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*Analytical Reports in
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Analytical Reports in International Education (ARIE) aims to publish high quality, original analytical articles, original research articles, tutorial and review papers as well as genuine experience materials related to international education.

ARIE is a refereed journal for the publication of scholarly research that makes an original contribution to the advancement of international education. The journal encompasses the broad range from macro works comparing education in different societies and cultures to theoretically insightful micro case studies and accepts submissions from a wide range of theoretical traditions and methodological approaches.

Recognizing that the current international education system starts to play decisive role in further globalization of sciences and engineering and recognizing that there is considerable potentials inherent in international education to improve the world economy and international collaboration, it is the mission of the ARIE to provide a place to discussion on most hot topics related to principles of convergence of different countries types of educational systems and role of academic community in this development.

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From Restoration to Mega-Expansion: Higher Education Reform in China: A Three-Decade Review (1976-2006)

Xin Wang*

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This article sets out to consider three questions: What are the principal problems confronting Chinese higher education sector? How has the landscape of higher education changed since 1978? And what are the issues need to be addressed in the future? This article examines major reforms that have transformed Chinese higher education in last three decades, including the expansion of the student enrollment, the consolidation of universities, the funding reform, the privatization of higher education, and other alternatives to higher education.

China has experienced significant economic growth during the last three decades as the country sought to make up for lost time during the Cultural Revolution. However, one of the serious obstacles to China's quest to enhance and sustain the country's economic growth is a shortage of educated personnel. To respond to this compelling need, higher education in China has undertaken reforms to expand the higher education system, restructure curriculum and programs, establish two- and three-year specialized colleges, reorganize administrative system, diverse higher education finance, and establish private institutions (Min, 1991; World Bank, 1986 & 1997). From 1980 to 2005, the number of Chinese universities and colleges rose from 675 to 1,792, with an increase in student enrollment from 0.625 million to 15.61 million (MOE, 2005). At the same time, private institutions had grown from none to 252. This article examines major reforms that have transformed Chinese higher education in last three decades. This article sets out to consider three questions: What are the principal problems confronting Chinese higher education sector? How has the landscape of higher education changed since 1978? And what are the issues need to be addressed in the future.

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Four Phases of Development

The higher education system in China, which was shattered during the ten-year Cultural Revolution, was restored in 1977 when the new leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) initiated the economic reform and set objectives for the social, economic, and educational development for China. To facilitate the nation's political and economic reform, higher education was given the top priority to educate and train large numbers of advanced specialized human resources. Universities held the first examination to admit students to receive college education after ten-year lapse of education during the Cultural Revolution. Between 1978 and 1985, China's higher education was expanded in a rapid pace. The enrollment grew from 625,319 in 1977, to 1,703,115 in 1985. By 1985, there were 1,080 institutions of higher learning, excluding institutions for continuing education, TV and Radio universities, and corporate institutions. Of these, 36 were under the direction of the State Education Commission (SEdC), 316 under the ministries of government, and 664 under provincial governments (MOE, 1985).

The second wave of reform occurred between 1985 and 1992. The old pattern of higher education administrative system and management structure was highly centralized. The central government and related provincial governments maintained excessive control over higher education financing, admission policies, instruction design, curriculum, and leadership assignment (Du, 1992). This highly centralized system of higher education impeded the development of higher education, and inhibited institutions from changing to meet social, political and economic challenges. In 1985, the central government and the CCP adopted a series of important new policies entitled 'The Decision on the Reform of the Educational System', which brought fundamental changes into the higher education system. The decision intended to "expand the powers of decision-making of the institutions of higher learning in school management ... and enable the institutions of higher learning to have the initiative and ability to meet the needs of economic and social development." These new policies delegated to universities with the authority to make decisions regarding instruction and curriculum, as well as with the freedom to set admission policies to admit students outside the state plan but financed by enterprises or by themselves. From then on, higher education institutions began to generate a certain amount of funding through private sources rather than government allocation. The new policies also proposed the implementation of a three-level education management system at the central, provincial, and municipal levels of major cities. The Decision suggested diversification in institutional types and

encouraged the establishment of more three-year specialized colleges, two-year community colleges, and adult education in addition to the normal baccalaureate institutions in order to meet the demands for different levels of skilled workforce.

The third wave of development continued after 1992 when the Chinese higher education system expanded in an unprecedented rate. Given the financing constraints in higher education in China, the central government and the SEdC, the major policy-making and planning organization for the Chinese higher education system, have launched several reforms to improve administrative system and reconfigure the structure of Chinese higher education (MOE, 1993). In 1993, in the Fourth National Conference on Higher Education, The Outline for Educational Reform and Development in China was adopted by the SEdC as new guidelines for reforms in the higher education administrative system. The Outline urges to funding sources, decentralize administrative structure and expand of university autonomy, and restructure the system for efficiency, and reasonable expansion. Meanwhile, SEdC proposed to make joint efforts with the local governments in supporting and constructing universities. In December 1994, at the National Forum on the Reform of Higher Education System, SEdc presented restructure plans for universities (Mauch, 1997). This plan is intended to implement systemic strategies rather than piecemeal solutions to change the highly centralized existing administrative system, in which universities were governed by both central government ministries and local governments. The overall system was divided into small closed systems. In such closed systems, Universities and colleges reported to different divisions of governments. They tend to be small and specialized in one area of study to prepare workforce for a specific industry. As a result, the scope of knowledge of the graduates was relatively narrow. Since colleges were confined to the specific roles defined by the needs of their affiliated governmental agencies, they were inertia to the changing environment. Meanwhile, cross-ministry intercollegiate coordination was lacking. Resources could not be shared and utilized efficiently. Furthermore, under the centralized planning system, universities and colleges had no autonomy for their own development. Institutions were unable to take initiatives to revise curricula and degree programs in response to economic and social changes in the labor market. Under restructure plans, from 1992 to 2002, about 753 colleges and universities were merged and consolidated to 285 universities. Meanwhile, universities have increased its efficiency drastically. The average enrollment of undergraduate students at baccalaureate universities was increased from 1919 in 1990 to 10454 in 2002 (MOE, 2003). The teacher-student ratio was increased from 1:6.3 in 1990 to 1:13.4 in 1999. Mega-size universities were in

