

System and Effects: Breakthrough the Bottlenecks of Educational Reform in China

Li Wei

Central University of Finance and Economics

The education system in China is typically government controlled, or an administration-monopolized type of system. Instructed by such an education system and the educational philosophy behind this system, China's education presents two major effects in recent years. Primarily, the distributions of China's limited educational resources are imbalanced and not equally allocated. In addition, large amounts of Chinese higher education graduates failed to gain employment, suggesting that graduation means to be unemployed, which causes relative social and ideological issues. Therefore, a concensus has formed across various groups of the Chinese society that there is an emergency need for reforms of China's education system and the philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Within the thirty years' of reform and opening-up, China's economic sector benefits most from breaking restrictions. By introducing liberalization, marketization, privatization reform into China's economic systems, it stimulates and releases inside potentials of all types for the Chinese economy to unite: state-owned, collaborative, and private-hold, although conflicts are remaining, for instance shortage of innovation, shortage of commercial creditability and market order.

Opposite to China's in-depth economic system reform, the education system reform presents reversed effect. It has been submerged into the traditional government autocratic culture and the administrative monopoly from the old planning economic system, and seriously excludes market, private investments and internationalization outside of the sector. Students trained to study like machines. These issues are pressing the open and reform China's education system, and passions of faculties on academic creation and innovation. Indeed, slowly developed education has become the obstacle and bar for China's further economic transformation. Therefore, the whole society blames the serious problem inside China's education system that has been lacking good education effects.

The current situation requests China's education system to reform turning to the direction of truly meaningful, in-depth open and transformation activities, but not external changes, changes on some details, or perfunctory moves. Apparently, this transformation, which will bring enormous interest into the education system reform, will evoke people's potential capabilities of creation and innovation. It is much more meaningful than motivation and indemnification for China's further economic transformation and promotion, thus represents Chinese peoples' expectation of humanity revolution and demands to increase their culture cultivation.

This article tends to share the opinions on process of China's education system reform, which bears great responsibility of China's future. However, by reviewing the current situation, it is clear that China's

education system has become the hindrance to restrict further development of China's education. This report regards traditionally autocratic education philosophy, and vested privileged interest group structure is solid and fundamental issues to drag the education reform back. However, reform on autocratic education systems has become a global tendency. In China's great long history there are successful reforms can be discovered. In addition, the country's leadership has been aware of the need of education system reform. Thus, China's education system reform and the promotion of China's existing education faith should irrevocable but not be distortion. However, crucial breakings of China's education system reform highly depend on the success of China's political restructure, namely the reform of the leadership system of government and China's Community Party. Hence, it is foreseeable that China's education system reform has a long and rough journey ahead. In the following, it will discuss the major conflicts and issues during the reform progress, and discover practical solutions.

CHINA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM AND EDUCATION EFFECTS

China's Education System

Education system refers to institutional system and organizational system regarding to a nation's education section, conducted and executed by the national government, and determined by certain political environments, economic development level and cultural factors. In other words, it is the nation's commitment to the education objects, education administration and education activities. Therefore, the education system is the result of comprehensive actions by factors of a nation's political system, economic system, and cultural system, in certain historical period.

China is a historical glorious country, and the influences of feudal autocracy profoundly accumulated in many aspects of Chinese society, for instance political, economy and culture, which seriously affect the development and regulations of China's modern educational system. In other words, the national government presents straight and centralized control, and administration on each individual section and path of the country's education. In China, the government controls education system, which is not a social autonomy type, and the substance, is autarchy.

By reviewing the development process of China's education system since the establishment of Peoples Republic of China, Mr. Yuan Xucheng (2009), educator, the Head of "China Reform" Journal, recapitulates it as "administrative, monopolized, and formalized". Primarily, the government is usually the principle part of education actives and investments. The administration and control degree on local private enterprises and foreign investment is relatively high. It has been clearly stated by China's "Regulation on The Running of Educational Institutions with Social Resources" that "Chinese government strictly controls the higher educational institutions running by non-government resources."

In addition, the national government is the principle of education administration. The three tiers of China's education administration are nation, province and county. The minister of China's National Education Ministry is appointed by the Organization Department of the China Party Centre Central Committee. Countrywide principals and enrolled teachers are reserved civil servants paid by the local government. Basically, the national Education Ministry directly manages each aspect and tier of national education, which covers the education planning, human resources management, outlay and teaching activities(for example textbook, curriculum, and methods) in education institutes from colleges to primary schools, and geographically. However, it is ironically, the public summed up the object of China's education in one sentence: all for the National College Entry Examination.

