round Way

-- The ideological and ethical standards, the scientific and cultural qualities, and the health of the whole people will be enhanced notably.

VI. 2. National spirit is the moral kingpin on which a nation relies for survival and development.

VI. 3. Promote ideological and ethical progress.

VI. 4. ... train socialist builders ... in morality....

At the Fifth Session of the Ninth National People's Congress on March 6, 2002, the Congress was presented with a report on the “Implementation of the 2001 Plan for National Economic and Social Development and on the Draft 2002 Plan for National Economic and Social Development,” by Zeng Peiyan, Minister in Charge of the State Development Planning Commission. The report contains a single reference to “morality.”

“Greater efforts will be made to develop spiritual civilization

and promote all-round development of undertakings in culture, health, sports, radio, film, TV, the press and publishing. The Program for Establishing Civic *Morality will be carefully instituted along with vigorous efforts to develop activities for the participation of the masses to build spiritual civilization.*”

President Jiang Zemin has given his complete and unqualified support to a program called “The Chinese Little Citizen’s Moral Building Program” that is concerned with strengthening the moral building for children. This is a joint program between the Ministry of Education and the All-China Federation of Women. (People’s Daily, 6/5/02)

The Ministry of Education has taken a strong stand against exam cheating by announcing that anyone caught cheating on college entrance exams would have their names published for public humiliating purposes i.e. loss of face. (China Daily, 7/8/02)

Government officials are coming under closer scrutiny as their personnel records are searched for faked or forged degrees. Those found to have faked or forged credentials to obtain their employment would not only be dismissed but also prosecuted. (China Daily Hong Kong Edition, 9/5/02)

In a summary of the accomplishments of the CCP, we find the most coherent statement of the moral philosophy of China to date. The party has created a “favorable social environment for upholding the good and eliminating the bad, and promoting the good and punishing the evil. ... Cultivating citizens having high ideals, moral integrity, a good education and a strong sense of discipline is the fundamental objective of developing advanced culture and building a civilization with high cultural and ethical levels. ... moral education with patriotism ... combining legal construction with moral construction ... high cultural and ethical levels ... courtesy and honesty.... (People’s Daily, 10/17/02)

The Chinese Government's position on copyright infringement, a form of plagiarism, is also clearly stated:

It is the Chinese government's view that the intellectual property protection system plays a significant role in promoting progress in science and technology, enriching culture and developing the economy. (Government White Paper, 1994)

The white paper lists China's reforms, legal enactments and membership in international organizations, all of which are designed to implement protection of intellectual property rights. But as recently as 12/02, U.S. businesses were expressing continued concern over China's need to strengthen and enforce intellectual property rights on a uniform basis. (sanjose.bizjournals)

There is no doubt that China places a very heavy priority on developing a society with high moral and

ethical standards and is resolute in prosecuting those who stray over the acceptable moral/ethical line. Problematically, the moral/ethical standard China seeks to adopt, implement and enforce is one based upon the economics of market economy rather than a social morality more commonly associated with Western developed nations.

RECENT EXAMPLES OF CHEATING

INTRODUCTION

School cheating is so widespread in China that at a recent NPC and CPPCC Forum held in March of 2002 it was suggested that “Campus cheating is a problem related not only to academic work, but also to intellectual’s moral qualities.” It was suggested that there should be a “crack down on campus cheating. A nationwide committee to promote academic ethics needs to be set up. It should follow up on some serious cases of such cheating and suggest suitable punishment after investigation and verification. To combat academic cheating a compulsory system of controls and counter-measures is needed.” (China Daily, 3/18/02) In the following sections we will catalogue recent events as reported chronologically in the press or as they occurred.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHEATING

The Government has accused a Vice-Director of the Education Bureau of Jiahe County in Hunan Province of dereliction of duty in allowing two hundred and three students to cheat on the college entrance examination. (China Daily, 7/22/00)

It was reported that in Jiangxi Province Government job applicants were using copies, pagers and mobile phones to cheat on exams. (China Daily, 8/18/00)

In January of 2001 seven of thirty-three students were caught cheating on a final examination. Due to administrative interference, the seven students were not required to retake the examination but were allowed to continue with their studies as if nothing had happened. (Uriel in China, 1-6-01)