the making as the result of the restructure plan. Zhejiang University, which consolidated 3 other colleges into its system in 1998, enrolled 35,000 students. The increasing number of college students partially results from the expansion plan of higher education enrollment in China. Policies which were made in the late 1980s and the beginning of 1990s delegated universities with the authority to make decisions regarding admissions. Universities began to admit a small number of self-paying students to generate an extra funding through private sources rather than government allocation. In 1987, over 25,000 employer-sponsored and self-paying students were admitted, about 2.5 percent of the total admitted students (Gao, 1988). This is only the beginning of a large-scale expansion of college enrollment. The mega expansion of Chinese universities started in January 1999 when China set a goal of achieving a gross enrollment rate of 15 percent by 2010 in the national Action Plan to Vitalize Education in the 21st Century (the Action Plan), issued by the Ministry of Education. This marks the transition from an elite and a meritocratic higher education to a mass higher education. As the result of this plan, student enrollment at universities increased from 7.8 million in 1998 to 15.61 million in 2005 (MOE, 2005), and already reached the targeted 15 percent gross enrollment rate.

From appearance, the expansion plan was made to increase access to higher education. However, this decision was intended to encourage Chinese families to spend their savings on their children's higher education to stimulate the nation's economy. At the same time, the national government could continue to reduce its public expenditures in higher education as the funding need for other public sectors were increasing. The new decision also helps China's higher education sector to establish new patterns of financing which will likely persist when government expenditures in higher educational decreased.

Meanwhile, the priority of the central government is to build a small number of the world-class universities. In 1993, the Ministry of Education announced to launch Project 211, which supports 100 key universities to become world-class universities in the twenty-first century. In 1999, the Chinese government announced a new initiative, Project 985, to support building 38 world-class research universities in China. From 1999 to 2002, the central and the local government allocated \$3 billion to strengthen research and infrastructure at these universities.

Governance

These series of reforms have had a direct impact on governance and management of higher education in China. The centralized higher education system is the product of the planned economic system. With the transition to a

market-driven economy, universities need freedom to make decision on academic affairs. Chinese higher education institutions enjoy more freedom of institutional governance today than before as academic governance has shifted from a completely centralized model to a more locally governing model since the 1990s. But in reality, government-institution relationship has been complicated in many areas. This transition delegates more responsibilities to institutions for making decisions and taking actions for their own well-being. On the other hand, as chief executive officers of universities, college presidents take more responsibilities and held accountable for the operation of the university. To many college presidents, who are often appointed by the government and the CCP, they have to learn how adapt themselves to the new administrative system.

One of the constant challenges of the Chinese higher education system is the undefined boundaries of the decision-making authority between the central government and the academic institutions. Before the economic reform of the mid 1980s, the central government had a direct influence on the management of higher education, and institutions' policies on admissions, curriculum and instruction, leadership selection, and faculty employment. In 1985, the central government and the Chinese Communist Party adopted a series of important new policies entitled "The Decision on the Reform of the Educational System", which brought fundamental changes into the higher education system. The decision stated that

The key to success in the reform of the higher education system ...is to change the management system of excessive government control over the institutions of higher learning, expand the powers of decision-making of the institutions of higher learning in school management...and enable the institutions of higher learning to have the initiative and ability to meet the needs of economic and social development (MOE, 1985).

This new policy delegated the authority to universities to make decisions regarding instruction and curriculum, admissions, and other academic and administrative affairs. It changed the role of the government in the governance of the universities, and eventually changed the government-university relationship. Though universities have gained some autonomy of academic and administrative control, the boundary of the decision-making authority between the government and the universities is vaguely defined. The central government provides specific guidelines on admissions, research and study scope, missions and objectives, and curricular structure. In terms of curriculum and instruction, national policies still have a direct control on the curriculum of graduate education. Under such uniform national guidelines, academic programs function in the similar way.

The Chinese administrative system still contains elements of the traditional division of authority between center and local provinces. Extensive government intervention is imbedded throughout higher education sector. The system emphasizes good political skills over modern management capabilities. Higher education is a public sector and receives funding from both national and provincial governments. Though universities continue to learn how to negotiate with the government to gain more autonomy and control over their own academic affairs, they are accustomed to the centralized system. They tend to depend on central planning, central funding, and central policy making. They have to learn how to share the governing responsibility with the government under the new dual governance system. This dual governing system can often be translated as less funding, more regulations and guidelines from the central and local government. Universities are held accountable and liable for institutional planning, governance and fundraising. Therefore, academic leaders need more knowledge, management skills and business acumen in order to run today's university effectively.

As more authority has been delegated to individual universities, administrative power is being strengthened within each university. This leads to a shift from government bureaucracy to institutional bureaucracy. First, there is an undefined authority of academic governance between the president and the party secretary at each university. Chinese Communist Party has its own committee at each university. During the early 1980s, the goal of the political reform was to separate Party from the administration and to clarify the functions of and relations between the two structures. Idealistically, the administration should act independently in daily administrative affairs and Party should confine itself to policy making. In reality, it is impossible to separate Party from administration. Party's political authority is much larger and higher than the administration's authority at each university since Party is in charge of key personnel appointment and promotion of the university. Presidents and senior administrators are often party members and report to the party secretary. Therefore, administration is lacking in independent authority to run the university. The "presidential responsibility system under Party's leadership" does not allow college president run the university operation independently. College presidents feel that they are sandwiched in between the government and the Party leadership since they are appointed by the government and the Party, though they are liable for the operation of the university.

Chinese academic leaders have been efficient at implementing policies and decisions made by the government and negotiating with the government in order

to receive more resources. However, college presidents need knowledge and management skills to operate modern universities effectively. When the government expenditures on higher education is shrinking, the imminent challenge for college administrators is how to raise more funding to support research and instruction.

