# A Humanistic Approach to Enhancing Teacher Influence

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the issue of declining teacher influence on students, and investigates a humanistic approach to responding to this change in the context of students' changing modes of learning in China. The paper is the results of an empirical study based in two institutions in Changsha, Hunan Province: Changsha Normal College and Hunan No. 1 Normal College.
The study take a two-pronged methodology of survey among college graduates who have been in their professions for more than two years; and of a series of interviews among the faculty members in the above institutions. With the focus of the areas students feel most needed for a successful professional life, we find that psychological maturity is the weakest area, among others, which they hope the students still studying in the colleges to strengthen. We also find from our investigations that, in catering for students' learning needs, a humanistic psychological approach will be effective to augment teachers' influence. The main findings from this approach include humanistic care, teacher initiative, aspiring determination, guidance on deep learning, emotional maturity, and purpose of life.

**Keywords:** Influence pattern, teacher influence, humanistic psychology, teacher quality
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## I. Introduction

1.1 The changing influence pattern

In teacher training institutions in China, there has been a prevailing concern on teachers' power of influence in schools. The issue of decreasing teacher influence has been especially obvious as a trend in schools in urban areas. With the fast and vast social and economic development since the early 1980's when the Reform started, the pattern of influence has changed over the decades.

According to a report of the Guangzhou Municipal Government based on a study of "the environmental factors for the growth of the youth" (2005), the order of factors, in terms of significance on the younger generations, was like the following in the year of 1985 –

Family, School, Media, Society, Peers;

by the order had changed after two decades as –

Media, Society, Peers, Family, School.

The former pattern of influence reveals a traditional phenomenon of influence, natural and logical since "family" has been the place where children are brought up with daily care by their parents; and "school" has been the next place where children are sent for compulsory education. As such, "family" and "school" are the factors with the most significant influence on the younger generations. The new pattern of influence shows a contemporary phenomenon of influence because of the social, cultural and especially technological development. The factors of "family" and "school" have moved to the last two, with "school" as the least significant factor. Meanwhile "media, society, peers" have shifted to the first, second and third respectively, with "media" as the most significant factor of influence. It is understandable that "society" and "peers" are the growing factors influencing the younger generations because of the more and more frequent social

interactions. Nevertheless, it is hard for educators to take as a trend that "school" becomes the last in the influence pattern.

1.2 Investigation on the trend

The pattern of influence in Changsha, Hunan Province is similar, from our experiences and observations: while the influence of "school" is decreasing in significance, the influence of "teacher" on students is going downwards. With these phenomena as backgrounds, our experiential and empirical study focuses on this issue of declining teacher influence, and on exploring some methods of increasing teacher influence. This is from our belief that teachers are able to do something to strengthen their influence even if it is not feasible to make a turnaround.

With regard to students' new learning needs and modes, we note that they rely more and more on new channels of getting information/knowledge through the internet, especially since the mergence of telecommunications, broadcast television and internet known as "the three nets" since 2010. As they expand channels outside the classroom, they tend to depend less and less on their teachers for learning. This has been a crucial aspect in students' new learning modes. Their learning needs have been changing, too: they need more opportunities of presenting themselves; more provisions of information communication technology (ICT) facilities from the school; and more involvement in activities inside and outside of the classroom/campus.

Because of such changes, students are not taking the classrooms and textbooks as the only channel of learning, nor will they regard their teachers as the sole resource for knowledge. The dark side is that they may have a misconception that information drawn from other channels like the Internet is knowledge, which results in a tendency of shallow learning, thus losing respect to their teachers who are not the sole authority any longer.

1.3 The study on new professional qualities

Our study takes a two-pronged approach by examining students' new learning needs and modes, and by identifying teachers' new professional qualities. Two methods are implemented in this study: 1) in Phase 1, a survey of 100 graduates of Hunan No.1 Normal College who have been working for more than 2 years, on the abilities which they realize that they need in their professions; and 2) in Phase 2, a series of interviews with a dozen of faculty members who share with us their concern on teachers' declining influence, in Changsha Normal College on humanistic qualities which teachers should possess so as to effectively influence their students. The quantitative results of the survey, with 70 responses out of 100, are shown in Figure 3. The qualitative results of the interviews are reflected in Discussion (Part III) of this paper. The two key questions for the interviews are as follows –

1. What do you think are the key areas in humanities which would strengthen teachers' influence on students? You may consider areas outside the domains we put forward: "humanistic care, language, philosophy, language philosophy, literature, arts", and "culture".
2. In which areas of student qualities/abilities may teachers augment their power of influence? The examples provided are to cater for your thinking: "determination, teacher guidance on deep learning, time on task instruction, psychological maturity", etc.

