CHAPTER 19

Understanding and Practice of *Outline of China’s National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development* (2010–2020)

*Outline of China’s National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development* (2010–20) (hereinafter referred to as *The Plan*) presents the basic guideline for the development of national education in the next ten years. *The Plan* proposes a series of innovative solutions to the problems in national education. Thus analyzing and interpreting the contents of *The Plan* is important for its implementation and practice.

1 Contributing Millions of Suggestions and a Single Word is Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold: Special Planning Implicates Special Intentions

The establishment of *The Plan* is a special process. It takes one year and nine months from initiation to completion, and personnel involved in the process come from a variety of backgrounds, from domestic institutions to China’s overseas embassy and international organizations such as UNESCO and OECD. The total number of participants reaches 1,500. After its completion, *The Plan* asked for advice and suggestions nationwide in January 2009 and March 2010 and received millions of suggestions. With the proposals as well as advice and suggestions from the media on education during NPC and CPPCC, it can be said that the establishment of *The Plan* rests on millions of suggestions, with total content reaching about 25,000 words. At its initiation, it received 2.5 million yuan from the State Council, which makes the saying “a single word is worth a thousand pieces of gold” credible without taking into account investment in other matters. It is even comparable to the establishment of the Constitution, not to mention other laws and regulations. And it is only a plan, not a law. Some people doubt whether it is worthwhile to spend so much manpower, resources, and finance to enact a plan. I personally think it is absolutely worthwhile to do so, because special establishment means special intentions.

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First of all, just as the media has reported, the major intention is to ask for advice from the people so as to perfect The Plan. Premier Wen Jiabao once said that the people should be satisfied, but absolute satisfaction is unlikely because the people come from different groups with different interests, thus it is impossible for each individual to be content with each item of The Plan. However, asking for advice from the people extensively helps perfect The Plan as much as possible so as to maximize the people’s satisfaction. Secondly, asking for advice from the people is greatly beneficial in enhancing mutual communication between the government and the people. In the past, the government established laws, and the people simply obeyed. The people didn’t fully understand the laws, and the government’s executing body didn’t either. Various problems occurred in the implementation. Now asking for advice from the people fosters mutual understanding and communication between the government and the people, which lays a solid foundation for the smooth execution of The Plan. Thirdly, and more importantly, asking for advice from the people strengthens the government’s executing responsibility and the people’s supervision. The announcement of the content for rounds of discussion improves transparency, which in turn boosts the government’s ability to execute The Plan. In the past after the completion of plans and outlines, the government’s staff was not always knowledgeable about how to execute The Plan and unsure of their own responsibilities. Moreover, effective supervision fell short as to what the people should do, how to do it, and whether the government fulfilled its mission. Now, however, based on the proper understanding of The Plan, the people can offer criticism and suggestions through the media. So the establishment process of The Plan holds special meanings.

The Plan Reflects the Government’s Continuity and Planning’s Innovation

Some people say that there isn’t much new stuff in The Plan. Is it true? Is it necessary that The Plan hold brand-new contents? This is related to a fundamental issue, that is, the continuity of policy. Capitalist countries adopt a multiparty system, so it often happens that when one party assumes power, it may abandon all the policies of the last office and create everything of its own. We can’t possibly do that because we have to take into account the continuity and long-term effectiveness of policy. So the claim that there’s not much new has its legitimacy to some extent, but reform needs constant innovation. In other words, basic policy needs continuity, but with the changing times, constant