During the summer of 2002 at a private business institute in joint venture with a 2nd tier public university in Hebei Province, (Qiang/Wolff, 6/03) there were two instances of administrative altering of academic records. In one instance a male student attending the private oral English course completely failed to meet the minimum criteria for passing the class and was given an “F” by the teacher. However, when the grades were posted, this student received a “D” or passing grade. In the second instance, seven male students in the public university oral English class completely failed to meet the minimum criteria for passing the class and were given an “F” by the teacher. However, when the grades were posted, these students received a “D” or passing grade. (source: author’s personal experience) The rationale for the administrative grade changes was that if students attending the private courses, (which are the profit center or “cash cow” of the joint venture operation) fail a course, they

drop out of the program and future revenue is lost.; and if students attending the public university courses, (which are the bread and butter revenues which pay all of the joint venture operation) fail a course, the lucrative joint venture agreement is jeopardized with termination and hence loss of essential revenue and facilities.

During final oral examinations at a College in Henan Province just prior to the 2003 Spring Festival vacation, a tongue-tied female student, with extremely poor pronunciation, was given a “B”; while one male student, who could not even speak one word of English, and had been referred just the prior week for special phonetics tutoring received “D”. This was justified because the students were admitted to the College because of their parents' political positions and these were people upon whom the College relied for continuing community support. (source: author's personal experience)

A prominent Shanghai university became embroiled in a cheating scandal when it reportedly published an Internet list of important students and their “official supporters” in an apparent attempt to influence professors' grading actions relative to those students. (Matuszak 9/01)

A Vice President of a prestigious Shanghai university was recently detained by the prosecutor of Ningbo City for investigation into allegations that he “was suspected of having taken a large sum of bribes during his tenure” as deputy president of Hangzhou University, Zhejiang Province from 1992 to 1998 (People's Daily, 1/22/02)

Another form of administrative cheating is explored by the BBC. It involves school administrators utilizing school children (child labor) to engage in business enterprise for personal economic gain. This resulted in a school fireworks manufacturing accident. (news.bbc.co.uk) On March 7, 2002, 40 children died in a school explosion while manufacturing fireworks due to a “shortfall in school funding.” After initial denials, use of the school for such business activities was admitted and an attempt was made to justify it as a form of a training “work to study” program. (<http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/03/07/china.school.blast.03/>; <http://www.asia.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/03/15/china.premier.blast.01/>)

The authors are also aware that certain university admissions officers have been swayed in their admission decisions through *guanxi* or outright gifts. In one Henan Province college between the years 2001 and 2004 a mentally retarded student failed every course but was allowed to receive his graduation certificate because his parents had faithfully paid the tuition and were “important Party members.”

CHEATING ON EXAMINATIONS

Sascha Matuszak, a Foreign Expert from Minnesota, U.S.A reports that “Cheating is a Way of Life in China, *Guanxi* rules in China’s Schools.” Sacha reports that his Chinese university students engaged in widespread cheating on tests, i.e. only six essays were produced by sixty students due to sharing

information during the test process. It is also claimed that the students not only used texts verbatim, but also were impervious to corrective remarks about the evils of plagiarism. (Matuszak 9/11/01)

On 12/26/02 a foreign English teacher (soujiro_ab@hotmail.com) published a letter at www.eslcafe.com complaining of widespread cheating on tests and tolerance by public university administrators in China.

In Guangzhou, secret videotapes caught students using various methods to cheat on an exam while the exam proctors or monitors intentionally looked the other way or gave the students extra time to complete the exam. Students were observed passing notes, making gestures to each other, discussing the test in hushed voices, and even exchanging answer sheets. (People's Daily, 7/11/00), "College Exam Cheating Operations Uncovered") And in another cheating scandal from the same Province, thirty-nine students and five teachers were accused of a scheme where the teachers took the test first and then sold the correct answers to students. (People's Daily, 7/15/00)

It was reported that in Shanxi one student held up her exam paper for the person behind to copy and the teacher looked the other way. In another incident involving student cheaters in a music department, the school administration was furious with the teachers who exposed the cheating rather than with the cheating students. (www.china.org.cn, 6/3/02)

In Henan Province in the Fall of 2002 a professional test taking surrogate complained that he has been required by social expectancy and political pressure "guanxi" to take the Band 4 and Band 6 English tests more than several times for friends and allies who knew that they would fail the examination if they were required to sit for it themselves. The test monitor not only cooperated in this fraud, but also often was the one making all of the arrangements for its success. (source: author's personal experience)