"Quality teacher" is on the top of our concern in relation with the factor of teacher influence in our investigation. Because the students' learning needs and modes are changing, teachers are facing a situation where their authoritative image is challenged in the implementation of the syllabi through their classroom instructions. A common response from the school leadership is an encouragement of teachers to change their role as "teacher" in a traditional sense to "facilitator"; and to improve on their pedagogical skills like organizing more group activities for student participation. We note that these efforts from school administration are helpful but inadequate. Among the components of teacher qualities, we have found that *humanistic elements* are what the teachers lack, without which a general call on changing teachers' role or usual efforts of improving pedagogies would be ineffective.

1.4 The key components of teachers' humanistic qualities

As the results of our investigation, we have found out the key problems in the change of students' learning needs and modes –

- Shallow learning instead of deep learning
- Lacking of connectedness
- Emotional immaturity, and weakness in emotional intelligence

Addressing the issue of decreasing teacher influence, this paper illustrates the enhanced teacher qualities, and highlights relevant humanistic perspectives which are imperative for teachers to possess so as to turn around the trend of declining influence on students.

## II. Perspectives of the Humanistic Studies

There are ample thoughts in the literature of students' learning and teachers' instructions, with pertinent ideas of dealing with students' problems in learning, and of helping teachers with their challenging situations.

2.1 Transforming shallow learning to deep learning

Addressing the consequences of new learning modes, researchers' (e.g., Marshall, 2006; & Mullen, 2007) latest theories describe in specific terms the kind of persons learners will turn to. According to Marshall (2006), shallow learning (浅层次学习) "often results in risk-averse, uncurious, and emotionally disengaged learners who believe either that they are inadequate or that they understand far more than they really do. In either case, they emerge ill equipped to respond to the intricate, ethically complex, and very messy problems we face that defy simplistic categorization, linear analysis, and rapid resolution" (p. 40).

In "Nurturing Integral Habits of Mind", Marshall advocates a transformation from "shallow learning" to "deep learning" (深层次学习). Shallow learning "validates only one way of knowing", while deep learning "is holistic and inclusive: it recognizes that we are living in a both-and universe, not an either-or one. It is often through the integration of polarities and seemingly disparate ways of knowing that genuine understanding and wisdom can be created" (p. 45). Teachers may help the students to actively and reflectively engage bigger ideas, more questions than what they are interested in the contents they are learning or retrieving from elsewhere, thus making deep learning transform the students into open-minded rather than overly confident learners.

2.2 The deep learning theory

The deep learning theory inspires educators to harness more effective ways of influencing students. In so doing, they turn the situation of "declining influence" on students by guiding students in identifying the chasm between their learning modes.

Marshall (2006) in "A New Learning Landscape" points out that "[C]urriculum is not textbook driven. Textbooks are just one resource. Students have more alternatives, mostly Internet access and can retrieve information and generate knowledge from multiple sources" (p. 70). Likewise, Mullen (2007) states that information literacy is included in the curriculum and taught to all students; and that students learn how to use traditional sources and alternative sources like Internet, for both basic and critical purposes. Further, Mullen emphasizes an equal access to technology among students, and an essence of genuine learning: students learn how to encode and decode messages, and make judgments about the worth and validity of the information they receive or retrieve. In an increasingly media-dominated culture, it is imperative for all students to possess information literacy and to have equal access to technology (pp. 70-71).

2.3 Time-on-task studies

Besides the issue of shallow learning, another aspect of learning behavior is worth noting, that is, "time on task". Researchers (e.g., Hallahan; Marshall; & Lloyd, 1981) have addressed a close correlation between the time/efforts on the subjects being learned and the performance. The amount of engaged time a student spends on a particular task in a subject has a direct effect on the student achievement in that subject.

Hallahan *et al.*(1981) investigates the effects of self-monitoring on attention to task in class (p. 407), where self-monitoring refer to self-assessment (individual's judgment as to whether or not the learning has occurred) and self-recording (individual's physical recording of the occurrence), and find positive behavioral changes can be maintained during a period of time after the students are taught to self-monitor their on-task behavior while participating in group activities. This concept of time-on-task, and the practice of self-monitoring are closely related to deep learning for substantial increase in achievements because students are required to be actively involved in the teaching-learning processes throughout the instructional period.