Funding

The reforms in the early 1990s were intended to give higher education institutions more autonomy to generate their own revenues (Du, 1992). As Table 1 indicates, about 96 percent of the total budget for higher education in 1978 comes from the government appropriation. In 1992, funding for public higher education comes from multiple sources, including student tuition and fees, donations, and revenues from university's businesses. Government allocations account for 82 percent of the total budget for higher education; revenue generated from various sources by universities themselves represents fourteen percent and tuition fees accounted for four percent. The percentage of the revenue that the university receives from government has been shrinking (Table 2). In 2002, less than fifty percent of the university budget comes from government appropriations.

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of Funding from Different Sources

Source	1978	1992	2002
Total Budgeted Allocation from Govt.	95.9	81.8	50.6
Total University Funding	4.1	18.2	49.4
University Generated Revenue	4.1	12.8	21.3
Donations and others	0	0.8	1.8
Student tuition and fees	0	4.6	26.3
Total Percentage	100	100	100

Source: China Educational Statistical Yearbook, 1979, 1993, and 2003

Meanwhile, university revenue from student tuition and fees has been increasing, accounting for 26 percent of the total university funding. Universities have also been more entrepreneurial than before to generate funding from other sources to improve financial stability. Universities in China often have their own businesses and high-tech firms, especially when many technology development zones were created and built around universities. Universities often receive income from patent licensing and technology commercialization. Revenues from university's businesses and technology licensing fees have contributed around 21 percent of the total funding. One area which still accounts for a small percentage in the overall financial picture is the endowment and donation. It only contributes

less than two percent to the total funding of higher education in China. Higher education finance has already shifted from the state as the sole funding provider of higher education to a cost-sharing mechanism which includes multiple parties to share the cost of higher education. The central government has gradually reduced government financial subsidies to higher education and students. Meanwhile, universities, college students and their parents have shared the financial cost of higher education. Funds from the nongovernmental sectors have helped institutions reduce their dependence on government financing and their vulnerability to budget fluctuations, and have made institutions more responsive to market signals. The major pitfall in the process of decentralization is the disparities in financial capacity to invest higher education among provinces (World Bank, 1997).

Table 2. Revenue from Different Sources on Higher Education in China
(billion Yuan)

Year	Total Expenditure on Higher Education	Revenue Allocated from Government	Revenue Generated by Universities
1978	1.50	1.436	0.064
1992	11.04	9.030	2.01
2002	158.32	78.750	79.57

Source: China Educational Statistical Yearbook, 1979, 1993, and 2003

China is divided into three macro economic and administrative regions: the coastal region includes highly developed provinces; the central area comprised of medium-developed provinces; and the western region is a less developed region. Provinces of the coastal region can appropriate more funding from their budget than other interior provinces. Further disparities exist among provinces within the same region. Coastal provinces generally can appropriate more funding to higher education than the interior provinces can. Even within a province, disparity is evident in financial resources available for provincial universities and national universities. Universities under the jurisdiction of MOE receive more government funding than the provincial universities. Consequently, the expenditure per student for provincial universities is smaller than that for national universities in the same province. The key research universities in China are in a strong financial position. State Appropriations have leveled in last decades to these universities while dropped to many other universities; revenues from tuition, research grants have increased at an extraordinary rate. They have a large operating budget. Competition for state appropriation has been intense among top-tier universities.

Universities are dependent more upon tuition than they were two decades ago. Tuition revenue today accounts for more than 25 per cent of the typical operating budget on average. Even though sources of funds have been diversified when compared to ten years ago chart here, major sources of funding are tuition revenue and state appropriation.

Cost-sharing financial mechanism has reduced financial dependability of universities on state appropriation and increased enrollment of higher education in China. However, it has also created inequality of access to higher education as the tuition has increased from an average of \$250 per year in 1996 to \$750 per year in 2004. China's rapid economic development has accelerated the stratification of the Chinese society and the polarization and disparity between the new rich and the poor since 1990. The average income per capita in urban areas passed \$1,000 in 2005, while the average income per capita for rural families is barely \$300 (Liu et al., 1999; National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). This income disparity has created inequity of educational opportunities between regions, between rural and urban areas, and between middle and lower income families. It is almost impossible for rural families to support a student to receive university education, especially when financial aid program has not been institutionalized effectively. Urban families have more financial resources to invest in their children's education, especially middle- and upper-income families. They can afford to send their children to college preparatory programs and private universities.

Adult Learning and Continuing Education

Another fast growing sector in Chinese higher education is adult and continuing education to accommodate an increasing demand of higher education. Adult and continuing education is a part of Chinese efforts to establish community education in higher education system. Since 1978, Chinese educators have discussed establishing community education with "Chinese characteristics." The State Education Commission signed agreements with several foreign educational agencies to seek aid and understanding of community education. Chinese educators visited American community, junior and technical colleges, Australian technical and further education (TAFE) colleges, and German vocational colleges in order to develop its own version of community colleges. China has developed its own system for adult and continuing education, which includes radio and TV universities, colleges of adult education within universities, technical and vocational colleges. The total enrollment at adult and continuing education institutions is around 4.36 million in 2005. These institutions provide opportunities for students who are unable to get into

baccalaureate universities to pursue their higher education. At the same time, adult learning institutions relieve universities from the pressure for an increasing demand for higher education.

China also established two- or three-year colleges as commuter colleges to provide higher education for students in surrounding areas. These institutions are equivalent to community colleges. They are regional and provincial universities since they receive funding mainly from provinces, cities, or government agencies. They evolved as residential colleges in the 1990s as they started recruiting students from farther areas. They emphasize profession training and prepare students to enter a work force after two or three years of study. Students are usually not able to transfer to a baccalaureate university to continue their study since no articulation is established with baccalaureate universities for transfer. However, these institutions provide an alternative channel for students to receive higher education under such an elite system and meritocratic system. As universities expand their enrollments and start charging tuition to students, two- to three-year colleges face serious challenges from baccalaureate universities. Students prefer four-year universities to two- or three-year colleges since they have more career choices, and better economic return to their college education. Especially when job market is becoming competitive and college tuition is increasing. To accommodate student's needs and to survive in the market place for higher education, some two- to three-year colleges transformed themselves into baccalaureate universities. Some have been consolidated and merged by other universities in vicinity since the mid 1990s when universities were anxious to become mega comprehensive universities. In 1998 471 two- to three- year colleges existed, but only 149 left in 2003 after aggressive consolidation and merger among universities and colleges in China. When public two- and three-year colleges become baccalaureate universities, private universities emerged and took their place in providing community education.

