The Construction of High-Level University in China: From 1949 to Present

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Abstract. Higher education has been one of the major concerns of the world. The construction of a world-class university in China has been one of the goals of the Chinese Communist Party. This paper focuses on a series of successive efforts and milestones made by the Chinese Communist Party government to build high-level universities from the founding of New China to the present. This study finds that the development of high-level universities is closely related to the construction and development of the state. Since the founding of New China, the Chinese Communist Party has begun to emphasize the construction of high-level universities. In order to cultivate the successors of socialism, high-level universities also began to reform and progress. By the time of reform and opening up, high-level universities began to focus on the modernization of education. Under the policy of strengthening the country with science and technology, “Project 211” and “Project 985” emerged one after another. They became very important projects to build China's world-class universities. Recently, the construction of double first-class universities has become the main goal of high-level university construction. The development of high-level universities is inseparable from the core values of the nation and the social context of China. However, at the same time, the development of high-level universities also needs to be integrated with the international context, and to exchange and learn from various nations around the world.

Keywords: High-level university; Construction; Higher education; China.

1. Introduction

In the modern era, higher education began to spread around the world from the United States. Universities have become the authority of each country to train its own human resources. High-level universities represent a nation’s own national strength. In the age of technology, the establishment of high-level universities is undoubtedly essential. A state could train a large number of talents to develop its politics, economy, science and technology, military, culture, etc. if it establishes its own world class universities. Knowledge is power. Knowledge is also wealth. The establishment of high-level universities gives the talents of each nation the space to study and rise, so that these talents can apply what they have learned and eventually help build the country. Therefore, since its founding, the Chinese Communist Party has been committed to developing and building Chinese high-level universities. According to China's own unique national conditions, social context and ethnic culture, the development of high-level universities has gone through four stages since the founding of the new China until now. This essay will develop a discussion of what each of these four stages are, why these developmental policies or aims were published in China, and what significance and impact they have had on the development and construction of Chinese society at that time.

2. The Construction of High-Level Universities from 1949 to 1977

2.1 Educational Policy in the Construction of High-Level Universities

The restructuring of faculties of higher education in China was politically oriented in this period. The foreign political situation and the domestic political situation made it inevitable for the restructuring of higher education faculties and ideological transformation to take place in the early years of New China. For the foreign political situation, the period just after the establishment of New China was also the time when the Second World War had just ended. Because the Chinese Communist

Party had just founded New China, the situation was not stable at this time, plus there were still weak U.S.-led forces in China that were still on the move. Then the most important thing at this time is what kind of talents to cultivate in China. In the summary report of the "Instruction on Education Work" on December 2, 1958, it was pointed out that "education is a means and, to a certain extent, a tool for political service" . Then for the new China, the most important thing is to cultivate socialist successors. Because higher education played a very important role in cultivating socialist talents, high-level universities were developed accordingly. For example, the prototype of a high-level university has been born. "Resolution on the scope of work of higher education schools and experts" on December 5, 1954, identified six universities such as Renmin University of China, Peking University, Tsinghua University and Harbin University as the national key schools. After that, after 1958, the large-scale construction of higher education schools was gradually started" .

2.2 Socialist Transformation of High-Level Universities

For domestic politics, educational development and ideological change are important because the newly established regime needs to consolidate power and deepen the people's understanding of the Chinese Communist Party's philosophy of governance . Educational change follows the overall change and ideological change. Thus, when the Chinese Communist Party first established the new China, educational reforms were carried out at the same time. From the initial abolition of reactionary courses and the addition of revolutionary courses such as those related to Marxism, to the later restructuring of faculties and departments, to the ideological transformation of teachers . This series of reforms in higher education were all aimed at helping the Chinese Communist Party consolidate power. And, gradually, those educational revolutions train the talents for the development of the new China. Only with the correct values of the new China, students can better contribute to the consolidation of the regime and the stable development of the new China.