2.4 Emotional maturity

Emotional maturity (EM, 情感成熟) has been an important domain of researches because it is an aspect of a person's ability to have a successful professional life. Emotionally mature people, as Goleman (2001) puts it, are oriented toward self-improvement instead of denying their weaknesses or fantasizing success. The behavioral indicators of such maturity include –

    1) more stable emotions, not prone to extreme mood swings or outbursts of anger;
    2) less self-centered, more caring about other people;
    3) practicing self-control, less impulsive, able to resist hedonistic temptations; and
    4) less defensive but receptive to criticism, and willing to learn from mistakes.

According to Yukl (2006), emotional maturity in work places is highly associated with managerial effectiveness and advancement. When these people become leaders, when they are at a high level of moral development, they tend to build and maintain healthy personal and working relationships with their subordinates, peers and superiors.

2.5 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI, 情感智能) is a further domain of researches in emotional maturity. It is an ability of understanding one's emotions and moods, how they affect one's performance and interrelations with others. While intelligence is the ability to reason and to identify the rationale of one's action, EI, interrelated with intelligence, helps sensing the consequences of one's actions.In comparison with emotional maturity which is the status of one's mental health in terms of personality, EI is the sensible applications of maturity in one's social and professional life. The significant impact of possessing EI is seen in Robbins (2005) –

    • EI is a high degree of self-awareness and requires effective communication skills to accurately express one's feelings with the correct language and body language.
    • EI is positively related to job performance at all levels, and especially relevant at a higher degree of social and professional interactions.

The ability to manage one's emotions increases the person's influencing power because emotions are functional and adaptive. This reveals a new understanding of the nature of emotions against a traditional perception of emotions as an indicator of one's immaturity. Some researchers (e.g., Gosling& Gosling, 2004) put forward a suggestion of managing emotions for personal growth and leadership development; and of making emotions a high order of intelligence. Psychologists and Goleman (2001) have found about what makes a leader—effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: they all have a high degree of emotional intelligence. Hence EI has been recognized since the middle 1990s as an essential element in effective leadership in organizations. Those of high EI demonstrate –
    • *Self-awareness:* showing confidence, realistic self-assessment, and a sense of humor;
    • *Self-management:* possessing integrity, openness, and comfort with ambiguity;
    • *Self-motivation:* presenting optimism, and a strong drive to achieve; and
    • *Social skills:* exhibiting diplomacy, and persuasiveness (Robbins, 2005).
     Both EM and EI can be learned and trained. Since these two components are integral parts of schooling for students' growth, rationally, they should be included in school-based training programs. The designs and benefits of such programs will be described in Discussion (Part III).

2.6 Humanistic studies

Humanistic psychology studies human beings with a psychological perspective which is focused on individuals' potential, and stresses the importance of growth and self-actualization. It takes a holistic approach to viewing human beings as "capable of fashioning their personalities and lives with deliberation and insight" (Zanden, 2007, p. 44). Hence it has been a dimension of psychology in examining how people control and determine their state of mental health. These ideas are reflected in Rogers' term of "actualizing tendency", and in Maslow's study of self-actualization (see Wikipedia, May 18, 2013). There are six core principles in humanistic psychology, specified by Bugental and Greening, of human beings who –

1. supersede the sum of their parts;
2. have their existence in a uniquely human context;
3. are aware of oneself in the context of other people;
4. have some choice and, with that, responsibility;
5. are intentional, aim at goals, which cause future events; and
6. seek meaning, value, and creativity.

Synthesizing the main characters of, and the above principles in, the humanistic perspective, we arrive at the key features of humanistic psychology as 1) putting human consciousness at the center in their examination; 2) looking into environmental influences on people's experiences, and on the formation of their personalities; and 3) they favor student-centered education. Similarly, in the Chinese classics like *Confucius Analects* (*Lun Yu*《论语》), in the Passage of *Yang Huo* (阳货), which states that people's personalities are similar but different, while their habits are far unlike from each other's (性相近, 习相远, in Xu 1991, p. 217). Also in *Mencius* (*Meng Zi*《孟子》), in the Passage of *Gao Zi Shang* (告子上), which argues that humans are kind like water preferring to present a low profile (人性之善, 犹水之处下, in Xu 1991, p. 439).

