



Education system reform in China after 1978: some practical implications

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to provide an overview of education system reform in China since 1978, and its practical implications.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from literature review and interview. An overview of education system reform and its practical implications was found through data analysis.

Findings – There has been two types of education system reforms in China since 1978. The first type is school education system reform, and the second is education management system reform.

Practical implications – A point arising is how to reform the education system at the national level.

Originality/value – This is the first time the researcher has studied education system reform and its characteristics in China since 1978, and it can help people to understand education system reform in China systematically.

Keywords Education innovation, Education planning and administration, Education policy, China

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government shifted from isolationist, politics-oriented policies to open door, economics-oriented policies which aimed at changing a planned economy to a market economy. In order to keep up with the change of political and economic circumstances, The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party convened a conference on education in May 1985, at which a policy document which was called *Decision on Reform of Education System Made by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China* (hereinafter called *Decision*) was made to carry out reforms in China's education system. The essential aim of this education system reform was to promote the quality of the whole nation and produce more qualified personnel so as to realize China's socialist modernization. However, although a great number of education reforms related to the education system have been conducted, the education system established before 1980 could not match the needs of training hundreds of millions of educated and skillful workers and farmers, and tens of thousands of experts and managerial personnel with specialized knowledge in modern science and technology. It is only through education system reform that such personnel can be trained, so from 1985, the Chinese government has formally initiated education system reform, which concentrates on the reform of school education system and the reform of the educational management system.



Method

Data gathering

The formal research methods I want to mainly use are the interview and literature review in as much as, for my purposes, the document review actually belongs to the literature review. Each of these methods is discussed below.

Literature review. By reviewing literatures in both Chinese and English, this research hopes to gain evidence for answers to the following questions:

- (1) How many documents, promulgated by the national government, related to the reform of education system?
- (2) What are the key documents?
- (3) What are the contents of these documents?

In order to gain clarity on these issues, I want to review the policy documents, and other sources, including scholars' writings and dictionaries. Of course, besides the literature above, in the process of literature review, I also want to review newspapers and some statistical materials so that an overview can be obtained.

Review of policy documents. The policy documents to be reviewed here are not the documents published by the local government and by the schools; rather they are the documents promulgated by the national government since the reform of education system is a policy of the national government.

There were 43 documents promulgated before 1978, and 43 documents were published after 1978. All these documents were published either by administrative organizations (e.g. the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the State Council, the Ministry of Education) or by legislative bodies (e.g. the National People's Congress). Some contents of these documents refer to certain aspects of reform of education system, and some cover all aspects of education system reform. There are, among these documents, three promulgated by the central government in recent years. The first as I mentioned is *Decision on Reform of Education System Made by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party* in 1985, the second is *Outline of Reform and Development of Education in China* enacted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and State Council in 1993 (hereinafter called *Outline*), and the third is *Decisions on Deepening the Educational Reform and Improving Quality-oriented Education in All Way* also promulgated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1999 (hereinafter called *Reform*).

Review of other sources. A total of 80 books and 123 journal articles relevant to the period from 1978 until now have been reviewed.

Interview. The subjects I have interviewed for this study consist of officials, including the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Education, the Director of Department of Policy Research and Legal System Construction of the Ministry of Education, and the Director of Education Department in Hubei province, Heads of General Education Office, Pre-school Education Office, Higher Education Office, Non-government Agency Running School Office in Hubei Education Department, the Director of Education Department of Wuhan city, Head of General Education Office, official who take charge of special education of this office, Director of Education Department of Huanshi city, Director of Education Department of Yangxing county of Hubei province, and the Director of Education Department of Tongxiang county of Zhejiang province; and of some scholars who are well-known in the education, and who are the consultants of

policy making in mainland China. Principals and Secretaries working in the kindergarten attached to the Central China Normal University (CCNU), Number 49 Middle School, Hongshan Middle School, Primary School attached to the CCNU, Datongxiang Primary School, Honglingjin Primary School, President of CCNU, Vice Secretary of Huanzhong Science and Technology University, the Dean of Faculty of Education from Eastern China Normal University and Beijing Normal University are also interviewed.

By using the methodology of interview, what I hope to discover is:

- (1) How and why do they understand the reform of education system?
- (2) What is the *status quo* and what are the problems of education system reform in their units?

At least 40 subjects have been interviewed. I have interviewed these subjects once or twice during the research process, by using intensive interviews (interviewing several peoples in the conference or meeting), informal conversation for the Vice-Minister, a general interview guide approach for the Director of Department of Policy Research and Legal System Construction, and the Director of Department of Education of Province, and open-ended interviewing for principals of key schools.