Private Universities

As public universities have undergone expansion and consolidation, private universities have resurged in the last two decades. Private universities which established by missionaries and Chinese entrepreneurs and educators were closed or transformed into public universities after the Communist Party took power in 1949. For example, Furen University, one of the most famous private universities in Beijing built by the Jesuit, was transformed to become part of Beijing Normal University.

In post-Mao era, with the economic reform and the expansion of higher education system, universities were facing growing demand for higher education.

Public universities have limited capacity to admit students. As household income and purchasing power of consumers increase in China, private education became a logical solution to the growing market for higher education. In 1993, Chinese government published Provisional Regulations on the Non-State Higher Educational Sectors to allow private sectors to establish and operate Minban schools. In 2005, about 225 private universities were accredited by the Government with a total enrollment of one million students.

Private universities are facing many challenges. First, private universities are short of permanent faculty members. Professors prefer working for public universities to private ones. Private universities depend heavily on retired and part-time faculty members. At some private universities, eighty percent of their faculty members teach part-time. Such instability of teaching faculty makes it difficult for new private universities to create their own academic culture. At the same time, research at these universities is void since no research faculty wants to come to work for private universities in China. Private universities are generally established in large cities and college towns to share resources from public universities, including faculty. For example, twenty-two private universities are in Xi'an at present, a city with more than forty-five public universities. To public universities, private universities have not posed any fierce competition to them yet since the majority of Chinese students still choose to go to public universities, whose degrees are well recognized and academic programs are diverse and broad. Public universities recruit top forty to fifty percent of high school graduates. Private universities can only recruit students after admissions of public universities. To students who are not admitted by public universities, private university is the second choice to receive higher education. Academic programs are still limited at private universities. Most of programs are professional studies, such as English training, business and computer science. It is rare to have academic programs in humanities and sciences at private universities, which require more investment in lab research. Curricula at these universities are pragmatic. Most programs are two to three years long.

Private universities are still new in China and the central government has published several regulatory documents to enhance private higher education, including the 1995 Provisional Regulations on Education Institutions Jointly Sponsored with International Institutions, the 1995 Education Law, the 1996 Vocational Education Law, the 1997 Regulations for the Non-State Education Sector, and the 1998 Higher Education Law. Private universities have also been working with the government for accreditation and improving education quality.

Private training schools are thriving in China. These schools provide language training, test preparation, business training and technology training to all age groups. Students at all levels attend year-round after-school training programs. Self-potential and ability development programs are also popular among the newly emerged middle-income class and white-collar professionals. Recent college graduates will also pay to improve their English or business skills, as they believe that they must do so in order to get promoted or find a higher paying job. In a recent survey conducted by China Market Research Group, the result shows that in Shanghai over fifteen percent of recent graduates are willing to spend over ten percent of their monthly disposable incomes on training courses (Rein). One successful school in English training business is New Oriental Education. Founded in 1993, the company has since built a strong brand name for its foreign language and test preparation courses for GRE, GMAT and TOEFL. Foreign language training and test preparation courses are the main growth drivers for the company. As China is plugged into the global market, the demand for English training is increasing. Its primary market is the college students who plan to study abroad. Since 2002, more than 100,000 Chinese students have traveled abroad to pursue degrees each year. The company has also developed English training programs for adults and children lately since there has been burgeoning demand for English training. It has an extensive network in large cities. It currently operates 25 schools and 111 learning centers in 24 cities with an enrollment of 900,000 students. It has successfully developed a distinguished brand name among Chinese college students. It is now publicly traded at New York Stock Exchange.

Privatization of higher education has also increased the issue of inequality in access to higher education. Private training schools are booming only in large cities. Smaller cities have fewer English-speaking candidates and qualified teachers. In addition, like private universities, training schools primarily focus on foreign language training or business training. Curriculum is lack of diversity. But the demand for training is growing among adults and college graduates.

Conclusion

This article has described the challenges to which the Chinese universities and government must respond in order to create the conditions under which continued improvement and transformation can occur. With the introduction of student tuition payment and private institutions, Chinese higher education has been privatized and decentralized. The system is shifting from a meritocratic education to mass education. However, government is still the dominant force in Chinese higher education. Government directs the development, structure,

instruction and research of higher education through its funding and policymaking mechanism. Recent reforms in higher education have accelerated the polarization of the universities. With a substantial financial support from the central government, a group of research universities are emerging. These universities can afford to attract top researchers and scholars to teach and conduct research. The disparity in government funding between research universities and other universities is increasing and has created elitism in Chinese higher education system. Research universities have more elite status than other institutions do. Smaller colleges, who depend on local funding and tuition, have been consolidated into large universities. At the same time, private colleges are emerging and become active regional player in technical and vocational education. Thus, a multi-layered higher education system is in the forming. Universities have already started tapping financial resources from private sectors. Students, businesses and private donors, along with government, share the cost of higher education. A multi-sector cost-sharing financial mechanism of higher education is in the forming.

The introduction of student payments and rising enrollment has raised a critical question about education quality at both public and private universities. Some universities admitted more students than their capacity can handle in order to generate more financial revenue. Chinese government has not yet established new mechanisms of quality assurance for higher education. National accreditation agencies have not been established to evaluate administrative and instructional effectiveness. No evaluation procedure has been developed at both national and local levels. With the increased pace of reform and the new questioning about quality, Chinese government and universities need to develop a coherent policy that will achieve accountability for higher education.

