CHAPTER 13

Current Status and Several Issues in the Development of Mainland Non-state Education

Following the worldwide convention, institutions of higher education that are not hosted by the government in Taiwan are generally known as private higher education, which includes private universities and colleges as well as vocational schools. In mainland China, such schools are designated as non-state higher education. Although “private” and “non-state” differ more or less in their denotations, their connotations are fundamentally the same in terms of organizers and sponsors of the institution. Promotion Law of Non-state Education of the People’s Republic of China, Article 2 stipulates that “non-governmental organizations or individuals who organize schools or other forms of education without financial support from the government should abide by this law.” The article clearly defines what is non-state education: 1) non-government organized and 2) non-government funded. In other words, “non-state” is equal to “private.” Therefore, there are substantial implications to classifying the phases of the development of non-state higher education in mainland China by the organizers of an institution and the amount of capital that has been invested.

1 Phases of Development of Non-state Higher Education in Mainland China

The development of non-state higher education can be roughly divided into three phases in terms of the organizers and the amount of capital that has been invested, which are the past, the present, and the future. Each phase has different principal organizers and different sources of funding. Since the classification does not rely on either form or quantitative factor, but rather on its substantial connotations, each phase inevitably correlates and overlaps.

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1.1  **The Recovery Period (the Late 1970s to Mid-1990s)**

In the history of China’s modern education, the appearance of non-state higher education precedes that of public higher education. In the early years of New China, non-state higher education was not prohibited, and the newly founded government issued laws and regulations on running private schools. However, due to the reform of the economic system, private schools lost financial foundation that was essential to their operations. They were converted or merged into public higher education institutions at the time of the Adjustments of Universities and Colleges in 1952. Once disrupted, it took nearly thirty years for private schools to reemerge again. During the recovery period, supporters of non-state education were often veteran cadres and retired professors who were committed to the cause of education. They responded passionately to the call of non-state education and organized private schools on their own or by collaborating with their communities. Ways of investment are mainly the following: 1) human resources—lobbying friends and family members who share the same vision for running private schools; 2) charging tuitions and fees—some newly founded private schools receive donations from the society. Starting from very meager means and adopting a snowballing strategy, their scale has reached a considerably high level.

The pressing issue during the recovery phase is to tackle the problems of the nature of non-state higher education as well as its status in the education system. For instance, is non-state higher education an indispensable part of the education system or merely a supplementary part? Should it be widely promoted or "strictly controlled"? Is it only allowed to cater to vocational and technical training programs? And so on and so forth.

To a certain extent, consensus was gradually reached in answer to such problems in the mid-1990s. Nevertheless, opposing sides were still far from seeing eye to eye. For instance, relevant laws acknowledge the fact that non-state higher education is a component of the education system, but in policy, its development should be strictly controlled. In the late 1990s, Huanghe Science and Technology College in Henan Province broke through the restrictions set on non-state junior colleges and was officially approved to transform into a university. Up until now, only eight non-state junior colleges have made the top-up cut.

1.2  **The Developing Phase (the Late 1990s to the Present)**

The initiation of the popularization of non-state higher education in mainland China calls for its renaissance. On one hand, the release of *Promotion Law of Non-state Education* greatly facilitated and standardized non-state higher education. On the other hand, organizers have to reach relatively stringent