China's Education Effect

Imbalance of Educational Resources

In China's education system, the social educational resources supply presents generally imbalance, whether in colleges, middle schools or pre-k tiers. Reputable schools are directly related to two groups of students: whose parents hold privileges, and who have outstanding academic performances. Survey China's large and small cities, indubitably, better education resources closely related to higher-level authoritative institutions and social groups. Since 1990s, fewer and fewer top national universities have

accepted students from rural areas, and its ratio to total students dropped from around 30% to approximately 10%, it became even less in recent years (Weng Heng, 2011).

Education Lacks of Practical Purpose

Lacking of practical purpose is an unique character of China's higher education institutes. Han Xue and Jiang Weiwu (2009) state the colleges in China have formed strict ranking system. They point out that the competitions in higher education all concerns disputing on front-end outlay, tract, teaching faculties, and students, thus cause ignorance on true object of education and frequent academic corruption. Curriculums designed far from actual social demand, and graduates even failed during internship.

Only 10% of Chinese graduates with bachelor degree in engineering are qualified for multinational companies in China. Mr. John Deere, the Chief Executive of China Office of the world's largest agricultural machinery producer shares the same opinion unreservedly that Chinese engineers are short of capabilities of decision-making, communication, practicing and English expression during their work.

Xu Jing'an refers the investigation made by world leading global administration consulting company, Mckinsey& Company regarding conflicts between the human resource demands of foreign companies in China and the local supply. In five years, there are 280 thousand foreign companies with the need of 750 thousand college graduates annually. However, million of Chinese graduates (including Master and Doctoral graduates) become unemployed for unqualified. Eighty-nine multinational companies in 3 years would need 75 thousand senior managers every year, but local labor market is just able to provide 3 to 5 thousands qualified candidates. The need on software talents in China is 500 thousand a year, but the total amount of qualified employee provided by Chinese colleges is only 200 thousand (Xu Jing'an, 2009).

The education system determines that China can only take the role of world factory in global economy development, but the world's research and development center. Furthermore, these conflicts mentioned above hardly support the expansion of China's education. Overseas education are widely accepted by Chinese parents (including households depends on salaries), who are eager to send their children to receive high school and college education in developed countries, such as the UK and the U.S. Oppositely, the debt level of each Chinese college is significant. Among them, Jilin University ranks as the top with 3 billion RMB debts. According to the Education Ministry's assessment, Chinese colleges' total amount of bank debts is around 20 to 25 billion RMB, but professionals believe it having reached 40-50 billion RMB (Chen Hanci, 2010).

CHINA EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND SYSTEM REFORM

Program of China Educational Planning

In last three decades of China's economic system restructuring, there are two hallmark events during the educational reform. One is the enrollment expansion in higher education section since the end of 1990s. The other is the issuing "National Long and Middle Term Education Reform and Development Planning Program (2010-2020)" Since 1999, the expansion of enrollment in higher education, the total annual enrollment amount approximates 30 million from 7 million students. The scale of China's higher education has exceeded that of the USA's around year 2005, and became the largest one in the world. Yue Yinyin (2009) states that the total annual enrollment rate of China's colleges has reached 24.2% from less than 10%, and has stepped in to the ordinary level recognized by international. According to China's education planning, the total annual enrollment shall reach 40% by the year of 2020. While the higher education experiencing rapid scale expansion, conflicts of education quality decline and unemployment raised as well.

Due to the promote the further development in education area, July 2010, China's Educaiton Ministry issued the first middle and long term education planning program "National Long and Middle Term Education Reform and Development Planning Program (2010-2020)". According to actual issues, it claims the working guideline that states education must be "developed in advance, people oriented, innovated, fairness and justices and high quality." Educational professionals criticized specifically on its essentials, especially content regarding educational system and philosophy reform, although it is highly

recognized by the Chinese government.

Yang Ziyun and Du Ke (2009) argue that it is hardly to recognize the fundamental value, principles and criteria of the “Planning Program”. They criticize it failed to discover crises, and regarded it reflected conservative, narrow, and complacent of technocracy. Other professionals warned this so called ‘Democratic Centralism’, in which the democracy represents soliciting social opinions and collective indicates the administrative authority of governmental education departments, would hardly truly present social views and demands.