Data analysis

Organizing the data. The purpose of this phase is to become familiar with the data and put them in order. As a first step, I have read the material several times so as to understand what this data mean. Second, I have clarified the data collected in terms of the source of the data and the content of the data. The data were divided, in terms of source, into two categories: data from the literature review and data from interviews. The first category includes data from the review of documents and data from the review of other sources, including scholars' writings and dictionaries. The second category includes data from officials and data from scholars. These data were differentiated, in terms of content, into several categories.

Generating categories. There are two ways, which reflect a classification scheme used by the people in the setting under study, to describe the process of inductive analysis where the salient categories emerge from the data. That is, indigenous typologies, which are those created and expressed by participants and are generated through analysis of the local use of language, and analyst-construct typologies, which are those created by the researcher as reflecting distinct categories but not generative of separate language categories (Patton, 1990, pp. 306, 393-400)

In the process of category generation in my research, first I want to discover the categories that emerge in the data by using the way of indigenous typologies, because I do not want to add new categories. Instead, I just want to find categories that are used in the policy documents, other sources and the findings of interview.

Findings

We found that there are two styles education system reform in China after 1978. The first styles is the reform of school education system, the second style is the reform of education management system. As for the first style reform, there are two kinds' reforms. The first reform is the reform of school system at different levels, including the reform of compulsory school education system, and the reform of advanced school

education system. The second reform is the reform of school system of different kinds, including the reform of vocational and technical education system, and the reform of private school education system.

Reform of school education system at different levels

Reform of compulsory school education system. At the beginning, the policy of compulsory education system reform adopted by the Chinese government is no balanced development. Because it is no easy job to implement the nine-year compulsory education system in a country with a population of over one billion at 1980 (Gu, 1987, p. 82), a vast territory and unbalanced economic and cultural levels among different areas. The financial and manpower requirements are enormous. Hence, different areas have different requirements for the implementation of compulsory education. Developed areas are required to make universal nine-year compulsory education by around 1990; less developed areas are required to institute the nine-year compulsory education by around 1995, and economically poor areas are required to develop the primary education in pace with their economic development. However, in 2006, the emphasis of compulsory education system reform is put on the balanced development, no matter city and countryside, developed area and less developed area, all the compulsory education schools should be balanced developed. This is not because of the needs of construction of harmonious society, but also because of the economic development in China.

In order to implement the nine-year compulsory education system reform, the Chinese Government has adopted some major measures. First, the State Council worked out a bill on compulsory education and the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China was passed by the National People's Congress on April 12, 1986. And the Detailed Regulation for Implementation of Compulsory Education Law of People's Republic of China has been stipulated by the Ministry of Education later. Second, the Chinese Government has adopted some practical measures to improve teachers' quality and their social and economic status. In 1993, Teachers Law was passed by the Fourth Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Eighth National People's Congress, which aimed to safeguard teachers' rights and interests. Third, revised Compulsory Education Law of People's Republic of China has been approved by the National People's Congress on June 29, 2006. According to the new Compulsory Education Law, a new funding policy for compulsory education was established; and local governments' power and responsibility for managing compulsory education has been enhanced.

Great progress has been made since 1985 towards the universalization of the nine-year compulsory education. A total of 98.5 percent of counties in China have realized nine-year compulsory education until 2007 (*Zhongguo jiaoyubao*, 2008).

Reform of advanced school education system. The first reform is to establish the short-cycle institution. In 1983, the number of regular graduates from higher education institutions compared to those short-cycle schools was 72 to 23 (Gu, 1987, p. 80). This has caused a serious imbalance in the composition of the technical work force in some national economic sectors, with the ratio of senior specialized personnel to ordinary technicians in some sectors being 6 to 1 (Gu, 1987, p. 80). Thus, senior technical personnel are forced to do lower-level work, which is a waste of manpower. This situation cries out for a change. It is therefore necessary to make an all-out effort to

expand the short-cycle higher education, while consolidating regular higher education. One of the measures to set up such short-cycle colleges is to change some colleges with non-degree courses to vocational and technical colleges. Until end of 2007, there are 1,168 vocational and technical colleges that have been established in China (*Zhongguo jiaoyubao*, 2008).

