

# University Education and China's Development

The University stands under the mutual influence of tradition and environment. Its development is closely linked to the change of time and to national development. Now for more than thirty years, China has been persisting on its path of reform and opening-up. Meanwhile, the Chinese society has experienced revolutionary changes; the Chinese universities have acquired unprecedented development. Looking back on history, and looking forward to the future, we are filled with confidence and anticipations for China's further development, as well as that of the Chinese universities.

**Part I. It is a significant strategic move of China's reform policy to restore university education, to rebuild universities, to establish and to perfect the modern Chinese university system.**

A century ago, the Chinese universities were born under both European and American influences. In their early years, they generated an enormous amount of social energy, leaving great impact on the country's recent history. The successive turbulence and wars did not succeed in strangling their vitality and vigor. Instead, the spirit of freedom and democracy joined hands with the call of duty for our nation's survival, resulting in a large repertory of elite intellectuals, who would devote themselves to the nation's construction. After 1949, the search for university construction went through rises and falls. Nevertheless, universities have always carried on with their mission to educate the youths, to create new technologies and to further national and social developments.

We have to admit that our efforts to build the modern Chinese university system were once met with serious upsets. However, as the new era of reform and opening-up dawns, the general restoration and reconstruction of the university, along with the establishment and perfection of the modern university system once again became a significant strategic move of the country.

Since the 1980s, universities have been gaining an ever more eminent status, thanks to the country's strategic policy to revitalize the nation via science, technology and knowledge. The general restoration and construction of universities have provided a solid technological and intellectual basis for China's modernization. While a considerable number of new discoveries were made in the fields of science and social sciences, a new generation of pioneers and successors was cultivated in nearly every profession. In 1979, there were only 633 higher education institutes in the whole country, with 1,020,000 registered students. At present, we have more than 2300 higher education institutes, with more than 2,150,000 academics, more than 2,200,000 registered undergraduate students, and more than 1,500,000 graduate students. Universities such as Tsinghua University, Peking University and Fudan University are now beginning to enjoy international fame, while pushing forward in our mission to create world-class universities, and to better serve the country and the society.

## **Part II The University Is the Source of Power for China's Reform, Opening-up and Modernization**

The development of modern civilization is based on "countries" as single units, but at the same time combines the world as a stage. There are three major forces driving behind it: the development of man, the establishment of systematic order and the advancement of science. The university happens to be closely linked to all three.

The university helps with personal development. It enables the individual to gradually acquire independence. The university is the great workshop where man is polished and provided with infinite possibilities. The Fudan University anthem sings of "academic independence and intellectual freedom", which happen to be the mutual spirit of all Chinese universities. It is a prerequisite for our universities to be able to produce men and women that meet various needs of modern development. For over thirty years, Chinese universities have always based their work on the healthy improvement of students. We are keen to bring out creative elite intellectuals, and try

to build a friendly environment which encourages independent thinking, free search and creativity.

The university can help build a better social system, so as to unify the increase of wealth with the maintenance of public order. A system should in its nature be macroscopic, steady and sustainable. China's past experience has proven that the learning of a system is by no means the copying of a system. It requires exploration, study and creation based on the reality of social developments. The main contribution of the university to systematic reform consists in the learning and outputting of systems. The university, as a conductor of higher education and scientific research, plays a key role in the learning and renovation of systems. Its social influence, therefore, cannot be neglected. For over thirty years. Chinese universities have been trying to perfect their own systems, actively developing systematic theories and conducting research programs. The universities are consciously driving the nation's systematic building and improvement, and pushing forward the economic advancement of the whole society.

The university also gives a boost to scientific advancements. With infinite wisdom it obtains immense power from limited resources. By the logic inherent in the development of modern productive forces, we might see in system and technology a crucial importance to the liberation and development of productive forces. The former may be regarded as the fundamentals, the latter as the key. The university, with its power to generate knowledge and benefit the society, ought to take it as its responsibility to promote scientific and technological advancements. For over thirty years, the Chinese universities have been actively conducting urgent strategic, scientific and social research programs which concern the nation and the people's welfare. We've been promoting original and integrated innovations along with borrowing and recreation. We seek to achieve the union of production, learning and academic research, and to facilitate the industrialization of science and new technology. We also seek actively to participate in local development, and to facilitate the balanced development of the eastern and western parts of China. We help build a

learning society by launching wide-range popular science education programs, and by supplying a variety of educational services.