Professor Li Baoyuan (2009), the Director of Human Development and Research Center of Beijing Normal University indicates “I have noticed that this Bulletin listed 36 issues, which covered all the respects of China’s education, but education system reform (ranked 26) listed as one of the less important issues submerged among the others. Therefore, this detail serious reflected the actual situation of education system reform to authorities who drafted and edited this plan.

Ding Dong, researcher of Chinese Academic of Social Science indicates that the greatest objection of this “Planning Program” is the ignorance of citizen education, which affects the ultimate target of education. The ultimate target must not be cultivate successors or social constructors, but to educate qualified citizens. Professor Cai Dingjian (2009) from China University of Political Science and Law emphasizes during the process of education reform, has not set the college self-rule as a target of reformation, which is disappointed. From the angel of constitution and politics construction, the system of college self-rule will deeply influent a nation’s, degree of liberty, democracy and legal system.

Opinions to Education System Reform

China must carry out a truly meaningful reform on education system. Educational professionals has reached consensus on the content of a truly meaningful education system reform, and widely accepted by the public. Generally, it contains following points:

The General Target of China Education System Reform

The general target of China’s education system reform shall shift to the establishment of social autonomy model or unrestricted education system, from current national administration monopoly mode, or in other words, government controlled mode. Head of China Reform Journal, Mr. Yuan Xucheng (2009) pointed it out straightly and sharply that the target of China’s education reform is utterly specific “

The Administration Framework of China's Education System Reform

Advice regarding to the administration of education system reform focus on the shift of government’s functions, from managerial to serving oriented. Government shall give more authority to local education administration institutes and establish competitive system of education object. professor Yang Dongping from Beijing Institute of Technology, College of Arts, is reputable educator and cultural scholar, the headmaster of 21 Century Education Research Institute, his opinions represent the general understanding of publics: first of all, to establish the service oriented government and innovational education managerial structure. The major task of country is supposed to serve the education but not control, thus authority to local and schools are the primary principle and common tendency for countries around the world. Secondly, it means tremendously for Chinese education system reform, authorizing to local government and educational institutes. Moreover, China’s higher education has suffered from existed conflicts for long time. It has become urgent to build a competitive system inside the higher education tie.

The Principals of Education Investment

Professor Yang Dongping (2009) stressed the significant meaning to open the extension of education investment principal. First of all, inland it is necessary to open the education sector to private investors. The ratio of private holding education institutes in the entire education system, as for developed countries Southeastern countries and region, Korea is 80.5 per cent, Japan 71 per cent, India 59 per cent and Hong Kong is relatively low 55 per cent, but the private holding educations just occupied 13 per cent in China. Secondly, education internationalization, it stresses the importance to open education sector to foreign

education society. As the article “Ten Criticism of Education Reform” (2009) stated in China Reform that while Chinese government “blocks the path of inland private holding education institutes”, it also rejects the investment of abundant foreign capital and intelligence to China’s education. However, in fact, foreign capital and intelligent investment is valued for China’s education system development, financially and practically. For instance, the International Finance Company subsidiary to World Bank, has already provide \$4,400 USD for 11 private holding education institutes in developing countries, but not include those in China.

UNDERSTANDING OF CHINA’S EDUCATION SYSTEM REFORM

It is clearly to see from discussions above that China’s education development and reform and education system reform is suffering in bottleneck period, and maintaining the sticky situation, just similar to the nation’s political system reform and economic system reform. It is in a key period. Predictably, if China’s education system reform moves to next phase smoothly, there will be enormous space for China’s education expansion. China is going to benefit from people’s creative capability release. The most of all, it will accelerate China’s economic growth extremely.

However, if the education system reform stops its steps to move forward, as China’s political reform, China’s education will harm the benefit of public and its country. In additional, it will cause unpredictable faith crisis and social unrests. In following content, this paper is going to briefly explain the reasons of China’s education system reform encounters, and the future directions of China’s education system reform.

The Bottleneck of China’s Education System Reform

Traditional Chinese Culture and Education Faith

Currently, caused by the inertia of China’s government belief on education, the bottleneck of China’s education system reform becomes apparent. However, China government’s faith of education roots deeply in traditional cultures. China has never experienced profoundly sustaining and social universal humanism renaissance to compare the Renaissance in Europe, and humanism culture has only short-term glory in China’s history. On the contrary, autocracy dictatorship culture under feudalization found its way to grow deeply, profoundly, and universally in China.