The second reform is to adjust the specialties offered in universities. In the 1980s, the structure of system specialties in higher education did not fit well with the needs of China's economic reform. The enrollment by different programs shows a clear bias in favor of science and engineering and against humanities and social science, with students majoring in finance, economics, political science, law and business management making up only a small proportion. Statistics released in 1983 showed that students majoring in finance and economics accounted for only 5.9 percent of the total higher education enrollment, and those in political science and law only 1.5 percent (Gu, 1987, p. 80). Among different programs of the natural science, there is also a disproportion in the number of students studying mechanics, energy, metallurgy and other heavy industrial specialties, and fewer in food and other light industrial specialties. In view of this, it is necessary to make an adjustment in curricular programs, enlarging enrollments in the social sciences, such as finance, economics, political science, law and business management and adding courses in rising fields of science and technology and interdisciplinary fields. In the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, China made an adjustment in curricular programs, and the problems mentioned above have been basically solved. From 1996 to 1999, in order to match the change of labor and the structure of employment, the Chinese government has adjusted specialties of universities again. This adjustment has three features. First, the percentage of enrolment of students for literature, engineering, medicine, and law has been increased. Second, the percentage of enrolment of students studying in non-degree programs in economics has greatly dropped, but students who study in undergraduate courses have increased, which has reflected the development of the structure of qualified personnel in management. Third, the percentage of undergraduates who majored in engineering has dropped and students of non-degree programs have increased, which results in the qualified personnel of engineering moving to middle and small companies and to the first line of production.

To enlarge the scales and to raise beneficial results for tertiary institutions is the third reform. A few years ago, there were lots of small-scale colleges, with one specialized area of study for each college. This situation resulted from copying the higher education system of Soviet Union by the Chinese government after the founding of the Peoples Republic of China. Just after 1949, the Chinese Government changed higher education system, transforming comprehensive universities into colleges specialized in one area. There are two disadvantages in this system. One is that it is not efficient in resource utilization because even a small college needs to be equipped with all facilities. The other one is that it is not helpful for students to establish a good foundation of knowledge in such colleges because of the narrow curriculum program, which is very important for students to meet the needs of a changing world after they graduate. In order to solve the above problems, the Chinese Government has been changing higher education system, retransforming small-scale colleges into comprehensive universities, which means merging small-scale colleges into one comprehensive university. This reform was initiated by "Project 211" announced by

the Chinese government in 1993, which aimed to establish 100 institutions of world standard at the twenty-first century. In order to increase the competitiveness of some prestigious universities, this reform focuses on not only the merger of small-scale colleges, but also the merger of prestigious institutions. Some prestigious universities have been merged and have become huge comprehensive universities in Beijing, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Yangzhou, Nanchang, Nannin, and so on so forth. There were 50 universities and colleges in Shanghai, and the average number of student enrolment for each university and college was only 2,600 at the beginning of the 1990s. After the reform there are 38 universities and colleges and the average number of student enrolment for each institution is 4300 (Guojia jiaoyu fazhan yanjiu zhongxin, 2000, p. 18).

The fourth reform is to set up the University Zone. This is a new development model of the university: several universities are set up in one region. There are several university zones that have been set up or are under construction. They are: Hangzhou University Zone, Ninbo University Zone, Beijing Huabei University Zone, Shengzhen University Zone, etc. For instance, Shengzhen University Zone has already cooperated with ten prestigious universities from home and abroad, and Qinghua University has set up a branch in this University Zone (Pan and Wu, 2001, p. 6).

Reform of school education system of different kinds

Reform of vocational and technical education system. Since 1979, proposals have been put forward by people from different walks of life calling for reforms in the structure of secondary education and more efforts to develop vocational and technical education. By late 1984, China had 3,301 specialized secondary schools (including normal schools) with an enrollment of 1.3 million, 3,465 technical schools with 64 million students, and 7,002 farming and other vocational schools with nearly 1.8 million trainees. The number of these students has reached 34 percent of the total number of those in the senior high school age group at the same period of time (Gu, 1987, p. 83).

However, this number of students is still inadequate to meet the needs of China's socialist construction. For this reason, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party called, in *Decision* (1985), for more efforts to be made to develop vocational and technical education. There have been several measures adopted by the Chinese government to reform vocational and technical education. First, the Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China was promulgated by Order No. 69 of the President of the People's Republic of China on May, 15, 1996, thus establishing the legal foundation for the reform of the vocational and technical education. Second, a number of general senior high schools have been changed into vocational and technical senior high schools, especially in rural areas. Third, the regulation of out-dated employment has been replaced by the new regulation of "training before employment". Now employers, no matter governmental or not, have given priority to hire good graduates from vocational schools. Everybody who wants to find a job should have a certificate of one kind or another before he or she can be employed. Fourth, in order to train high-quality teachers for vocational and technical schools, 12 technical and vocational normal universities have been set up. For instance, Beijing Vocational and Technical Normal University, Tanjing Vocational and Technical Normal University, Hunan Vocational and Technical Normal University, etc.