In November 2002, as soon as a teacher left an examination room, the students started sharing test answers. (21st Century, 11/4/02)

The U.S. based Educational Testing Service canceled its GRE Computer Science test in China in August 2002 after an earlier decision to suspend the text due to widespread cheating. (International Herald Tribune, 10/15/02)

PLAGIARISM

It was recently discovered that a professor of the Department of Sociology at Peking University had "committed serious plagiarism" in a 1998 book he wrote. Another professor of the College of Computer and Information Engineering at Hefei University of Technology was also found to have "serious cheating" in six of his thesis published in professional journals. (China Daily Hong Kong Edition, 1/24/02)

During the Fall of 2002, at a private business institute in joint venture (Qiang/Wolff, 9/03), with a 2nd tier public university in Shanghai, in a group of 60 third year students there were 6 confirmed instances of flagrant plagiarism. The administration required the students to write a letter of apology and repeat the assignment as the totality of punishment. It was explained that this is the normal method for handling such matters in Chinese middle schools and to impose any harsher punishment might jeopardize the joint ventures continuing viability. (source: author's personal experience) A second teacher at the same institution also experienced plagiarism from two students. The teacher simply required the students to re-write their papers.

In a second incident during the Fall of 2002 at a private joint venture with another 2nd tier public university in Shanghai, (Qiang/Wolff 6/03) in a group of 56 first year students there were 8 confirmed instances of flagrant plagiarism. The administration required the students to write a letter of apology and repeat the assignment as the totality of punishment. (source: author's personal experience)

On 11/24/02 a letter was published by a foreign teacher at www.eslcafe.com complaining of widespread plagiarism in a public university in China.

On 14/03 Richard of Va., U.S.A. (chinamoy@aol.com) filed a report at www.eslcafe.com about his experience with plagiarism while teaching in China, commiserating with another teacher who also had a similar complaint about rampant plagiarism in China.

FAKE DIPLOMAS AND CREDENTIALS

Government officials often obtain their high-ranking positions through falsification of degrees rather than go through the educational process of self-improvement. (China Daily Hong Kong Edition, 9/5/02)

A Chinese student attempting to enter the University of California at Los Angeles was caught utilizing falsified academic records. UCLA now joins several other U.S. academic institutions giving closer scrutiny to applications from foreign students. (China Daily Hong Kong Edition, 9/19/02)

Japan issued “student visas” to a group of Chinese students who, after entering Japan, never appeared at their educational institution. Apparently these “students” lied to the Japanese Government to obtain student visas only to enter the Country to illegally obtain high paying jobs. (21st Century, 12-26-02)

The Internet is proving to be a modern source of professionally prepared term papers and even doctoral dissertations in China. (China Daily Hong Kong Edition, 3-6-03) Foreign Experts are asked to prepare term papers or assist in locating them on the Internet. (Matuszak 9/11/01)

Term papers, design work, entire essays and articles are copied off the Internet and students mark “copied” on them to warn other students that they have already been used. (www.china.org.cn, 6/3/02)

WHY THE PREVALENCE OF ETHICAL MISCONDUCT BY STUDENTS AND ADMINISTRATORS?

The very simplistic short answer is that cheating pays, it is rewarded. The mid-range answer is that it is endemic (“Guanxi”), both historical and cultural. One need only look at modern China's attitude and aptitude in manufacturing “knock off” or “fake” designer watches and clothes and the speed with which it can bring to market pirated copies of music and movie DVD's. Sometimes it appears that the pirated version of a CD or DVD is available in China before the original is released in the U.S. (China Daily, 11/26/01)

There is a joke from Hong Kong that attests to the Chinese ability to copy what others have created: It claims that a westerner brought a magazine picture of a designer wedding dress to a tailor shop for a custom reproduction. When the customer came to pick up the dress she was aghast! There was a cigarette burn hole right in the front of the dress. When she brought this to the tailor's attention, he showed her the magazine picture she had provided to him. Right there on the picture was a cigarette burn hole exactly in the same place as on the dress.