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Growing English Studies: Current Reality in China

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Along with the ever-fast trend of modernization in China, English has become increasingly popular. More people start to show interest in English learning while noticing the pragmatic values in speaking English. Gradually, English has developed into a higher level of public acceptance. Within this social background, this paper takes *Crazy English* program in China as a case in point to illustrate how English has transformed from its initial role as a second-language to this contemporary era's public mania towards English learning. Meanwhile, this examination of the Crazy English program aims to expose the sociocultural dimensions embedded in the altered role of English, English learning, and English teaching. In other words, through the lens of Crazy English program, this study reveals the multifaceted forces underpinning globalization that have resulted in Chinese people's changed attitude towards English and English learning and teaching; and in doing so, explicates the sociological consequences resulting from this English mania while calling for a healthier approach to English learning and teaching.

Ever since the last two decades, the popularity of English has become one of the most noticeable aspects that epitomize China's transition to a more modernized and globalized era. Politically, socially, and economically, China is no longer the same as it once was years ago. Ideologically, Chinese people have become much more open-minded towards new ideas and ways of living their lives, many of which were unthinkable of if it were years ago. Transforming from a peasant society to a consumerist reflection of the West, English seems play an essential role in linking the two phases and materializing the transition. Within this framework, this paper examines the altered role that English plays in Chinese society while exposing the sociocultural dimensions and embedded in and sociological consequences resulted from the change.

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In particular, this paper uses *Crazy English* program as a case in point to illustrate Chinese people's changed attitudes towards English and English learning and teaching. The rationale for choosing Crazy English lies in that the overarching development of this training program, from its initial launch to its later triumph, vividly reflects Chinese people's mentality change with respect to English, English learning, and English teaching.

Throughout this process, *Crazy English* program simultaneously reflects and nurtures a sheer new generation with conceptually different mindset towards English. Chinese people, especially the young generation, have changed from an initial indifference to a later mild interest, and finally this contemporary era's English learning mania. In general, the Chinese society has recognized the rhetorical, political, and socio-economic values associated with a good command of English skills. With that, this paper's examination of *Crazy English* program's development hopes to reveal primary sociological forces that have resulted in and hastened the explosion of English learning mania in China.

English Learning in China

First, to have a better understanding of the scale of English learning in China, it is necessary to trace back to some facts and figures. Throughout almost every landscape in China, the number of English learners is exploding apace. As Taylor (2002) has pointed out, "It seems there are more people learning to speak English in China than there are English speakers in the whole of the United States." Truly indeed, more than 200 million kids in China are learning English in schools, which is about 20% of the world population (Jiang, 2003).

Additionally, if the 80s generation started to learn English since middle school, the current 20s generation begins English learning as early as they start to learn Mandarin, which is the official language in China. Bilingual kindergartens are developed to especially meet this need. In spite of this cost, Chinese parents are showing great enthusiasm in sending their kids to bilingual kindergartens so as to master English skills in addition to Chinese as young as possible. Reports from Malaysian Democratic Action Party (DAP) in 2002 have demonstrated the growing popularity of bilingual kindergartens, "In fact, English is almost a compulsory subject in Beijing's kindergartens as a growing number of parents want their children better equipped for the future." This passion for English learning lies in Chinese parents' belief that adequate English skills are crucial to a bright future. As a result of this pragmatic view towards English learning, as Yun and Jia (2003) have stated, "The primary purpose of study[ing] [English] has switched from being a valuable tool for gaining access to western science and technology to serving the needs of society better: that is, mutual communication

with people from different cultures." Indeed, Chinese people's ever-increasing eagerness towards English seems to confirm Yun and Jia's statement.

Responding to the growing public's needs, the number of enterprises and institutions specializing in English training has increased considerably. Universities and colleges have at least 13 million students learning English (Jiang, 2003). Numerous institutes have provided training classes for TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), GRE (Graduate Record Examination), GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test), and IELTS (International English Language Test System). All these tests are mandatory for everyone who wants to study in any English-speaking countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, etc.

In addition to these tests on a global scale, Chinese universities have their own English tests designed for students who do not want to receive overseas education. They offer two such tests: College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) and College English Test Band 6 (CET-6). CET-4 is a required test for all college students if they want to graduate regardless of their majors. In other words, students cannot receive their college diploma if they fail to pass the CET-4. Except for English major students, CET-6 is not mandatory but will substantially boost a student's competitiveness when he or she enters job market after graduation. As a result, most students take both CET-4 and CET-6.

Given the number of students taking the various tests, public and private institutions providing English training have become very popular and profitable as a result. Reports have shown that English as a Second Language (ESL) training has become a 10-billion Yuan business. Of the 37 billion Yuan annual book sales, ESL takes up as much as 25% of the market share (Niu, 2003). Till 2002, according to Jiang (2003), "There are more than 3,000 ELT [English Language Training] schools across the country." In addition, compared to 2002, Dai and Du (2002) have stressed, "The figures [of ELT] have doubled or even tripled in just a year." In short, all these aspects have demonstrated Chinese people's desire to English learning.

Crazy English Program

Crazy English program, launched by Li Yang, is one of the few institutes that have become a legendary figure in China's English training history. This program came to the marketplace in September 1995 (*Crazy English Website*). Since then, it has shown to be an incredible success. Besides offering classes, the *Crazy English* institute has a rich variety of products facilitating English speaking such as videos, tapes, books, MP3, VCD, DVD, text message via cell phone, etc.

The major reason *Crazy English's* success is its teaching method, which is a breakthrough from the traditional way of Chinese education. That is, instead of focusing on grammar and test preparation, which are what most schools routinely do, Li Yang concentrates on the spoken aspect of English. Moreover, instead of speaking English, he "shouts" English believing that shouting is an effective way to improve English skills.

Another reason that has contributed to Li Yang's fame was his poor performance in English classes and test scores when he was a college student. Almost at the edge of failing his English classes, Li Yang took the nerve to break away from the conventional approach and created his "shouting" English learning method. This method worked well for him and his English scores have had bumped up to the top three. Since then, Li Yang coined the well-known name *Crazy English*.