Reform of private school education system. After 1978, with the government's emphasis shifting to economic development, the demand for educated labor greatly encouraged the growth of education. The Constitution of 1982 stipulates that "the state encourages collective economic organizations, governmental enterprises and other social forces to initiate and manage various kinds of educational activities according to law". In order to develop private education and regulate the development of private education within the policies of the central government, various administrative regulations were stipulated by the State Council and the Ministry of Education. There are three important ones:

- (1) Certain provisional regulations concerning social forces running schools issued by the State Council in 1987.
- (2) Provisional regulations on setting up *minban* higher institutions issued by the State Education Commission in 1993.
- (3) Education law of the PRC declared by the National People's Congress (NPC) in 1995 and Regulation on social forces running schools in 1997.

Supplementary regulatory measures were also made by some local governments. The general policies on private education raised from the above documents are to "actively encourage, greatly support, correctly direct and strictly manage". According to the key points in the 1997, the government only encourages the non-government sector to run pre-school education, post-compulsory education, and vocational and technical education, and does not encourage non-government agencies to run compulsory education and higher education. Since 1999, after the Conference of Third National Education, the above policy has been changed. The government allows non-government organizations or individuals to run all kinds of education, no matter vocational and technical education or general education, primary and secondary education or higher education; non-compulsory education or compulsory education.

The movement of privatization has created new trends. Some governmental schools, which were either very poorly funded or managed badly, have been changed into non-government schools. For instance, Zhejiang Agriculture Technology College has become Zhejiang Wanli College, a private tertiary institution. Some private schools have merged into government universities, some of which are solely set up by the university, some jointly by the university and some entrepreneurs, some by the university and educational agencies abroad and some by the university and another domestic private university.

With regard to the second style reform, two kinds of education system have been reformed. The first reform is the reform of education administration system, including the reform of basic education administration system, and the reform of higher education administration system. The second reform is the reform of intra-school management system, including the reform of intra-school management system in primary and secondary schools, and the reform of intra-school management system in tertiary institutions.

Reform of education administration system

Reform of basic education administration system. The goal of this reform is to increase the authority and responsibility of the local governments in managing primary and

secondary education. The central government has no control over basic education any more from the middle of the 1980s. The basic education administration system in China is known as “administration at two levels, sponsorship at three levels.” in rural areas. Administration mainly refers to the instructional and personnel aspects of school management. Townships administer primary and junior secondary schools, and county governments, through their educational divisions, administer senior secondary schools. Sponsorship mainly means to cover the expenditure of schools and exercise ownership of schools. Primary schools are sponsored by villages, junior secondary schools by townships, and senior secondary schools by counties. However, all the schools in countryside are sponsored by county government after the new Compulsory Education Law published in 2006. In the urban areas, all the primary and secondary schools are sponsored and administered by the district governments of cities.

Superficially, the reform of basic educational management system is a devolution of management power to the local authorities and schools; substantially, this reform is a transfer of financial responsibilities, which means the local authorities and schools have the responsibility to provide for most of the schools’ expenditures[1], which includes teacher’s salaries, constructing and reconstructing of school buildings, provision of school facilities and all the recurrent expenditures. In order to cover all the expenditures on schools, the local authorities were allowed to levy an educational tax, which started in 1984 in rural areas and in 1986 in urban areas. The amount of educational tax, for instance, is an additional 1 percent of products tax, value-added tax, and business tax in urban areas. However, the collection of this tax is not enough for local authorities to cover the expenditures of schools. For example, in 1987 the total sum collected was only 2.64 billion yuan, less than 10 percent of the expenditure budget (Cheng, 1990, p. 227). Consequently schools try their best to make money through different methods.

Reform of higher education administration system. The first reform is to devolve power and responsibility to local governments. This is normally called decentralization or localization. Fifteen years ago, there were nearly 1,000 institutions, half of which were run by the Ministry of Education and other ministries, and another half were run by provincial and municipal governments. The number of institutions controlled by the Ministry of Education and other ministries is now reduced, while the number of institutions controlled by provincial or municipal governments is increased. There are two reasons caused this phenomenon. One is the result of implementation of Project 211, which means the central government will only support 100 institutions in the twenty-first century, and the remaining institutions will be run by local governments. As long as the fund of the central government could not support so many institutions, local governments should share more financial burdens for higher education. This is known as *gongjian* (collaboration in building the institution). Some institutions formerly run solely by the central government now become institutions supported not only by the Ministry of Education or other ministries but also by the local governments. In the past few years, over 900 higher education institutions were involved in restructuring. Among them 556 institutions that were mainly supervised by central ministries have been merged into 232 institutions. The Ministry of Education and other ministries now only supervise 120 institutions, and most higher education institutions are now under provincial authorities (Zhen, 2001).