A Foreign Expert teaching English in China attempts to shed some light on the question with the following comments: “ ... because the foreign language education in China is so poor and the tests so difficult that most students have no choice but to cheat or fail. ... The idea of the national standard exam (Imperial examinations) is ingrained deep enough that it survives today. And people cheat today as much as they did back then.” It is also suggested that teacher's pay is so low that they are willing paid participants in the cheating process. “Guanxi (the art of cultivating friendships) is so pervasive in China that corruption is a given.” (Matuszak, 9/11/01)

“According to one student at a university in Shanxi, practicing fraud has become a trend, with only a few students living on their own labor. Most other students cope with the strain of exams by cheating. ... As the competition for good job requiring special certificates and university diplomas increases, so does the market for forged documents. ... Some educators say a bad social environment is not the only cause of cheating. They put the blame on a bad academic atmosphere. ... Many professors regard outdated university management as a chief cause of increased cheating. They point out that management rules are becoming a bottleneck for much needed changes. According to regulations, students have to score their professor's performance at the end of the school term. Professors who score poorly may have their bonus withheld. This system not only encourages students who cheat, but professors who are reluctant to offend them.” (www.china.org.cn, 6/3/02)

He Weifang, professor of the Law Institute of Peking University suggests that the practice of faking academic diplomas in the job application process is the result of the “fierce talent competition.” (China Daily Hong Kong Edition, 9/5/02)

In attempting to explain what drove a 17-year-old boy to kill his mother, the China Daily boldly states, “The core reason is that the entire society is holding on to outdated educational concepts. ... Traditionally, children’s ability is determined by examination scores. High marks are still the only way to ensure that one is admitted to better schools, better universities and many are convinced is a sure path to better jobs, better income and a better life. Test-oriented education has forced schools to put overwhelming emphasis on textbooks and neglected such aspects as morality and ethics, which are essential for the cultivation of healthy personality.” (China Daily, 2/16/00)

We are aware that senior middle school students preparing for the college entrance exams work 12 to 15 hours each day, seven days a week over a two-year period. These students have little concept of free time or recreation as they are under tremendous pressure to succeed and get into a major university. The environment is far too stressful and indeed can generate a desire to “win at any price” approach, even if cheating is required.; After all, one’s entire future will be determined by the results of the college entrance examinations.

The long term and fatalistic answer is that “Guanxi” is so engrained in Chinese culture and society as to make it impossible to root it out and be done with, it once and for all.

OFFICIAL REACTION TO RAMPANT CHEATING

Official reaction to the call of the Ministry of Education to crack down on rampant cheating in universities has been limited, but very positive.

Beijing University will not only punish exam cheats who hire a surrogate test taker but will also punish the surrogate who takes an exam for another. Electronic instruments such as personal data assistants, calculators with higher memory function and communications equipment like mobile phones will be excluded from exams. The new rules will also punish students who attempt to plead with, threaten or bribe a professor. (China Daily, 6/28/02)

Peking University has adopted new rules to curb plagiarism on essays and thesis. The punishment can result in failing a course and even loss of the opportunity to complete the requirements for a degree. (China Daily Hong Kong Edition, (7/5/02) Li Ki’an the head of the Academic Affairs Office says that the new rules “are meant to curb the rampant problem of cheating.”

Fujian Normal University has expelled a PhD candidate and three Masters degree candidates because they sat a college English test for other students. The Chinese University of Science and Technology punished eight students for either hiring test takers or for sitting an examination for someone else.

(China Daily Hong Kong Edition, 1/16/03)

China Agricultural University has recently expelled three students who were found cheating in the final exams and two students of Information and Electronics School who sat an exam for other students were also expelled. (China Daily, 10/8/03)

Possibly the limited application of the new disciplinary rules indicates a reduction in cheating subsequent to the call of the Ministry of Education, rather than a failure to adopt and enforce appropriate disciplinary rules.

STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARD MORALITY AND ETHICS

Some students have publicly voiced their concern about cheating. Ma Jing of Shaanxi is highly critical of a cash bonus program instituted to curb cheating (Zero Cheating Award). Ma says the program intended to reduce cheating actually “degrades honesty as a commodity that can be sold. Students ought to consider honesty a duty in their academic pursuit, rather than an unusual way to get money.” Ma goes on to state that it is better to “develop a sense of honesty and responsibility as the only way to stop cheating.” (21st Century, 9/26/02) An unidentified student writes in the 11/4/02 issue of 21st Century “Cheating in School is Cheating in Life” that “the only true way to succeed is to work honestly and to honestly earn what you receive.” This clearly is a rejection of “guanxi.”