As advocated by humanistic psychology with regard to student-centered education, humanists believe that students should play an active role in their learning; and they perceive teachers as facilitators, and as flexible resources to be used by students, providing a wide range of learning materials (Zanden, 2007, pp. 45-46). In the exploration of teachers' effective influence on students, we have identified six areas of humanities in teacher qualities –

• Humanistic care,
• Teacher initiative,
• Aspiring determination,
• Guidance on deep learning,
• Emotional maturity, emotional intelligence, and
• Purpose and quality of life.

## III. Discussion

With the identification of areas to strengthen in students' qualities as the results of our survey, and of the domains to enhance in teachers' professional qualities as the results of the interviews, we are advocating a humanistic approach derived from the literature to subduing the trend of teachers' declining influence.

3.1 Humanistic care

Humanistic care (人文关怀) turns out as an noticeable element in quality teachers which we focus in examining the issue of teacher influence. We share humanistic understanding of human beings' consciousness in the context of other people, and of intentional efforts on seeking for meanings of life. Taking a Chinese philosophical perspective in both Confucianism and Taoism, we perceive people possessing such inner derives as 1) upward mobility of status;2) betterment of life, and 3) perfection in kindness (向上,向好,向善 see Table 1). We encourage our interviewees to reflect on what they had been

doing in the three aspects, and to consider what they would do to improve their instructions for students to maintain these inner drives.

Table 1. People's inner drives and teachers' endeavors

| Aspect | Student quality | Teachers' endeavor |
|---|---|---|
| Upward mobility of status (向上) | Knowledge and intelligence (知,智) | What they have been doing<br>• _____<br>What else they need to do<br>• _____ |
| Betterment of life (向好) | Price and value (价,值) | What they have been doing<br>• _____<br>What else they need to do<br>• _____ |
| Perfection in kindness (向善) | Virtue and deeds (德,行) | What they have been doing<br>• _____<br>What else they need to do<br>• _____ |

We also support humanists' advocate of student-centered education, and hold that teachers with a more humane manner in front of their students will yield stronger influence. Throughout the process of instructions, teachers need to pay closer attention to, and to exert greater efforts in, the following three aspects: 1) sense of responsibility; 2) relationships with students; and 3) understanding of students. Table 2 below shows these aspects and the implications.

Table 2. An approach of humanistic care

| Aspect | Implication |
|---|---|
| Sense of responsibility (责任) | • Teachers mind (在意) when seeing students' low performance.<br>• Teachers feel that they are responsive (在乎) if students are not doing well in their classes. |
| Relationships with students (关系) | • Teachers express concern (关注) and they start to build rapport with their students.<br>• Teachers show care (关怀) about each of their students and engage them in emotions. |
| Understanding of students (了解) | • Teachers look into the expectations (期望) held by their students.<br>• Teachers learn to know the prospects (预期) of success presumed by the students. |

The key components in students' quality, as specified in Table 1, are intelligence, values and virtues. In the efforts for students to possess them, teachers' abilities of carrying out their responsibility surface as crucial. As Pantić and Wubbles (2010) point out, that teachers' competence is embodied in their beliefs and values, hence they must take an exemplary leadership in cultivating students' values; and that the features of teaching in the 21st century show that accountability increases. This is the primal area of augmenting teachers' power of influence.

3.2 Teacher initiative

Teacher initiative is normally based in the implementation of the curriculum which is the key domain teachers exercise their influence on students. Pedagogically, Ubben (2007) presents a set of learning objectives included in each subject: Basic skills, common learning, exploratory areas, and specialization.

Figure 1. A typical American curriculum model
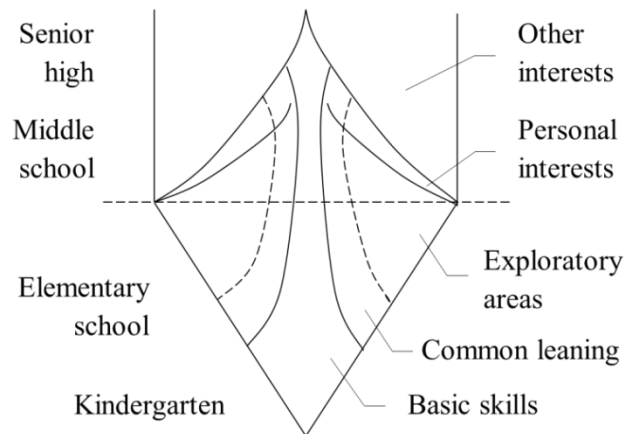


Source: Adapted from Ubben (2007).