The second reform is to reform the regulation of higher education. Let us first describe the reform of regulation of entrance examinations for university (*gaokao*). This reform has experienced two stages from the end of the Cultural Revolution until now. The first stage is to resume the regulation of nationwide college entrance examinations, which had been abolished during the Cultural Revolution. This stage ran from 1977 to 1998. Although there have been lots of experiments on the entrance examination since 1983, this regulation still has two unique features. One is that students are admitted according to their scores in the entrance examination and the enrolment quotas, which are assigned, according to a national plan, to specific institutions and disciplines. Students who obtain an average score in the college entrance examination can choose their majors in institutions. The other is that there are unified test subjects for different disciplines. For example, Chinese, politics, foreign language, mathematics, history and geography are the test subjects for students who want to study liberal arts (major in humanities). Chinese, politics foreign language, mathematics, physics and chemistry are the test subjects for students who want to study science and engineering, etc. The second stage is the reform of the entrance examination from 1998 until now. The Ministry of Education formally announced the reform program for the entrance examination in 1998, calling to establish the college entrance examination with Chinese characteristics. The main content of this reform is the reform of test subjects. Guangdong province in 1998 was first to reform test subjects, the reform being known as “3 plus x ”. Three is the number of required test subjects, including Chinese, foreign language, and mathematics; x is one elective test subject, which can be chosen from physics, chemistry, biology, history, politics, and geography. Elective test subjects were extended to 11 in 2000, adding a comprehensive subject, painting, music, physical education and retest of foreign language. As for undergraduates, besides art and music, a comprehensive subject is required, two or over two of the elective subjects are also required; one or over one of the elective subjects is required for non-degree programs. History and relevant art subjects are required for undergraduates of painting and music. A comprehensive subject and physical education are required for undergraduates of physical education. The test content of the comprehensive subject covers the required contents of physics, chemistry, biology, history, politics, and geography in the middle school. In 2000, Shansi, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Jilin adopted “3 plus comprehensive subject”. The comprehensive subject includes comprehensive liberal arts, which refers to comprehensive politics, history, geography; the comprehensive science and engineering, which includes physics, chemistry, and biology, and the combined comprehensive liberal arts and science and engineering, which consists of politics, history, geography; physics, chemistry and biology (Guojia jiaoyu fazhan yanjiu zhongxin, 2000, p. 25).

Second is the reform of the tuition regulation. The tuition reform emerged in the early 1980s. Before this reform, higher education was free to all students, who were even given free board and lodging. In 1983 a new policy began to emerge and this formed the basis of changes consolidated in 1985. In essence three categories of student enrolment were proposed. The first category of student enrolment is enrolment according to the state plan. In order to ensure that a certain number of graduates will go to work in outlying areas and in trades and professions with harsh working conditions, a fixed proportion of students in the state plan will be enrolled from these

areas and trades and professions. Enrolment therefore continued to be subject to the demands of the state plan. In order to implement this new policy, in 1983 the Ministry of Education formally demanded that some institutions adopt the policy of “enrolling students directionally and assigning them jobs directionally” (*dingxian zhaosheng dingxian fenpei*). Second is the enrolment of commissioned students. This reform allowed any unit (*danwei*) to commission universities and colleges to train undergraduates and postgraduates, based on a written contract negotiated between the two parties. Commissioned students could only be recruited when the state plan for enrolments had been met. Such students need to take the national unified admission examinations and generally must have scores not below the lowest admission scores of the universities and colleges concerned. Third is the enrolment of self-supporting students outside the state plan. The scores of self-supporting students were usually below the “cutting-off score” (*fenshuxian*), so they have to pay the expenditure for study by themselves. In 1993, 30 institutions participated in a pilot scheme whereby all students, no matter within the state plan or not, were required to pay some fees. Institutions had the discretion to decide their own fee standards, although the standard rate was 1,000-1,800 Chinese yuan (RMB) per year. Fee rate varied in terms of different areas and different disciplines. Fees of universities in rich areas are higher than those in poor areas; fees of normal universities are often lower than those of engineering (technology) universities. A reform that equalized the admission fee rates for those students within the national plan with those outside it, known as “merging the rail” (*bingui*), started in 1995. Since 1997, all institutions have begun to charge students fees (Cheng, 1998, p. 22). In 1999, in order to promote economic development, the policy that educational consumption facilitates economic development was adopted by the State Council. Under the guidance of this policy, the enrolment-scale of tertiary institutions was enlarged. The enrolment number has been increased to 1.5968 million in 1999 from 1.0836 million in 1998, a rise of 513,200. The student’s fee was also increased. For instance, the student’s fee in Beijing was 3,200 yuan (RMB) and 4,500 yuan (RMB) in Guangdong. The total income from enlarged enrolment was 76.78 billion yuan in 1999 (Guojia jiaoyu fazhan yanjiu zhongxin, 2000, p. 77). The enrolment number in 2007 is 27.000 million (*Zhongguo jiaoyubao*, 2008).

