CHAPTER 8

Rebuilding the Government-School Relationship (政校关系): An Exploration and Reflection

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Abstract

During the process of rebuilding the government-school relationship, a series of effective measures were undertaken by local authorities, such as streamlining administration and delegating power; a substantial reduction of unnecessary inspections and evaluations on schools; pushing forward the separation of administration, operations, and evaluations (管、办、评); establishing an administrative system and a modern school system with clear rights and responsibilities; transforming the educational administrative functions of the government; converting unlimited government into limited government; and transforming a controlling government into a government that serves. It was also brought up that, during the rebuilding process, we should increasingly focus on the target of the reform, on how to tighten up the “hands” of the government, and on the best practices for monitoring schools’ operational autonomy. It was suggested that a “School Act” be established to clarify the power boundaries between government and schools in order to fortify the reformation achievements with an educational administrative system, an educational investment system, and an accountability system (问责制度), establishing a new pattern of government-school relationship that ensures social justice and fairness, as well as a better development for students.

Keywords

Government-school Relationship – Streamlining Administration and Delegating Power – Operational Autonomy of Schools – “Negative List” – Accountability System

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Rebuilding the Government-School Relationship is a Topic for the Next Century that Arouses Considerable Concern.

In 1985, the *Decision on Education Reform by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China* (中共中央关于教育体制改革的决定) proposed the concepts of streamlining administration and delegating power, expanding schools’ autonomy in operations, and implementing a school principals’ accountability system, which established a basic framework for a new government-school relationship model. Since then, three national educational conferences have been held, trying to break through the educational features of the planned economy and restore the true nature of education. Serious problems remained, however: the government was still “too controlling and too rigid” (统得过多、管得过死) in schools, schools were deficient in vitality, and there was little social involvement in the administration of schools. The “National Medium- and Long-term Educational Reform and Development Program (2010–2020)” (国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要 [2010–2020年])—hereafter referred to as Educational Reform and Development Program—issued in 2010 endeavored to do the same thing a second time, bringing up the idea of establishing a modern school system, “building up a new relationship model among the government, schools, and society,” “reducing and regularizing the executive reviews and approvals needed for school matters and ensuring the schools of their law-based autonomy in operation.” The *Decision of the Cccpc on Major Issues Concerning the Comprehensive Deepening of Reform* (中共中央关于全面深化改革若干重大问题的决定), examined and passed on the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Communist Party of China Central Committee (十八届三中全会) (hereafter referred to as the Decision), once again suggested that we push forward the separation of administration, evaluations, and operations, expand the provincial governments’ power over overall educational planning and the schools’ autonomy, and complete the internal governance structure of schools.

Meanwhile, under the guidance of the aforementioned national policies, some local governments have made consistent explorations in and efforts toward rebuilding the government-school relationship that have encompassed a variety of experiences. Browsing through the exploration process of local governments across several years can afford us better recognition and clearer expectations of the new government-school relationship model.