In this contemporary era, Li Yang along with his *Crazy English* program has become very influential in China. Among all Chinese English learners, Li Yang's name is as common as ABC. A documentary has been shot exclusively on Li Yang's English teaching (Zhang, 2002). The China Central Television (CCTV), which is the most influential media channel in China, has interviewed him regarding his success in English teaching. Globally, Li Yang has lectured to over 20 million people in China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, where he has also received favorable feedbacks from the public. Over 100 members of the media from 30 countries, such as Canada, the United States, Australia, etc., have interviewed him, and the Japanese TV station NHK has made a live broadcast of his *Crazy English*.

Analysis and Discussion

By all means, English teaching is not a brand new concept in China. Yet, what makes Li Yang become unique and popular is his innovative English teaching method. Traditionally, English teaching in China is predominately about grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing. Teachers gave little attention to spoken English and interaction with students. As a result, most students are comparatively good at English writing, grammar, and reading, but substantially poor at speaking English. And most Chinese students mistakes English learning as a mastery of grammar. The popular Chinese culture has commonly referred to this phenomenon as "dumb English."

Apart from taking away the joy of learning, the traditional English teaching method has made students become incapable of speaking and communicating in English. Learning has become a task for the purpose of passing exams and securing better jobs. A news article on *China Daily* has demonstrated this

fundamental flaw lies in the traditional Chinese education system, which has significantly prevented effective learning from taking place. As the article states,

The incompetence of many graduates from high schools or even colleges and universities to communicate effectively in spoken and written English is related to the teaching methods in China. Students are usually spoon-fed, listening and taking notes with teachers standing at the front and doing most of the talking.

English Teaching Method Faces Challenge

Nevertheless, this traditional teaching method to a large degree traces back to the sociocultural and political environments that most Chinese educational institutions grow up with. The most influential aspect is Confucianism, which has been in China for centuries. For example, compared with their American counterparts, Chinese students are more passive and obedient, and they seldom ask questions openly in class. Students grow up in China have been used to noting-taking, memorization, and obeying authorities, which are many core values to the conventional teaching method (Redding, 1980). Edmund (2000) has emphasized the influences of traditional values in Chinese education. As he has observed, "[Chinese students' politeness] has led to a certain reticence, even fear, of openly challenging or even discussing equivocal points and issues that could offend teachers or prejudice student advantage. Such reticence is compounded by a strong cultural sense of "face"--a desire not to be embarrassed, or to embarrass others, publicly."

With this social context, *Crazy English* was groundbreaking in that it has challenged the traditional teaching method. Unlike emphasizing note taking and memorization, *Crazy English* program questions students' shyness and inability to communicate with people in English regardless of the amount of time and effort that students have invested in English learning. Li Yang believes that good learning has to be facilitated by good teaching, and vice versa. Learning and teaching is a mutual process. Without effective teaching, real learning could hardly take place. With this mindset, the *Crazy English* program is determined to let publics know that learning English is meaningless if a person cannot communicate in English, and good writing has no guarantee of speaking good English. Speaking needs practice and it is only through doing so that one can truly master the language. As a result, the *Crazy English* program's core teaching principles are:

- speak English as clearly as possible,
- speak as fast as possible,

- speak as loudly as possible.

Crazy English Website.

At present, because of the popularity of the *Crazy English* program, Li Yang cannot teach classes in person. What he does instead is to lecture on large classes, sometimes around hundreds of people, believing and actually advocating that large class size facilitates effectively learning than smaller ones. This is because of the synergy that is only available from large groups. Typically, Li Yang would stand at the front of a big lecture hall and "shout and yell" every single English word in accompany with specific body gestures. Then, the entire audience would imitate and shout back the same word.

An example to illustrate the *Crazy English* program's teaching method is its summer and winter camping program. This camping program is specifically designed for students who want to sharpen their English skills during their summer and winter breaks. The goal of the program is to make students become crazy about English. Take the 2005 winter camp as an example. This program lasted ten days from February 5 through 14. Li Yang taught all classes in person, in large class size though. Everyday, student was assured to spend at least 10 hours in speaking English (*Crazy English Website*). This means that literally, since students opened their eyes, they probably have had to speak English. In this respect, this so-called camping was more like a "concentration camp," where students were congregated for the sole purpose of speaking better English

The cost for this camping program varied depending on how intensive a student wanted his or her training to be. The program offered three categories with different levels. The standard one was called "Distinguished Guest," which cost 6000 RMB (Roughly \$750). The second level was "Platinum" that cost 10,000 RMB (roughly \$ 1,250). The extra expense for this second level was because it offered students opportunities to receive personal tutor from Li Yang and to take pictures with him. The last group, which was the most expensive one, called "Diamond." It cost 16,000 RMB (roughly \$2,125). This last category allowed students to live together with native English speakers during the entire ten days including eating and sleeping. This last one might seem mostly appealing to people if they could afford the cost. However, remember that China is still a developing country with a number of people struggling to have their stomach fed. The amount of money that *Crazy English* charged for the purpose of merely speaking better English was unbelievable.

Moreover, students who joined camping program have had to go through varying degrees of psychological tension. Because most participants were middle school and high school students, it should be wondered to which extent these

little kids could have handled the intensity level that the program has demanded of. Nevertheless, regardless of the cost, the camping program has attracted thousands of hundreds of students. Parents have to register their kids early enough to have a seat. Apparently, people seemed to become crazy about English.

Shortcomings of the Crazy English Program

Theoretically and practically, the *Crazy English* teaching weighs pronunciation more than any other aspect of English learning. As a matter of fact, as the program has become more popular and profitable, the *Crazy English* training has shifted far away from its original intent as helping Chinese students beware that grammar is only one aspect leading to effective English learning. Unfortunately, the *Crazy English's* overwhelmingly emphasis on phonetics and intonation has made the program overlook many other aspects that are equally crucial to effective English learning such as the sociocultural values embedded in English.