Figure 1 illustrates the typical curriculum model with the set of learning objectives. "Basic skills" and "common learning" are two components to be reflected in the teachers' design of lesson plans. They are traditional and normal practices in discipline-based learning. "Exploratory areas" is the component teachers identify to be included in subjects and co-curricular activities, to encourage their students to further explore and expand their horizons. This helps connecting what they learn in class with what is happening in the real world (p. 168).

The setting of the objectives and the delivery in instructions reveal the essence of student-centered education. Also such a pedagogy overcomes the traditional teacher-centered education where teachers teach the textbooks instead of the students. This pedagogy requires more inputs in lesson preparation: 1) they understand their students better and individually; and 2) they help inspiring "personal interests" in certain students, and identifying exploratory/other areas for some other students, with specific and intentional question for the students. We find this model useful for teachers at all levels, from junior, growing to senior ones. Professor Dennis Shirley from Boston College conducted a seminar at the National Institute of Education, Singapore on September 2, 2010, and pointed out that students and their increasingly youthful teachers have the edge on electronic communication, and encouraged teachers to transform their schools from learning-impoverished to learning-enriched environment. Such ideas emphasize that although new teachers have a long way to go in mastering teaching techniques, they have an advantage in using the computers helpful in working closely with their students in exploring what areas they can learn beyond the units of the subjects. School management should encourage these teachers to take initiative in their instructions.

Parallel to Ubben's curriculum model with the learning objectives, the Chinese classic philosophy of education found in *The Book of Rites* (*Li Ji*《礼记》) that advocates a pedagogy conducive for students' learning. A passage of "The Essay on Learning" (*XueJi*《学记》in Liu 2006, p. 280), the earliest document on education in the history of China reads –
- Guiding without forcing (道而弗牵)
  This way encourages learners' active participation, helps to build a harmonious relationship (和) between the teacher and the learners, and overcomes learners' possible passiveness.
- Being forthright instead of coercive (强而弗抑)
  This way suggests the teacher's engaging manner, with affirmation in correcting misconceptions

from some learners, to avoid possible resistance (易).
- Inspiring rather than talking all the while (开而弗达)
This way requires the teacher to be precise and concise in explaining the key concepts during the period of lesson, leaving some time for the learners to conceive (思).

There have been lessons when teachers or the older generations are too forcible or coercive.
In *The Book of Poems* (*Shi Jing*《诗经 •国风》), there is a poem in the Volume of *Beifeng* entitled *Baizhou* (邶风, 柏舟 in Ma 2006, p. 42), which reads –

> "My heart is not a mirror,
> To take whatever in front." (我心非鉴, 不可以茹)

The background of the poem was that a girl, after her mother forced her to learn what her mother felt a must, she got aboard a cypress boat to roam about in a river, thinking loudly that a mirror would take in (reflect) anything in front of it with no choice, but her heart would not be like that. The thinking implied that she had her own interest in what to learn. The moral of this story is aligned with the spirit of humanistic education that learners should take an active part in deciding what they should learn, and that teachers' role is shifted from "teacher" to "facilitator" with a respect to the learners' inclinations. Teacher initiative is reflected in this shift, as aforementioned in Zanden (2007) in Section 2.6.Taking the role of facilitator, teachers explore what their students need to learn; understand what they want to learn; and recommend what they should learn.

3.3 Aspiring students' determination
Aspiring students' determination (立志) is another area teachers may exercise their influence. From the humanistic psychological view, people have the inner drive for self-actualization. The drive stems from a determination which comprises a search for the direction to advance to, a will of achievements in the advancement, and the courage to realize the will. In the passage of "The Philosophy of Learning" in *The Book of Rites*, a managerial statement reads that the administrators of educational institutions must ensure that all the preparation is done well before the admission of learners (官先事); and that learners must determine a clear direction of achievements prior to the start of their learning journey (士先志). The first task for the teachers is to check on the learners' setting of determinations, and to aspire those who have not made up their minds yet.