In an attempt to obtain a preliminary answer to the question “WHY?”, a Questionnaire was submitted to 211 first and second year college students attending Xinyang Agricultural College (XAC), Henan Province; 7 students attending Changchun AUST (from Australia) Foreign Languages Academy (CAFLA) in Jilin; and 43 students attending Shanghai’s Tong ji University (STU) (Appendix “A”) in an attempt to take their moral pulse.

As we ponder the student’s responses we must be cognizant of the source of their moral education. 49% of the responding students from XAC stated that they learned the difference between right and wrong from their parents, while 14% attributed their moral education to primary school teachers and 12% to their middle school teachers. 25%, or one quarter of the students attributed their moral education to television or friends, TV (4%) Friends (21%). 47% of the STU students claimed to have been influenced by TV and friends in their moral development. (see Appendix “A”) This would indicate that schools have not played any more important a role in social moral education than television and friends. This should be a wake-up call to educators. (Question #15)

There are some striking anomalies in the student’s attitude toward current social issues. For instance, when XAC students were asked if they were concerned about North Korea developing nuclear weapons, only 60% said they were, while 71% expressed concern over a possible nuclear war between Pakistan and India. CAFLA students responded that 86% were concerned about North Korea and only 57% were concerned about Pakistan and India. 84% of the STU students were concerned about nuclear weapons in Korea and only 77% were concerned about Pakistan and India. This anomaly may

be a prime example of the product of the sheltered lives led by university English majors. (Questions #8 and #12)

66% of the XAC students felt that expulsion for cheating on an exam was harsh or unreasonable and 75% felt that non-registered and non-paying informal “students” should be allowed to sit in on university classes at famous universities. 71% of the CAFLA students believed that expulsion for cheating on an exam was fair while 86% felt that informal students should be allowed to attend famous university classes without registering or paying any fees. 49% of the STU students felt that expulsion for cheating was harsh and 63% felt informal students should be allowed to remain in class. When the XAC students were further queried about whether they believed failing to pay a taxi was also justified, the students admitted that it was not. They just did not understand the analogy of stealing from the university. Under further discussion, the XAC students admitted that their parents, who were financing the higher education, might not agree with them that the non-paying students should be allowed to remain in the class. (Questions #1 and 9)

22% of the XAC students believed that it was acceptable to lie to a Government to gain entry to the country for the purpose of working illegally, while 14% of the CAFLA students and 16% of the STU found this conduct acceptable. The fact that any students felt justified in lying to any Governmental agency for purposes of personal gain is contrary to the high ethical and moral standard espoused by the CPC and should be a major concern for educational administrators. (Question #5)

None of the three schools have an English Department computer lab. All of the students evinced a mixed comprehension of the Internet and the dangers it posed. This result tends to confirm our opinion that the absence of an English computer lab is a major disadvantage to English majors because they are not regularly exposed to a broader worldview. (Question #13 a-e)

The XAC students were almost equally divided on whether China has too many universities, with 48% saying there were too many and 52% saying there were not. CAFLA students split 43% for too many universities to 57% against, while 21% of the STU students felt there were too many universities in China. However, those XAC students saying there were too many were not in favor of their college being one of the ones to be closed in corrective action. Closing universities was appropriate only to obtain personal advantage but not if it meant personal sacrifice. (Question #10)

On the issue of capital punishment, only 9% of the XAC students felt execution was a fair punishment for a mentally retarded man convicted of murder; 75% responded that a man convicted of killing and eating his mother should be executed while only 16% felt that his sentence of 30 years in jail was fair; and 35% believed that a man kidnapped as a boy and raised by an abusive convicted murderer should be forgiving and not seek the false father’s incarceration. (On further questioning those XAC students favoring forgiveness admitted that they could probably not be forgiving under similar circumstances.) 29% of the CAFLA students (65% STU) responded that capital punishment for the mentally retarded murderer was fair; 71% of the CAFLA students (51% STU) felt that the man who killed and ate his

mother should be executed instead of jailed for 30 years; and 14% of the CAFLA students (12% STU) believed that the kidnapped boy should forgive the man who raised him. (Questions #2, #3, and 4)