**Part III China's effort to build an innovative nation must include significant reforms in the university academic and education systems.**

The architect of China's reform and opening-up Mr. Deng Xiaoping once compared the reform to "groping across the river". It is just because of this that both China's economic society and China's universities are still searching for their path forward. As the era of knowledge economics dawns, science and technology have become the defining forces behind human civilization. In a time like this, every nation needs to rely on its scientific, technological and creative power, if it is to contribute to our civilization. Entering into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China has started building a creative nation, working on the achievements of previous reforms, for the welfare of the country and for the revival of the Chinese people. During the process, the university will be occupying a unique place, with its many advantages including its comprehensiveness, its concentration of intellectual persons and its combined educational and academic excellence.

In 2011, China was easily the second largest economic body with its 47 trillion dollars' GDP. However, we have to realize that the progress was made with a price, that is, heavy reliance on resources and low cost elements investment. In the long run, China's mode of development is in urgent need of transformation, in order to cope with problems such as pollution, water, food safety, and an aging population with limited wealth. Therefore, the country's 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan has made it clear that the major concern of the economic transformation should be the strategic reform of economic structure. And technological advancement will be the main support for the transformation. Accordingly, as a motivating force to the national reform, Chinese universities will also make significant adjustments to their academic system and education mode. We need to transform our developing mode, aiming at future technological innovation and the development of new industries. We should give

intellectual and technological support to the economic transformation; we should work as originators of new knowledge, new concepts, new technologies and new methods. With our contribution we should win wider scope for our own development. At the moment, Chinese universities have felt unprecedented pressure and also a sense of duty. We have chosen to face the opportunities and challenges, with our active responses and efforts.

#### **Part IV The reform and development of Chinese universities will determine the overall development of China in the future**

Serving the country's strategic policies is part of the mission of a prestigious research university, as well as a way to success for modern universities. History has proved that it is an important path for Chinese universities to follow. In the creativity-driven new era, the university will as always play an important role in national strategic policies, and can actually determine the overall development of the country. At present, Chinese universities are exploring new ideas in academic and educational systems.

First of all, we will be exploring the idea of a world-class university with Chinese characteristics. On the whole, Chinese universities still fall short of first-class universities in the world. At present, the various quantified evaluation systems to a certain extent give rise to academic utilitarianism, weakening academic morals and the scientific spirit. Our value and our goal should be in the cultivation of creative intellectual persons, in the production of truly original discoveries and in meeting the country's needs. This is the right way towards a world-class university. Against a backdrop of industrialization, information, urbanization, market economy, and globalization, the university must look for its position between the western ideas of "freedom" and "independence", and the traditional Chinese notion of Great Learning, which consists in promoting excellent virtues, in renewing people's mind, and in arriving at the highest Good.

Secondly, we will be searching for an education mode that is Chinese in character but can also stand up to world standards. The intellectual persons are a determinant element in future development. We carry on our shoulders hard but holy missions. China is large in terms of the amount of technology, education and intellectual persons that it produces, but not yet strong. We still lack world-level scientists and pioneering persons in various fields, we are in need of original thinkers and creative minds. Upon this premise, on the one hand, we need to improve both our general education and academic education, borrow from traditional methods, and produce intellectual persons with knowledge and sound personality. On the other hand, we will continue to open up, “letting in and going out”, strengthening communications with the world, and broadening our horizon. We will borrow from the ideas and methods of prestigious universities in the world, experimenting on our education system, our curriculum, our education mode and administrative structure. We’ll do our best to have first-class institutes burgeoning on Chinese soil.

Thirdly, we will be looking for a world-class, Chinese academic innovative system. With the innovations in the research management system, we will improve our competition, evaluation and encouragement systems. We must carry on with fundamental research alongside practical research, support local economic development, social development and technological development. We will seek to encourage joint inter-disciplinary research. And focusing on programs of national importance, we must establish a more flexible cross-field or unifying system, to strengthen the ties and inter-communications between different disciplines. We need to optimize the distribution of scientific resources and the research forces, to construct an open and resilient research management system, and to establish a multi-disciplinary academic body which can deal with scientific issues, practical issues and also theoretical issues. We must build an academic evaluation, selection and examination system based on categories and levels. We need to be able to produce academic masters with international renown, and also pioneers who can play the lead roles in the national strategy. We need quality teaching staff, as well as cultivators of

intellectual persons. We need devoted and original academic staff that can focus on fundamental research. We also need those who can bring out independent creation and develop new technologies according to the needs of industry. Finally, we need to provide a high-class intellectual repertory, which will be able to offer counsels and advice to the government.

Serving the nation and the society is where the university's social value lies. It is also a sure path which will lead Chinese universities towards world-class universities. Against the background of globalization, creation and transformation have become the common notions of the Chinese society. History and reality both inform us that the reform and development of Chinese universities have profound significance to the overall development of the country and the society. As administrators of Chinese universities, we'll carry on with our search and innovation, so that we can better serve the society and also the advancement of human being.