Equally important is the timing of determination setting, which is related to the age cohorts. There is a close correlation between the quality of determination, i.e., the feasibility of it, and the age cohort. In the Confucian teachings, the determination that counts appears at the age of fifteen. Confucius himself reflected that his determination of quality was made when he reached fifteen ("吾十有五而志于学"), in the Passage of *Wei Zheng* (为政), *Confucius Analects*《论语》). This is supported by Rutter and Rutter (1992) who, when describing the developmental changes in the understanding of problems involving abstract mappings, trace the raise of cognitive abilities of children at the age of fifteen (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Developmental stages of understanding abstract ideas
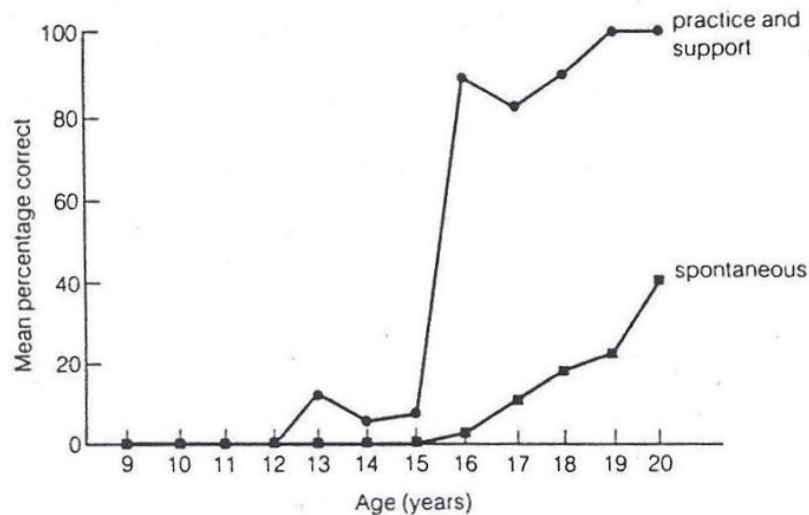
Source: Rutter & Rutter (1992).

As depicted in the above figure, with a guidance of teachers who experimented an innovative instruction involving support and practice, students in the experimental group showed a pick-up of their cognitive ability in understanding abstract concepts at the age of 12; and after a period of consolidation, such ability hiked up at the age of 15. In comparison, the students in the control group following traditional methods of instructions, demonstrated a pick-up three years later, at the age of 15, than those in the experimental group; and reached a much limited height at the age of 20 in comparison with that of the other group. Such a graphic description says loudly of teachers' function in aspiring students' determination at the crucial timing.

3.4 Guidance on deep learning
In this information age, with more channels to draw information and knowledge, some students may appear confident overtly while feeling confused covertly in class. This is one of the characteristics of shallow learning (the others are mentioned in Section 2.1).Teachers' ability of providing timely guidance with individualized attention is a must. Neglecting, or inadequate guidance, may result in students' poorer academic performance.

The key function of teacher guidance on deep learning is the sense of connectedness in students' learning. Providing a context of connections allows the students to establish their physical, cognitive, and spiritual intimacy and resonance with the natural world and one another (Marshall, 2006). The outcomes of such learning include students' abilities to make use of exploration, to grasp the nature of connectedness, and to differentiate the power between the two variables in each of the six pairs below:

- Intellect and information,
- Imagination and observation,
- Algorithmic and aesthetic,
- Rationality in subjective/experiential truth and objective truth,
- Independence and interdependence in relationships, and
- Wonder and skepticism (adapted from Marshall, 2006).

Guiding students in deep learning to reach the above cognitive ability entails teachers to do more homework in their lesson plans, more frequent exchange of the understanding of their students among the teachers teaching the same classes. There is a platform in the administrative structure in schools in China, i.e., the teaching-research groups (TRG).Teachers meet regularly in the TRG, to collaboratively undertake inquiries, and to study student learning problems. This is like professional learning communities (PLC), elaborated by Taylor in Khine (2009), Chapter 3. The Role of Teacher Leadership in Improving Student Learning Outcomes in Schools: "[O]ne of the most important sources of learning is internal to the school, the

teachers". "Teachers learn from sharing instructional problems and successes with colleagues..." They need support from the school principal who is willing to "support teacher decisions developed through collaborative teams, collective inquiry, and experimentation with innovations anticipated to resolve student learning problems" (pp. 43-46).

As our areas of concern are on the issues of students' shallow learning, and of the declining teacher influence, we would suggest a strong school leadership support in the TGR and PLC activities to inquire on effective guidance.