Besides, for the Chinese Communist Party, finding and aligning with the Soviet Union, which was politically and ideologically similar to itself, became a critical political matter. Therefore, in the field of education, China went on the path of "Russia as a teacher" . This meant that all theories and research on advanced capitalist higher education were excluded from Chinese universities. In addition, because the Soviet regime was so successful at the time, the Chinese Communist Party leaders saw examples of success and therefore they thought it was important to learn from the experience of others. Therefore, whether it was to align themselves with similar ideologies or to learn from advanced and successful countries, the direction of education at the beginning of the new China was basically to "learn from Russia". For example, China began to implant the Soviet-style special education model into Chinese higher education, which manifested in a massive restructuring of faculties and departments, focusing on training economic construction personnel . As a result, a series of reforms and adjustments in Chinese higher education took place.

2.3 The Effect of the Construction of High-Level Universities on Society

The restructuring of faculties at the beginning of the founding of New China had a positive influence. On the one hand, the restructuring of higher education faculties and the updating of curricula helped to train the first socialist successors of the new China. They had the core values of the new China as well as the knowledge and skills to develop the economy. First of all, the restructuring of the faculties focused on the development of the country's political and economic talents. In particular, the emphasis was placed on the training of talents for industrialization . In this way, the development requirements of national political and economic construction are met. Secondly, the restructuring of university faculties basically laid down the basic structure of Chinese higher education institutions afterward. For example, Peking University, which is very comprehensive, and Tsinghua University, which focuses on science subjects. It seems that they are all based on the structure of the restructuring of faculties in the 1950s. Finally, it is important to note that the restructuring of faculties and educational reforms have allowed China to move away from the traditional philosophy of education. Since ancient times, China has focused on the socio-political

function of education. That is, Chinese people have always been dominated by Confucian doctrine. Practical learning has not been developed at all . Therefore, the reform of higher education based on the Soviet educational model after the founding of New China has largely changed the traditional Chinese educational philosophy, focusing instead on the cultivation of industrialized associative talents. The education of practical studies and science and technology was carried forward.

3. The Construction of High-level Universities from 1978 to the Late 1990s

3.1 High-Level Universities' Educational Transformation with Socialist Modernization

Chinese socialist modernization in the 1980s contributed to the modernization of education. This was reflected in the fact that under socialist modernization, education began to focus on serving modernization rather than focusing on class struggle. Socialist modernization modernized Chinese higher education. Higher education began to focus on the cultivation of talents for socialist construction. Specifically, China's higher education began to focus on education in the disciplines of social construction, industrialization, and scientific and technological development. Higher education focused on serving the socialist modernization construction with economic construction as the center. In other words, under the influence of the guidelines of socialist modernization in the 1980s, China's higher education began to focus on cultivating practical students. For example, "in 1977 Deng Xiaoping proposed that Renmin University should mainly train cadres in finance and trade economic management and Marxist theory workers" . From this aspect we can see that the high-level university focuses on the training of socialist talents with economic construction as the center.

3.2 The Resumption of University Entrance Examination and its Effect on High-Level Universities Development

The restoration of the college entrance examination is of great historical significance. This study will discuss it in two aspects: one is that the resumption of the college entrance examination has, to a certain extent, achieved somewhat equality in China's higher education. The other is that the resumption of the college entrance examination has enabled China to emerge from the mistakes of the Cultural Revolution and truly move towards the right path of education. It laid the right and solid foundation for China's subsequent development. First of all, because during the Cultural Revolution, although there were high schools and universities in China, students were not judged on the basis of whether they were good or bad in their studies, or whether they could receive higher education. The recommendation system that was in place at that time contained too many political and human relations, making it impossible for capable students to go to school, but for incapable students to get higher education through connections.