In China’s traditional culture, no matter the education faith or education system, the most outstanding nature of them is struggles and efforts to achieve privileges from the autocracy dictatorship. There are Chinese traditional sayings, such as: “study hard to achieve official position”, “men who uses his brain will govern, and men who use his force will be governed”, “study hard, you will find golden houses, and fair maids in books”. Traditional educators were proud to cultivate few elite who would mast the most of social force, and students aimed to achieve privileges by educations. Meanwhile, education administrators mean to define their own range of gains to master, from autocracy dictatorship, surrounding specific education activities.

Since the establishment of People’s Republic of China, the education faith and education system construction have much more beyond the old time, but the general character and essentials are close connected to the old ones. Premier Wen Jiabo (2012) mentioned by answering journalists, during the sessions of China’s National People’s Congress and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, in March 2012, that “Chinese Communist Party has carried out the open-up and reformation policies, but influence from mistakes of cultural revolution and autocracy dictatorship under feudalization culture are not eliminated yet”. These words reflect China’s government rather focus on the guidance function on education faith, but not the promotion of civilian’s cultural cultivation, and its major task is to realize and maintain government’s interests.

The guideline of China’s education is “education must serve the construction of social democracy modernization, serve its peoples, and combine with production activities and social practice, to educate social democracy constructors and successors comprehensively developed on morals, intelligence, physical quality and aesthetics”. The researcher of Chinese Academy of Social Science, Ding Dong

(2009) pointed out “but the ultimate education’s target shall not be cultivating successors or constructors, it must be to educate qualified civilian to this society”.

According to China’s education laws and regulations, colleges must implement ‘the Party Committee Instructed Principal Responsibility’ system. China’s famous education innovator, former Principal of Wuhan University, Liu Daoyu (2009) wrote in correspondingly, “the government almost monopolized all educational resources, and the force on decision making and administration to education, which seriously harms colleges’ enthusiasm of academic development and investment, and the atmosphere of academic innovation that colleges supposed to have.”

China’s most important scientist, Mr. Qian Xuesen stated in 2005 there is no single college or university in China operated by the form that focus on cultivating talents and professionals for science and technology invention and innovation, and short of characters. He showed his disappointment after that. Mr. Qian said to discuss the reasons that Chinese colleges and universities could not educate masters was total misunderstanding on China’s college education’s talents cultivate model, which shall be the answer to this question.

Privileged Vested Interest

By the education administration which follows the education faith mentioned above, the core of the pattern of education administration must serve the autarchies and privilege. From one side, the government monopolizes education resources, which brings especially tremendous interests to the governmental administration institutions. On the other side, non-governmental education resources struggle for survival while rejected.

Ding Dong (2009) explains the gradually increased administrative level inside China’s universities and colleges. The reason is the ordinary operation funds of universities and colleges are relatively low, and most of their daily expense highly depends on the project capital, and government decides the usages of these funds. Under this circumstance, naturally, administration becomes extremely important within the operation of universities. Mr. Ding indicates that the consequent of over estimated value of administrative function inside education system can be corruptions. Higher administration institutes clutch colleges’ financial inflow, which will cause the over-concentration of powers and corruptions. Public mass disclosed a scandal of corruption of a secretary of China’s Education Ministry, which triggered reflections on China’s education system.

Professor Yang Dongping (2009) investigated the financial difficulty and current situation of China’s private holding education institutes, and pointed out “if private holding education institutes do not rely on national financial support, it must obey the market rules”. He argues, however, in China, education are defined as public benefit affair, not an industry, thus bank loans are not available. It is tough for private holding schools to finance in China.

That being the case, the truly meaningful reform on China’s education system will bring two consequences to China. Firstly, it will bring non-government education institutes, educators, and students out of the corner. In additional, it is evitable to regulate current educational administrators’ power, and for sure it will harm their interests. Therefore, though the essential of education system reform are clear and important, it is impossible to be drafted in the “Planning Program”.