3.5 Persistence on time-on-task

As aforementioned in Section 2.3 regarding the concept of time-on-task, the amount of time spent on study has direct effects on the achievement. This is testified by the experiences of our own respective learning journeys.
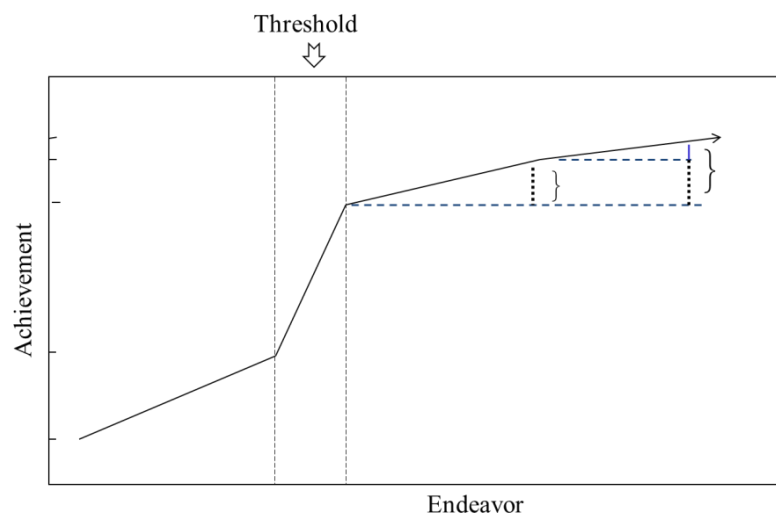
Figure 3. Endeavors, achievements, and the threshold



Figure 3 traces the endeavors we made and achievements we reached in our learning journeys. We note that there existed a threshold in the endeavors and achievements, at which the performance took a remarkable pickup; and that beyond the threshold the increase of performance became gradual and marginal towards the extremity even though the endeavors doubled. Interestingly, we learn that one's competitive edge lies in the marginal difference of achievements compared with others, and that the competitiveness lie in the amount of efforts spent on the study. We have also drawn reflections of the following –

- Threshold varies from subject to subject, and from student to student.
- Threshold can be shifted.
- Extremity can be extended.

We believe that teachers' persistent efforts on spending sufficient engaged time with their students will be an effective way of increasing their power of influence. During the contact time in class, rather than asking students to study hard, as teachers usually do, they may help the students to identify their thresholds in various subjects, and to explore possibilities of extending the extremities of their endeavors, namely, their potential. Both the students and their parents would be very happy to see teachers practicing this on the students' learning.

We observe two phenomena in students' learning, one being the learning habit of doubling efforts prior to examinations, and the other being the learning rates which vary from student to student. With regard to the first phenomenon, our interviewees share with us that endeavors should be made steadily in daily

experiences, not before examinations only. In his words to the principal of a school he supported to establish in the 1920's, General Feng Yuxiang (冯玉祥) wrote: "Do not wait till you are thirsty and then dig a well" (别临渴掘井, in Yin 2011).

About teaching students who have various learning rates, some teachers tend to play favoritism, like spending more time on those of higher learning rates. This reveals a pitfall in China's educational system – categorizing students by labeling them as "horses" and "cows". In his key-note speech at a principals forum held in Kaifeng in 2009, Wang Jinzhan, a Vice Principal from Beijing, criticized such a race between a horse and a cow. While recognizing the speed of the horse, educators failed to acknowledge the power of the cow(see "Report on the Principals Forum", November 15, 2009). This surfaces the necessity of teachers' overcoming the stereotype of regarding students with low learning rates as cows who will fail for sure in the competitive system, and of teachers' exercising differentiated instructions by implementing the concept of time-on-task, to encourage these students to identify their threshold and explore their extremities.

3.6 Training of emotional maturity and intelligence
Emotional immaturity (情感不成熟) existing in many students has been a concern of teachers. In the literature in Part II of this paper, we note that emotional maturity helps one to advance faster in his or her professional life (see Yukl, 2006), and that emotions are functional and adaptable (see Gosling& Gosling, 2004). Our survey with graduates in their professional life shows that "psychological maturity" is the weakest area, among others (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Areas of ability most needed at work
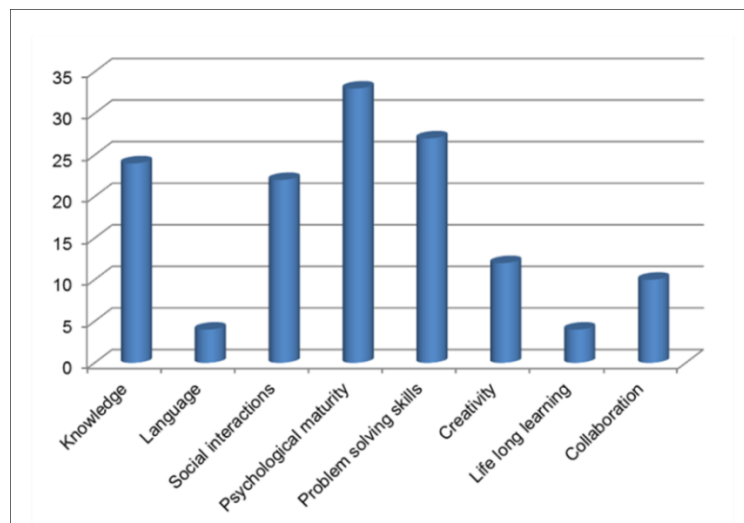


Source: Ma, Q. M. (2011, scale: 70).