Third is the reform of the regulation of people’s grant-in-aid (people’s need-based grant). Before the reform, People’s grant-in-aid was not related to the students’ academic performances. Instead, it was only related to the students’ family backgrounds, family incomes and selected disciplines. Students who were from farmers’, workers and revolutionary families with poor income and majored in disciplines urgently needed in the national economic development could receive the People’s grant-in-aid. In 1981, some of the higher education institutions began to transform the People’s grant-in-aid into a kind of scholarship granted on students’ academic performances. Since 1987, the new scholarship regulation has been practiced in the whole country (Sun, 1997, pp. 240-41). The government scholarships were comprised of three types, each based on a different criterion. The “Excellence scholarship” (*youxiu xuesheng jiangxuejin*) was awarded for meritorious academic performance. The “special-major scholarship” (*zhuanke jiangxuejin*) was intended for students who majored in disciplines urgently needed by the state and included fields of study that promised a relatively low private return. Accordingly, most students majored in teaching; agriculture and mineralogy students were offered also this

scholarship. The 'orientation scholarship (*dingxiang jiangxuejin*) required graduates to work in remote areas or grass roots work-units, where conditions would be harsher than in cities (Zhang, 1998, pp. 246-7).

Fourth is the reform of the regulation of job assignment for graduates. Under the socialist planned economy, graduates of higher education were assigned jobs according to state plans, which had many disadvantages, especially when China were establishing its market economy reforms. Since employment of graduates mainly relied on the administration of the government rather than the allocation of the employment market, employers and graduates were both denied freedom of choice. There was no way to deal with the problem that both employment units and graduates were not satisfied with job assignments. Especially, graduates were not satisfied with the phenomenon known as "one's job is not suited to one's major" (*zhuan ye bu dui kou*). It was not easy for graduates to change their jobs or move to other cities because of the so-called "once assigned, the whole life would be decided" (*yizhi fenpei dingzhongsheng*), which not only greatly obstructed qualified personnel to give full play to their professional knowledge and skills, but also caused a great waste of manpower. These phenomena have been changed since the middle of the 1980s, because the Chinese Government has adopted measures to reform the regulation of job assignment. First, under the unified system of job assignment, employers and graduates were given some room for free choice. Second, since 1989, China has started to practice what is known as "two-way-selection", whereby job fairs were organized on campus to allow potential employers and prospective graduates to meet each other for selection. Most institutions have practiced the "two-way-selection" since the mid-1990s, although the old policy of job assignment is still practiced in professions with recruitment difficulties and remote areas (Guojia jiaoyu fazhan yanjiu zhongxin, 2000; Cheng, 1998, p. 23).

Reform of intra-school management system

Reform of intra-school management system in primary and secondary schools. One of the reforms of intra-school management system is the reform of intra-school leadership system. There is a dual system of power in schools. One line of authority is the professional educator and the other is the Party branch in schools. There remained enormous scope for ambiguity in the roles played in practice by Party officials and school principals. Principals and party secretaries often had different opinions on what kinds of problems are important, and which are most appropriately handled by each level of authority. This phenomenon greatly influenced schools' teaching quality and administrative efficiency. In order to solve this problem, *Decision* (1985) has called for the practice of the system known as "responsibility regulation of principal" (*xiaozhangfuzezhi*). The principal is the central person in the management of the school and assumes full responsibility for daily decision-making and the improvement of teaching quality. The party organizations in schools only concentrate on strengthening the Party organizations and confine themselves to ideological and political activities so as to give more authority to principals, to support them, and to play the role of political guarantee and supervisor. Besides these, teachers should be invited to participate in school management. Where conditions permit, an administrative committee or governing body headed by the principal and composed of a small number of prominent people in the community has been set up to exercise power of review and supervision

in some schools. A regulation on establishing congresses of teachers and other employees has also been enacted. In order to find qualified principals and improve principals' quality, a competitive mechanism has been used to select, appoint, evaluate and train principals (Li and Xiao, 1996, pp. 102-20).