The Future of China Education Reform

It is necessary to clarify that the educational system reform is an irreversible historical trend, which is not going to be stopped by anyone or any organizations. For centuries, men’s understanding on the essentials of education gets deeply. The scientific miracles surprise the world, which root in American’s scientific educational faith. The consensus on humanist education across global education societies developed rapidly with the globalization of science and technology. The tendency of integration inside global education system has become an irresistible force. The core idea of this tendency is social self-determinations, the democracy of education administration and scientific planning, especially for these nation controlled education system.

Historically, China has successfully promoted the humanist education. In the early period of last

century, Chinese government of that time and its education system had accepted civilian education that imported from Western Civilization. 1913, Shanghai Qunyi Publishing House imported and translated "American Public School". In the education system of that time, civilian education was integrated and systemized. However, the moral education replaced civilian education after the establishment of Peoples Republic of China. However, since the 1990s, China's education sector has been working hard on it. Professor Yang Dongping published his work of "New Civilian Chrestomathy", and Professor Xiazhong's work of "College Humanist Chrestomathy".

In fact, the higher level of China's leadership has clear understanding on the current situation of China's education. President Hu Jintao claimed that China's education construction requires the spontaneously activities of the Party and the whole nation. The crucial of education is civilian, and it is the fundamental motivation of social reform and innovation. Justices and fair are the importance of education, and actually promote the quality of education is the core idea. Accelerate the development of China's education development in a new historical start, especially focus on the requirements of China's transformation of building a large country to a strong country, from a human labor resource rich country to a professional resource rich country. The construction of education sector should contribute to the great rebound of China and human's civilization's progress. Premier Wen Jiabao hosted the conduction of Education Program, and stressed (2012) that China needs not only economic system reform, but the political system reform, especially on the nation's leadership framework reform. Otherwise, it will be hard to maintain the current results of reform, or it may retrogress.

CONCLUSION

The importance of China's education system reform has been widely agreed, and it must happen towards the sited direction by right methods. However, the actual breaks of China's education system strongly rely on the success of China's political system reform, especially the reform of the leadership framework of China's Party of Communist and government. Therefore, the education system reform is stringent. Though the progress of China's education system reform is irreversible, it has a long and rough journey to go.

As Premier Wen Jiabao (2012) admits that, he is clearly and deeply aware of the difficulty of reform. Any reform strictly relies on peoples' disillusion, support, and enthusiasm and spirit of innovation. In a country with such a great population as China, it must proceed from its national conditions, gradually, construct the social democracy politics in proper process. It never has been easy, but it needs a push and promotion. Stagnation and retrogress are intolerable, let alone are the solution to current problems.

REFERENCES

- Chen, H.C. (2010), The Actual Debt Level of China's Colleges Approximate 500 Billion RMB-Raising Funds from Land Sale Shall Not be Followed, *First Financial Daily*, March 26.
- Chen, X. F & Shen, W. Q. (2012), Background and Condition Analysis to Construct Grea-Power National Higher Education, *Xinhua Wenzhai*, 2012 Vol. 6: 110-113.
- Han, X & Jiang, W.W. (2009). Education system must be reformed, *China Reform*, 2009(7): 5-6.
- Hu, J.T. (2010). President Hu Jintao's Speech at National Education Work Conference, www.People.com.cn
- Liu, D.Y. (2009). 10 Opinions on Higher Education Entire Adjustment, *Southern Weekend*, 2009 (12):10-11.
- Wen, J.B. (2012). "Premier Wen Answers to Chinese and Foreign Journalist on The Fifth Session of the

Eleventh National People's Congress", www.China.com.cn

Weng, H. (2011). Only 10 per cent Rural Students Enrollment in Peking University and Tsinghua University, Where Do Poor Students Go, *Southern Weekend*, Vol. 8(5):8-9.

Yang, Z. Y & Du, K. (2009). 10 Criticisms of Education Reform, *China Reform*, 2009(4):7-8.

Yang, Z.W. (2010). Review The First Decade of 21 Century: the Reform is Suffering Great Pain, *Southern People Weekly Magazine*, Vol. 1(24): 22-24.

Yuan, X. C. (2009). Strategic Thoughts of Education System Reform, *Inside References of Reform*, Vol. 2009 (17): 11-14.

Yue, Y.Y. (2009). China's Higher Education Scale Rank Top,
<http://info.edu.hc360.com/2009/09/150900186185.shtml>

Zhou, M & Ding S.C. (2012) . Internationalization Strategy of Colleges: Investigation on Framework and Path, *Xinhua Wenzhai*, Vol. 2012 (2), :113-116.