The sociocultural values are important in language learning because communication cannot happen in a vacuum. Just like identities are socially constructed, so is language. Meanings can only be developed from interaction and every communicative interaction is contextualized by a particular cultural setting. A blindly imitation without reflection on a language's sociolinguistic aspects is like eating without digesting. Isolating English learning only to its phonetic is misleading and unhealthy in the long run.

Another aspect that the *Crazy English* program has ignored is the applicability of its method. What works for Li Yang might not be workable for other students. Language acquisition is not so much about a universal methodology than a personal suitability. Individuals need to find a way that is compatible with their learning habits. Even if a person is really interested in *Crazy English* method, she or he needs to make the effort to critically think about the similarities and differences between herself or himself and Li Yang, and then decide whether or not the program is a good fit. Without this reflection and inflection, a blind mimic without any questioning is likely to backfire and push students into a radical approach towards English learning.

Moreover, sociologically, apart from the earlier discussed ignorance of the cultural context of English, the *Crazy English* program overlooks the linguistic and grammatical aspects of English learning as well. Driving the whole attention to phonetics and intonation, learning English seemed to be only about accuracy in pronunciation. In terms of long-term outcomes, this approach was misleading

particularly for beginners. As Yang (2001) who is an English professor at Peking University has pointed out:

Hundreds or thousands of people shouting together may help overcome the sense of fear. It may help learners speak several phrases so as to give them a specious sense of fulfillment and achievement. But to dare to speak [English] does not mean to speak nonsense. Imitation without awareness of grammar does not guarantee an understanding of linguistic rules although it may help learners speak several sentences.

-Yang Limin, 2001:1.

By all accounts, the phonetic aspect of English should not be pursued at the cost of other equally important dimensions embedded in the language. Responsible English learners should remind themselves of the purpose of English learning. That is, language serves as a means for people to communicate, to exchange cultures and beliefs, and to better understand differences as a result of effective communication. The uniqueness of a language lies in its rich cultural values embedded in the language. Meaning is achieved via interactive communication not an absolute accuracy in pronunciation. A shared understanding between and among communicators reflects more of the quality of communication than impeccable pronunciation. In other words, language and culture are mutually constitutive and reflective, and thus are inherently connected and inseparable. As Brown (1994) has clarified, "A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture."

Last but not least, the popularity of English has affected the literacy level in Chinese. Over the past, Chinese language has been losing its significance for Chinese people. Professor Du from Chinese University of Hong Kong has pinpointed the sociological consequences of this English mania. As Du has commented during an interview with the 21st Century,

'[G]lobalization' is a form of Western domination. If we follow these trends blindly and put too much emphasis on English in this country, it could take up a lot of people's time and energy, decrease confidence in the Chinese language, and block the development and popularization of Chinese culture In 1995, this topic came up at a famous university in Shanghai when graduate students failed a Chinese exam. That set off alarm bells and set people to thinking there was urgent need to improve students' ability in their own language.

-Oct. 10, 2002, 21st Century

Unfortunately, the trend of English mania continues, at least in the near future. The *Crazy English* remains its role in promoting the importance of English through its series of promotion programs such as camp training, Business English, Olympic English, and so on and so forth. The misconceptions that the *Crazy English* program has created regarding English learning have been unfortunately reinforced by public zeal.

Society at large starts to associate a good command of English skills with quality citizenship. The Beijing Speaks English committee estimates that about 2.42 million people in Beijing should be able to communicate in English with foreigners, and the committee hope that by 2008 the number will have risen to 4 million so as to be ready for the Olympics (Taylor, 2002). Tourist guides, policemen, taxi drivers, and a majority of civil servants are expected to have some knowledge in English. Especially, people involved in civil services are required to pass specific English tests. All these methods are to assure that when Olympic Games finally arrive in Beijing, China is ready to welcome the world. According to a news report by China Radio International (CRI) in 2002, "Guangzhou, the capital of south China's Guangdong province, requires all of its civil servants born after 1960 to pass an English test to make sure that they are able to communicate in English by the year 2004." As a news article in China Daily (2002) has highlighted, the Chinese government hopes that its entire "13 million residents [could] speak English in order to enhance its image as a cosmopolitan metropolis."

Undoubtedly, the *Crazy English* program has sped up the process. As English capacity has gradually become an unspoken criterion to judge an individual's educational level and rate in success, English has been raised up to the level to be reflexive of people's social status. Having a good command of English is no longer whether or not a person is interested in English learning, but has become compulsory. As Run (2002) has summarized, "Fluency in English covers up all defects and deficiencies and you may as well do without initiatives and achievements. You are kept away if you are not efficient in English."

Critiques of the Crazy English Program

Given the *Crazy English* program's unbalanced approach to English teaching and learning, scholars have started to question the validity of its teaching method. As Lai (2001) has pointed out, to date, there is still "[n]o formal analysis or assessment has been conducted so far" to prove if this "*Crazy English* can really raise the standard of English among Chinese learners." Certainly, there is nothing wrong with Li Yang's focus on spoken English and pronunciation considering the

limitations of traditional Chinese teaching. However, is this accuracy in phonetic all that a person should care about in order to learn English? If linguistic aspects are the only factors that cause misunderstanding, theoretically, there should be no miscommunication and misunderstanding among native speakers. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Shared understandings must be achieved through communication instead of perfection in pronunciation. It is through communicating that that messages come across and become meaningful. Pronunciation is just one step out of many.

In summary, the *Crazy English* program's exclusive focus on phonetics is ignorant of the sociocultural dimensions of English learning. Sociologically, for one thing, the *Crazy English* approach has misled Chinese English learners to a wrong direction; for another thing, it has cultivated an unhealthy learning habit that is detrimental to students' mental growth. As Lai (2001) has stressed,

From observation and short interviews, there seemed to be evidence to show that learners have become more confident, more motivated and are sure of their learning. In this respect, the program can be considered successful. However, if we take a closer look at the content, we may find that while Li can help learners to gain some confidence, he may have pointed them in the wrong direction. If learners follow his advice, we may have millions of Chinese speaking English very fast in a very loud voice to foreigners, which is undesirable from the communicative point of view.