Those responding to the survey express that students in the professional training throughout their college experiences need to have more training on "psychological maturity" in the areas of dealing with stress at work and maintaining positive personal and working relationships with their colleagues, subordinates, and superiors. Our suggestion is for teachers to learn the knowledge in this area and the training skills, to participate in activities aiming at strengthening students' weak areas. More specifically, we suggest to embrace emotional intelligence (EI, see Section 2.5, Goleman 2001, & Robbins 2005) in trainings. The skills students should learn include –
*Self-regulation:* Students learn to have the ability to channel their emotions into behavior that is appropriate for the situation, rather than responding with impulsive behavior. Such regulation facilitates emotional stability and information processing. It helps the students maintain their own optimism and enthusiasm when

faced with obstacles or setbacks. Teachers may guide them to draw cases from their experiences, like withdrawing into a state of depression after experiencing disappointment.

*Influencing:* Students learn how emotions help them convey messages to others, and learn to know that emotionally intelligent people have more insight about the right type of rational or emotional appeal; and that moods, when poorly managed, can affect others promptly and negatively.

In doing so, teachers need to be aware that EI training takes a form that is different from knowledge/skill-oriented classroom setting. EI and cognitive intelligence have different types of psychological processes, but they are interrelated. Once emotions are cognitively managed, they can facilitate cognitive processes as well. Possessing EI requires intensive individual coaching in group activities. It needs teachers/trainers to stimulate in the trainees a strong desire for significant personal development, and to provide situations, exposure, timely relevant feedback, and reinforcement on students' progress.

3.7 Heightening the conscience level of purpose and quality of life
Accompanying the training of EI is the sense of purpose and quality of life which teachers should help the students with. A good case of John Pepper, former Chairman of the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, of the Procter & Gamble Company is introduced in our study.

Figure 5. Pepper's personal growth
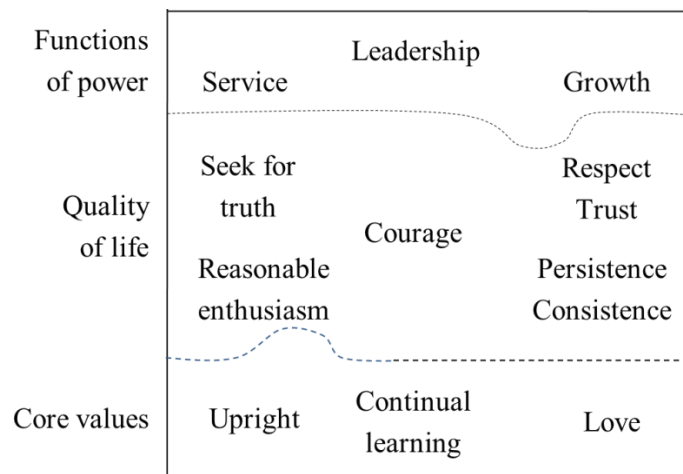


Source: Adapted from Pepper (2007).

We find that "core values" and "quality of life" are the key dimensions in one's considering the purpose of life. These are the essential components of humanistic education. Teachers will definitely increase their power of influence when they are able to raise the conscience level of the purpose of life in their students.

## IV. Conclusion

In the examination of the issue of declining teacher influence on students, and the investigation on possible approaches to enhancing teachers' influence, our empirical study results in findings on the areas the students had to strengthen for a successful professional life. The area needed the most is identified to be psychological maturity. In response, our research has identified a humanistic psychological approach to be effective to augment teachers' influence. The main findings include teachers' humanistic care, aspiring students' determination, guiding on deep learning, and raising the conscience level of purpose and quality of life.

The limitations mostly lie in the scope of the study which is in two institutions and in the scale of survey and interviews. A wider scope and larger scale may be helpful to reach a more objective perspective. We intend to follow up for a further study, and suggest researchers of similar interests to examine other humanistic areas in teacher quality such as language, philosophy, and philosophy of language, for meeting students' new learning needs.

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