In addition, the quality of teaching in Chinese schools is also really worrying. The quality of university teachers varies from one level to another, and the quality of students varies widely. Thus, education in China at this time was pulling the development of the country back. It was the restoration of the college entrance examination that saved China's educational efforts. Because the formal examination system also had a strict vetting system that helped universities to screen out students who were really capable of higher education. Thus, not only the quality of students goes up, but the overall standard of secondary schools and universities began to rise steadily. For example, "in early 1979, Renmin University of China shifted the focus of schoolwork to teaching and research in accordance with the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Party. The university continue to improve the quality of teaching to train socialist talents" for constructing a high-level university. Unlike the recommendation system of the Cultural Revolution, the resumption of the college entrance examination gave equal opportunities to people with different political backgrounds, regions and experiences. At this time, higher education was more equitable. As long as you have the ability, the door of the university is open for you.

3.3 The Influence of Reform and Opening up on the Development of High-Level Universities

The initial reform and opening up had a radical impact on education: resumption of college entrance exams, sending international students, and expanding university enrollment. Higher education became a key planning project in the early years of the reform and opening up. In accordance with Deng Xiaoping's policy of developing the country through science and education, China invested a lot of money to build up the country's universities after the reform and opening up. In addition to the resumption of college entrance examinations mentioned above, the Ministry of Education has made its efforts to send international students abroad. With the opening of the country's doors, the Ministry of Education's situation of being closed and confined to its own country was changed. The opening of education has better helped China to integrate into globalization . China's open attitude towards education has led to many talented young people going abroad to learn advanced technology, science and culture, and then sending these to China to help China develop and progress.

In addition to this, developed countries have moved from a post-industrial era to a knowledge-based economy . It is imperative to enlarge university enrollment to help Chinese society cultivate more young adults to build the country. The 14th Chinese Communist Party Congress proposed the strategy of "developing the country through science and education", and the 15th Congress proposed the important decision of building world first-class universities and enlarging university enrollment . These decisions are made because education is the foundation of a strong state. By increasing the investment in teaching and expanding the scale of education, higher education helps the country to train talents to construct China and improve China's status in the international arena. In short, the construction and development of higher education is very important for the development of China.

4. A Period of Rapid Development of High-Level Universities: 1998-2015

4.1 Project 211 and Project 985

The construction of high-level universities is an important foundation for China to improve its comprehensive national power. In 1995, China published and implemented the " Project 211 ", "i.e., to build about 100 higher education institutions and a number of key disciplines for the 21st century". In 1999, "Project 985" was officially implemented. "Project 985 emphasizes the creation of several first-class universities and a number of first-class disciplines with world advanced level". The publication of policies from Project 211 to Project 985 demonstrates the urgency and effort of the Chinese government to focus on building education. These higher education policies indicate that the level of higher education in China is gradually improving. For example, the "Preparation Technology of High-Performance Carbon and Carbon Aerospace Braking Materials" of Central South University is a key discipline and science and technology innovation platform of Project 211 and Project 985. In addition, these two projects have made efforts and paved the way for the construction of higher education in China, "from the key construction to the overall development". It is also a good foundation for the next step of high-level universities to enter the world's double first-class.

4.2 The International Development of China's High-Level Universities

With the construction of these two projects, the communication of foreign education and culture is also increasing. A certain number of academic accreditation agreements have also been signed between different national governments. Students are encouraged to study on exchange between China and abroad, and exchanges and resource sharing between different cultures and schools are enhanced . With the increased level of exchange between domestic and foreign universities, more collaborative research projects promote the progress of scientific research results in related fields. Chinese universities, they can also better learn from the experience of building-related fields with mature higher education systems abroad. It further helps the gradual maturation of China's high-level university system.

5. "Double First-Class" University Construction Stage

5.1 Content and Objectives of the Double First-Class Initiative

The construction of a "double first-class" university cannot be separated from the construction of China itself. The core of building a "double first-class" university is to better integrate the university into the process of building China. First of all, building a "double first-class" university with Chinese characteristics requires that our universities have a national culture. it is because the world's outstanding universities, they closely linked to their national cultures. In the case of China, our 5,000 years of history have nurtured a national culture rich in Eastern philosophical ideas. Putting the national culture into the ideological basis for the development of universities can have the possibility of developing a "double first-class" university with Chinese characteristics.