We believe that the most telling results of the poll are found in the responses to question number 14. The XAC students were almost evenly divided on whether the university was within its rights to prohibit students from smoking on campus with a vote of 52% in agreement and 48% opposed. The CAFLA students voted 86% in agreement and 14% opposed. However, when asked if the university policy that disallowed students smoking was compared to the same university allowing faculty and staff to smoke on campus, the XAC students found the double standard to be hypocritical by a margin of 92% yes and 8% no. The CAFLA students found the policy hypocritical by a margin of 86% yes and 14% no. The STU students felt by only 51% that the university was within its rights to restrict student smoking on campus while 70% found the policy to be hypocritical when staff and faculty are exempted from the smoking prohibition. At XAC this double standard was compared to a father advising his son of the vices of drinking alcohol and smoking while holding a half empty beer bottle in one hand and a burning cigarette in the other. (Do as I say, not as I do.) Many XAC students admitted to smoking on campus notwithstanding the administrative prohibition. This leads us to the conclusion that teachers and others in positions of authority must set the proper example because they are “teaching” or “instructing” by their actions more than by their words.

In January, 2004 120 college seniors in Henan Province were given a reading comprehension final exam that asked them to first read “Universities Put A Lid On Cheating” China Daily, 1/16/03 and “Survey: Many Students Say Cheating’s OK” CNN, 4/5/02. They were then asked to answer the following questions: 1. Should cheaters be punished? Why? 2: Who gets hurt when you cheat?

18% of the students wrote that cheating was necessary to get good grades and good grades are necessary to get good jobs, so cheaters should not be punished. The same students wrote that no one gets hurt when you cheat in college.

On the other hand, 63% of the students felt that cheating was a sign of lack of personal integrity and that cheating should be punished. These students also identified that when someone cheats, they hurt themselves, their parents, their school, their eventual employer, and most importantly, the society will not be able to develop properly. These students blamed cheating on the attitude of society, which places such a high value on grades and does not teach morality in school.

It is our overall impression that the polled students suffer from a general lack of exposure to national and international issues; a lack of exposure to a standardized moral or ethical standard; and have not previously been required to formulate their own independent ideas. They appear to suffer from an educational policy of rote memorization and regurgitation for exam purposes. There is a marked lack of creative and independent thought process based upon being well informed about current affairs. Most of the students had never previously confronted either the subject issues or their consequences. We are of the opinion that these English majors lead sheltered lives and are not regularly exposed to

the appropriate teaching materials necessary to obtain the levels of English proficiency identified by Professor Qixin (He Qixin, 7/00):

Listening Comprehension: Students should be able to understand radio or television programs of English-speaking countries (for instance, CNN) concerning political, economic, cultural, educational and scientific issues, special reports or lectures on similar subjects.

Speaking Ability: Students are required to exchange ideas with people from English-speaking countries on major international or domestic issues, to be engaged in lengthy and in-depth discussions on similar subjects, and to express themselves clearly, assertively and coherently.

Reading Comprehension: Students must be able to read editorials and critical essays on political issues from British and American major newspapers and magazines (for instance, *Times, New York Times*), to understand literature published in English-speaking countries, and to be able to analyze the thesis, the structure, the language and the style of the above writings.

Writing Ability: Students are required to write descriptive, narrative, expository and argumentative essays, expressing themselves effectively, smoothly and correctly. The required writing speed is 300 to 400 words within half an hour. A thesis is part of the requirement for a bachelor's degree, 3,000 to 5,000 words in length (12–20 double-spaced pages).

RECOMMENDATIONS

At this point it may be expected that we would formulate a comprehensive proposal for changing the moral standard of students; altering the academic curriculum to include the study of social morality; instituting continuing education programs for teachers in the area of social morals, requiring teachers, professors, and administrators to receive periodic updated moral training; propose enhanced security programs to prevent cheating, and catch cheaters; and to propose a new “moral standard.”

In this regard we will seriously disappoint because we are of the opinion that the Government is already engaged in these activities to various degrees and that the advice of experts in those specific areas is assisting in this pursuit. We are also convinced of the Government's serious commitment to the required educational reforms.

During our research we learned, rather convincingly, that all Nations are struggling with issues of

social morality and educational corruption, even the United States. (*Waite, D. 2001, November*).