The other reform of intra-school management system is the reform of job contract regulation and payment regulation. It is impossible to imagine a person will work in one place forever nowadays in China because of the emergence of a labor market. It is quite popular for teachers to move between schools. In order to keep a relatively stable ratio between staff and students so as to guarantee teaching quality, the job contract regulation has been introduced into schools. The period of a job contract is usually three years albeit in some cases it can be shorter or longer. As mentioned earlier, schools are allowed to make money in order to meet expenditure. This means that schools have some extra money known as "non-budgeted item" (*yusuanwai*) to pay for non-recurrent expenditure and raise teachers' income. How to allocate this money to teachers is a new problem faced by schools. The common solution is to actively reform the traditional payment regulation known as "eating from the common pot" (*daguofan*), and set up a new payment regulation of "distribution according to work performance" (*an lao fen pei*), in which a teacher's payment, besides the salary from the government, is mainly decided by the number of teaching hours and his performance. The other way to increase teachers' income is to reduce the number of non-teaching staff and increase the ratio of students to teachers (Li and Xiao, 1996, pp. 231-47).

Reform of intra-school management system in tertiary institutions. The reform of intra-school management system in tertiary institutions has been conducted from two stages as described below (Guojia jiaoyu fazhan yanjiu zhongxin, 2000, pp. 19-21).

The first stage is from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the reform of intra-school management system in this period of time has mainly concentrated on the reform of intra-school leadership system, regulation of payment, regulation of medical treatment and regulation of housing[2]. Just like primary and secondary schools, there were two lines of organs of power in tertiary institutions. One was the administrative organ headed by the president, the other was the political organ headed by the secretary of the school party committee. How to settle the relationship between them was still a problem faced by the Chinese Government at that time. In 1983, the National Congress of Higher Education has decided that school boards should be set up in tertiary institutions. The document named "Notice of setting up school boards in tertiary institutions" promulgated by the Party Group of the Ministry of Education in 1984, has enacted that the majority of members of a school board should be persons who have high academic credentials or possess rich teaching experience; a minority of members can be young or middle-aged scholars who have made a contribution to teaching, research and administration of the school. The school board, as a decision-making and examination organization, works under the leadership of the school president, and can represent the institution with the entrustment of the president. From 1985 to 1989, tertiary institutions have tried to practice the system of overall responsibility by president. *Decision* (1985) has stipulated that schools should gradually practice the system of overall responsibility by school principal. Zao Ziyang, former general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, pointed out in the Report of the 13th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 1987 that, with the practice of the administrative head taking full responsibility for his unit, party

organizations in enterprises also should gradually change their roles from leaders to supervisors and guarantors. In order to implement this policy, "Suggestions on practicing the system of overall responsibility by president step by step in tertiary institutions" in 1988 enacted that tertiary institutions should gradually practice the system of overall responsibility by president based on the principle that the administration be separated from the party. However, the system of overall responsibility by president was replaced by the system of overall responsibility by president under the leadership of party committee in 1989 after the "student movement in 4th June" (Liu, 1993, pp. 1095-6).

As for the reform of payment and other regulation reforms, Let us take the Central China Normal University (CCNU) as an example. Decisions on reform of intra-school management system published by CCNU in 1990 focused on the reform of payment, medical treatment and housing. The old regulation of payment adopted by CCNU was egalitarian social security which did not motivate teachers' enthusiasm, so CCNU changed it. A teacher's payment is only based on the teacher's teaching hours and publications within the section of the non-budgeted item of institutions. The regulation of medical treatment of CCNU before reform, just like other tertiary institutions, is the public health service provided by CCNU, which meant medical treatment is free for all the staff of CCNU. This regulation has been changed since institutions, due to the lack of funds, could not pay all the medical fees for all kinds of diseases of all staff. Staff who see the doctor, especially those that are ill with serious diseases and need to be hospitalized, should pay 15-30 percent of the total medical treatment fees[3], although this new regulation has not been completely implemented in practice. A few years ago, all the houses in institutions were free for all the staff and they only needed to pay some symbolic rents. However, they need to buy their own houses now, although the price of on-campus houses is a little cheaper than those on the market.

From the mid-1990s till now is the second stage, which mainly focused on the following reforms.

First, scientifically reestablishing the institutions and official staff team of the Party and administration within tertiary institutions. The institutions' establishment in tertiary institutions has followed the model of the government, which has resulted in overlaps of administrative organizations and lower efficiency of administration. Hence, the majority of tertiary institutions have begun to understand the basic functions of administrative organizations; the functions of management and service have been separated from administrative organizations; administrative structure has been streamlined; the organization of teaching and research have been reorganized; and the relationship among the university, faculty and departments have been clarified. For instance, the Northern Communication University has already completed readjustment of administrative organizations. Administrative organizations function as a service-provider, as sole-service organizations now have been separated from general administrative organizations. Some overlapping administrative organizations have been merged, and some administrative organizations with similar functions have been jointly administrated in one office.