Moreover, the fate of the country and the fate of the university are closely linked. The development of "double first-class" universities is a way to help China achieve national rejuvenation. Only by improving education and cultivating new young people, who have the Chinese national spirit, can better build China, thus completing national rejuvenation and realizing the Chinese dream.

5.2 The Impact of the "Double-First-Class" Initiative on Promoting the Construction of High-Level Universities in China

Besides, the development of "double first-class" universities is inherent in the development of national strategies. The strategy of the state is the purpose of the university, and the needs of the country are the needs of the university. Universities should be places that help the country cultivate talents who can build the country. Therefore, it is even more important for "double first-class" universities to firmly cultivate excellent young people with Chinese sentiment and the mission of reform and development for China.

In addition, the construction of a "double first-class" university makes the university focus on international development at the same time. Universities have begun to focus on international talent exchange programs as a way to ensure the improvement of the soft power of talents. We all know that education is important for the construction of a talent pool. No matter what the policy is, the final emphasis is on students' development. Then the internationalization of the talent team better helps the university to improve its soft power, including the talent itself, and the curriculum, and the internationalization of the faculty team. In this way, under the policy of "double first-class", the development of universities goes international.

However, the "double first-class" policy brings some negative effects on local universities. First of all, it is institutional inertia. It is difficult for local universities to get a lot of resource allocation once the policy is enacted. For example, many "double first-class" universities are still continuing the previous Project 985 and Project 211 universities. Therefore, it is very difficult for local universities to build "double first-class" universities. Secondly, because the "double first-class" universities look at the quantitative assessment results. Therefore, many universities make a lot of hasty adjustments to be among the top universities. For example, Xinjiang University, who has given up its advantageous minority language studies, instead went to focus its university discipline construction on disciplines such as science and computer science in order to easily obtain research funding or get major national research projects. The lack of consideration for the cultivation of talents is shown in the rush to publish papers and demand more research. In short, under the influence of this perverse academic culture, local universities are not focused on talent cultivation, but rather show a utilitarian attitude. As a consequence, this bad academic culture does not help China to better achieve educational equity and build higher education.

5.3 Prospects for the Construction of High-Level Universities in China

Since the founding of New China, Chinese education has evolved from its initial stage to continuous development to gradual improvement until now. And we are still exploring how to better build Chinese education. Today, we are aiming to build higher education with "double first-class"

universities. The foundation of moral education is the root of the construction of “double first-class” universities. Nurturing people is the lifeblood of China's education development . Higher education aims to cultivate special Chinese socialist modern talents to help China's continuous development and progress. And also, while nurturing people, the eternal object is still the continuation of national culture. China nowadays has the goal of realizing the Chinese dream, of which education is a very important part. Chinese higher education returns to nurturing people as the root in the hope that these talents can better help China continue to grow and develop.

6. Conclusion

From the founding of New China to the present, the development of high-level universities in China has gone through four stages. In these four stages, China has been reforming and improving the construction of high-level universities. From 1949-1977, when the education policy was the first published to build high-level universities and cultivate socialist talents. From the reform and opening up to the modernization of education, and the restoration of college entrance exams after the Cultural Revolution to implement the strategy of developing the country through science and education. Then the publication of the "Project 211" and "Project 985" policies, and the efforts to build world-class universities. As a result, the Chinese Communist Party has been making continuous and phased efforts for the construction of high-level universities. Behind these efforts is the construction, progress and development of a nation. The construction of high-level universities has always been closely linked to the construction of Chinese socialism. In addition, the construction of Double First-Class University is not only an appeal to national consciousness, but also to the hope that in the future, high-level universities can take the education of people as the first purpose. It is not the pursuit of academic ranking, but the cultivation of Chinese socialist talents in a down-to-earth manner. In the future, the development of high-level universities in China still needs continuous efforts to build. This cannot be done without the return of China's own national culture, but still requires the exchange and learning of high-level universities globally. This article provides us with a rough historical overview of the development of high-level universities in China. Based on this article, we can continue to study the policy of high-level university development and other related topics afterward.

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