We are also convinced, due to a lack of evidence to the contrary, that comparatively speaking, modern China has no lesser nor greater problem with educational cheating than any other Country in the modern world. We believe that on a per capita basis, China has a proportionate number of academic cheating scandals with the other Countries of the modern world. It must be emphasized that China has more students (16 million college students alone, without counting kindergarten, primary, middle or high school students) (21st Century, 3/13/02) more teachers, more educational institutions and correspondingly, more cheaters than any other Country. These facts appear to be lost in the sensationalization of the “cheating scandals” themselves.

It is our recommendation that China engage in a serious public relations campaign extolling the virtues of China’s educational progress and always portraying cheating scandals in their proportionate relationship to total population and other factors which put the matter into proper perspective and in a positive International light. The world simply has a wrong perception and China does little to alter it. China’s propaganda machine should be mandated not only to provide information upon which the Chinese people may think properly, it must expand its scope of activities to change world perceptions as well. There is a difference between writing for local consumption and writing to affect world opinion.

Possibly China could study and learn from the Israel/Palestinian conflict. It is not that the Palestinian plight is less just than that of Israel; it is that Israel knows how to use the International media to its advantage while the Palestinians do not.

CONCLUSION

China readily admits, through its official news organs, that it has a continuing need to develop moral and ethical citizens, while openly admitting rampant existing problems of dishonesty within its educational system. (www.china.org.cn/english/2002/jun/33700.htm) Recently elected (March 03) CPC Premier Wen Jiabao made a critical early pledge to crack down on corruption throughout the ranks of government officials. (*China Daily, 3/28/03*). “*Wen calls for more efforts to combat corruption.*”)

Based upon our research, it is our conclusion that China does not suffer from a failed moral or ethical development program or a failed educational system but rather is experiencing normal growing pains. What China suffers from is a failed information program. While continuing with moral development and educational reforms, China must use the International media to portray itself in a more positive light to affect world opinion in its favor.

Only when the International community is better informed will, China’s university degree receive the respect it deserves, assuming that other factors which may tend to disparage its

reputation receive the appropriate corrective attention.

APPENDIX "A"

UNIVERSITY STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE *

1. 45 Japanese students used the instant messaging function on their mobile phones to cheat on a university final exam. They were expelled from the university. (12-12-02 21st Century Shanghai "The email was right but the answers weren't") Do you think this punishment was fair ___ harsh ___ completely unreasonable ___.

2. A 40 year old man with the brain of a six year old child was sentenced to death for killing a 20 year old man. (1-9-03 Associated Press "Lawyers Appeal Death Sentence") Do you think this punishment was fair ___ harsh ___ completely unreasonable ___ the man should be put in a mental hospital ___

3. A 40 year old man was sentenced to 30 years in prison for killing his 79 year old mother and then eating her heart and other internal organs. (1 -1-03 AP News Service "Texas Man Sentenced to 30 years for Killing and Cannibalizing his Mom") Do you think this punishment was fair ___ harsh ___ completely unreasonable ___ (Students responded that he should be executed.)

4. An escaped murderer kidnapped a young boy and raised him as his own child for 20 years but was cruel to the boy every day. The man was recaptured and is now in jail. The boy is angry and bitter and wants his fake father to stay in jail. (2-2-03 ABC News "A Childhood of Lies") Do you think the kidnapper should stay in jail ___ or should the boy forgive him ___

5. Chinese students who entered Japan on a student visa have disappeared and are believed to be working illegally in Japan. (12-26-02 21st Century Shanghai " Strange Case of Missing Students") Do you think it is alright to enter Japan illegally as a student to obtain a job? Yes ___ No ___

6. A divorced man wanted to find a wife so he erected a large sign next to a busy highway saying "wife wanted." (1-3-03 ABC News "Wife Wanted") Do you think this is an acceptable method for finding a spouse. Yes ___ No ___.

7. After College graduation which is more important, (1-1-03 21st Century Shanghai "Oh! Pity the Poor Young Rich Things) career ___ love ____.