Second, tertiary institutions have reformed the regulation of employment for teachers, regulation of job contract for all staff, and regulation of payment. The incomes of staff are closely linked with their job duties, work achievements and contributions to the school in order to really fulfill the principle of "distribution

according to work performance". Some tertiary institutions have established new programs to greatly increase the incomes of prominent scholars and middle and young core faculty members, and greatly rewarded the persons who have made great contributions to the school. Under the principle of "give priority to efficiency, and then pay attention to equity", some institutions have implemented the new regulation of payment known as "intensification position, payment based on the position and distribution according to work performance". For instance, Qinghua University has developed a new program called "intensify position, and greatly increase the income of core faculty members", according to which faculties are divided into nine ranks and different ranks of faculty members have different responsibilities and incomes. There are big income gaps between the top rank and the bottom rank. Beijing University, Fudan University, Shanghai Communication University, and Central China Normal University, etc. have also developed similar new programs. For example, the average income of the first rank (professor plus supervisor for PhD) is RMB70,000 per year, and the average income of the bottom rank is only RMB40,000 per year in Central China Normal University.

Thirdly, socialization of the logistic service of tertiary institutions has been actively conducted. The phenomenon of "each institution runs its own logistic service, and every institution runs a small society" has been changed. The first logistic service center for tertiary institutions was set up in 1998 in Shanghai. The logistic service departments of some 20 schools have been formally separated from their own institutions and the commercial center for professional logistic service, relying on the government-enterprisers, was established in ten institutions, with 26 supermarkets and 19 restaurants set up at the end of 1999. The socialization of all the logistic services of tertiary institutions in Shanghai has been realized after 2000.

Some practical implications

The following three practical implications can be gained from the above findings:

- (1) There are many education system reforms in a country, but the main education system reform only can be divided into two aspects: one is the reform of school education system, the other is the reform of educational management system.
- (2) If you want to reform the school education system, you should reform the school education system in deferent levels and reform the school education system of deferent kinds. In the reform of school education system in deferent levels, the most important education system reform is the reform of compulsory education system and the reform of advanced school system. In the reform of school education system of deferent kinds, the most important education system reform is the reform of vocational and technical education system and the reform of private education system.
- (3) There are two kinds of education management system reform in a country, one is the reform of education administration system, and the other is the reform of intro-school management system. If you want to reform the education administration system, you should focus on the reform of the centralization, namely, to devolve power and responsibility from central government to local government; if you want to reform the intra-school management system, you should pay attention to the reform of school leadership system.

- (4) If you want to reform the education system in a country, you should reform the regulation. In the reform of education system in China after 1978, Chinese government not only reform the different levels and different kinds of educational system, but also reform the regulation, such as reform the regulation of entrance examination for university, tuition regulation, regulation of people's grand-in-aid, regulation of job assignment for graduates, job contract regulation and payment regulation, etc. This is because that education system is the integration of education organizations (*jiaoyu jigou*) and education regulations (*jiaoyu guifan*). It includes two parts: the organizations of education (*jiaoyu jigou*) and the regulations that govern education (*jiaoyu zhidu*). The organizations of education include schooling organizations (*xuexiao jiaoyu jigou*) and management organizations of education (*jiaoyu guanli jigou*). The organizations of education are educating organizations (*jiaoyu shishi jigou*). Management organizations of education are educational administration organizations (*jiaoyu xingzheng jigou*) and intra-school management organizations (*xiaonei guanli jigou*). The regulations that govern education include rules and regulations (*guizhang zhidu*) which can ensure that education organizations run well. Education organizations adopt certain regulations to formulate school education system (*xuexiao jiaoyu tizhi*). The management organizations of education adopt certain regulations to formulate education management system (*jiaoyu guanli tizhi*). Among these, education administration organizations adopt certain regulations to formulate education administration system (*jiaoyu xingzheng tizhi*). The intra-school management organizations adopt certain regulation to formulate intra-school management system (*xiaonei guanli tizhi*). Why is education system an integration of the education organization and the education regulation components? The general answer is that from the perspective of institutional theory, which is the broad theoretical framework adopted here, much regulation is of the constitutive variety, and so play a role in defining the nature of an organization. This means that we cannot separate regulation, in this sense, from considerations of organization (Sun, 2004, pp. 4-5).

Notes

1. It means that local authorities should pay for whatever is not paid by the state, because the state has earmarked expenditure for educational projects, especially for the compulsory education in remote areas.
2. The reforms of regulation of payment, medical treatment and housing continued in the second stage, although the scope and depth of these regulation reforms were much wider and deeper in the first stage, specially the reform of regulation of payment.
3. Since the government has money to provide a public medical service for each institution, some institutions practice new regulation in another way. Namely, they give this money to individual staff. Then, if staff see a doctor, they should pay the entire medical treatment fee.

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