8. North Korea is preparing to make nuclear bombs. (1-6-03 Washington Post "U. N. Warns North Korea To Comply With Nuclear Accords") Do you think this is something to be concerned about? Yes ___ No ___

9. Some young people who failed the college entrance examinations are attending famous university classes without registering or paying the required tuition fees. (12-26-02 21st Century

Shanghai "Keeping a Low Profile in Class") Should the professors allow these students to listen to the lectures ___ or kick them out of the class ___

10. 700,000 Chinese college graduate from 2002 have still not found jobs as of March 2003. In 2004 college enrollment will increase by one-third. (12-31-02 Xinhua News Agency "More College Students Put Strain on Job Market") Do you think there are too many universities and colleges in China? Yes ___ No ___

11. One year after the terrorist attack on New York City on 9/11 a young couple put a fake bomb in their suitcase and tried to board an airplane. They were caught and explained that it was just a joke on the police. (1/03 CNN "Luggage Hoax Lands Couple in Jail") Do you think this was a good joke? Yes ___ No ___

12. India and Pakistan are southern neighbors of China and both have nuclear bombs. Are you concerned about India and Pakistan dropping nuclear bombs on each other? (12-30-02 Associated Press "Musharraf Says Pakistan Was Ready to Wage Nuclear War") Yes ___ No ___

13. A thirteen year old girl met a pedophile on the internet and agreed to meet him for sex. When the pedophile arrived for the meeting he was met by the police and arrested. (1-3-03 ABC News "Caught By Christine")

Do you think the Internet is a dangerous place to meet someone? Yes ___ No ___

Should you give someone on the internet your real name? Yes ___ No ___

Should you give someone on the internet your phone number? Yes ___ No ___

Should you give someone on the internet your address? Yes ___ No ___

Should you give someone on the internet your school name? Yes ___ No ___

Should you give someone on the internet your work address? Yes ___ No ___

14. Many universities and colleges prohibit students smoking on campus but allow faculty and staff to smoke on campus. (12/26/02 21st Century Shanghai "Restricting Campus Smoking")

Do you think the school has the right to restrict student smoking? Yes ___ No ___

Do you think the school policy is hypocritical? Yes ___ No ___

15. Where did you learn the difference between what is right and what is wrong?

Parents ___ Primary School Teachers ___ Middle School Teachers ___ TV ___ Friends ___

*Survey of 211 Freshman and Sophomore business English major students at Xinyang Agricultural College in Henan Province, a rural school of approximately 5,000 students. The students are predominantly 19 or 20 years old, come from peasant or farm families and are the only hope for the family's future economic prosperity. Each question was based upon a timely and relevant news paper article used for oral English conversation class. The poll was taken after the students presented the issues from the articles and conducted class discussions

about the articles. (It should be noted that four students complained they did not like the Questionnaire because the Questionnaire forced them to think.)

*The seven (19 - 20 year old) students attending Changchun AUST (from Australia) Foreign Languages Academy in Jilin were asked the following questions (except for #15) during English corner. The students did not have any opportunity to read the corresponding articles but were able to discuss the questions with the school principal, Emanuel Sundra, before the poll was taken.

*Survey of forty-three (20 – 22 year old) Junior English major students at Shanghai's Tong ji University during a class but without any group discussion of the questions or underlying articles.

QUESTION	FAIR	HARSH	UNREASONABLE	YES	NP	JAIL	FORGIVE	NO OPINION	CAREER	LOVE
#1 XAC	34%	41%	25%							
CAFLA	71%	29%	0%							
TJU	51%	49%	0%							
#2 XAC	9%	27%	64%							
CAFLA	29%	14%	57%							
TJU	11%	19%	70%							
#3 XAC	16%	8%	75%							
CAFLA	29%	0%	71%							
TJU	65%	0%	35%							
#4 XAC							65%	35%		
CAFLA							86%	14%		
TJU							88%	12%		
#5 XAC				22%	78%					
CAFLA				14%	86%					
TJU				16%	84%					
#6 XAC				42%	58%					
CAFLA				29%	57%			14%		
TJU				53%	47%					
#7 XAC									69%	31%
CAFLA									100%	
TJU									77%	23%
#8 XAC				60%	40%					
CAFLA				86%	14%					
TJU				84%	16%					
#9 XAC				75%	25%					
CAFLA				86%	14%					
TJU				63%	37%					
#10 XAC				42%	58%					
CAFLA				43%	57%					
TJU				21%	79%					
#11 XAC				9%	91%					
CAFLA					100%					
TJU				7%	93%					
#12 XAC				71%	29%					
CAFLA				57%	43%					
TJU				77%	23%					

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