- Lai, 2001:34.

Last but not least, when it comes to the issue of speaking standard English, this topic has brought up a sheer different set of concerns about power. Which country has the power to decide whose English is standard and whose is not? Given space limitation, this paper will not delve into such issues. However, Chinese people should beware that accuracy in pronunciation is important but not the single most important factor in mastering English skills.

Conclusion

Briefly, this paper has reviewed the changed role that English has played in China along with the sociological consequences resulting from the change. This paper uses Li Yang's *Crazy English* program as a case in point to illustrate major forces driving this trend and hopes to generate new insights in effective and healthy English learning and teaching.

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Globalizing the curriculum at Dickinson State University: Dual-Degree and International Internship Programs at the Department of Agriculture and Technical Studies

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Globalizing the undergraduate curriculum is increasingly important for Dickinson State University students who are seeking the opportunity to understand different culture, improve language skills, and learn more about international markets and international communities.

For the last couple of years, the issues of globalization and multicultural diversity have gained increasing attention in higher education as well as at DSU and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Studies in particular. As a result we established new relationships with China, England, Russia, Japan, Mexico and Kazakhstan. Two of the partnerships with Chinese and Russian institutions are particularly remarkable. In 2002, a dual degree program with 15 Chinese universities was developed. This program allows Chinese students who have completed one or two years of study at a participating Chinese university to attend Dickinson State University for a summer, two consecutive semesters and a concluding summer session and obtain two diplomas from the United States and Chinese higher education institutions.

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Why do we need to have a global perspective?

As we closer to developing a truly global economy, many people believe that it is becoming increasingly important to internationalize the curricula by integrating global ideas, problem solving issues, and understanding the relationships between broad international concepts in many scopes of the curricula. Akpan and Martin (1996) believe that with the rapid shrinking of our world, U.S. institutions cannot afford the consequences of failing to prepare their citizens for participation in world affairs.

Vickers's (2000) rationale for globalizing universities included that the model for today's universities must be one that educates students to be competent in their discipline and intentionally prepares them to successfully participate as world citizens in the global economy.

As the international community moves toward greater interdependence, globalization is driving a revolution in educational institutions. This transformation is being shaped by the demands to prepare labor for participation in the global economy and to prepare citizens to participate in the international polity (Torres, 2002).

Study abroad and Students Exchange programs are increasingly being seen by DSU students as a way to better understand culture, language, traditions and business opportunities in an international content (Desruisseaux, 1999).

Chinese exchange program

As many as 40 Chinese students could begin attending classes on the campus of Dickinson State University in the summer of 2002 following a series of exchange program agreements signed by President Lee Vickers his trip to China.

According to the partnership agreements with 13 different Chinese universities and the creation of a dual-degree program between Dickinson State University and the foreign schools, Chinese students have the opportunity to attend classes in their home country for one or two years, then come to Dickinson State University for a summer, two consecutive semesters, and another summer session. While in Dickinson, the students are able to enroll in a University Studies major. Students participating in the dual-degree program take 42 credits during their residency on campus, and an additional six credits of online work after returning to China. Students must return to China and complete their degree requirements at the Chinese university before receiving a degree from Dickinson State University. Students will also receive a degree from their home university.

—This will enable us to increase our efforts to provide a diverse learning environment, which is beneficial to all students,”—said Dr. Vickers. —It is another aspect of our effort to bring the world to Dickinson State University.

Chinese institutions that entered into partnership agreements with Dickinson State University for the dual-degree program include Beijing Polytechnic University, Lanzhou University, Anhui University, Central China Normal University, Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics, Jimei University, Guangxi University, Nan Jing Normal University, Yibin University, Fuzhou University, Hubei University, Hubei University of Technology, and the Sichuan International Studies University.

Background of the International Internship Program in Russia

Global perspectives and attitudes toward cultural diversity among agriculture students were examined in this program.

During the past three years, Dickinson State University, in cooperation with Russian universities including Nizhniy Novgorod State agricultural Academy and Voronezh State University have conducted joint International Internship Programs. Ten Dickinson State University students and two professors took part and visited Russia for three weeks in June 2004. From Russian side, only four students took part in the program and spent six weeks on DSU campus. This first year program was considered as a pilot project and it went very well. Russian students had the opportunity to learn by participating in the program about the Western-life style and culture as well as observing the American Higher educational system and academic programs at DSU. American students learned more about Russia, Russian traditions, culture and religion. Russian students were introduced to the modern technologies of US Agriculture and learned about agribusinesses, trading and finance. DSU students visited Russian agricultural enterprises and studied the way of agricultural production in Former Soviet Union. Both American and Russian students saw the value of the partnership that they developed with their peers. Program designers delivered the program evaluation and indicated that joint programs like this can be effective in helping young people to bridge the cultural and professional gap between Russian and American students.

In order to improve the program and prepare DSU students for their trip to Russia a Basic Russian language class was offered first time in 2005. This course offers an introduction to the Russian language, developing the four basic communication skills of speaking, listening comprehension, reading, and writing.

In addition, students were introduced to cultural and social aspects of the Russian speaking world. By the end of this course, students were able to carry on basic conversations in Russian on many topics from their daily life and they able to introduce themselves in Russian.

In spring 2005 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Dickinson State University and Voronezh State and four students with their two instructors from Russia visited DSU campus for three weeks. Then nine American students and three instructors went to Russia and visited Voronezh for three weeks. DSU students learned a lot of culture from their Russian counterparts and they learned about themselves too. Their knowledge base of business and agriculture grew and their desire to gain more knowledge about Russia and Russian education increased. Russian instructors learned about US education and academic programs in DSU and they gained new teaching skills that they can use and directly apply in Russia. Both American and Russian participants learned about similarities and differences of the cultures, people and businesses.

Last year the program has been increased and in April of 2006 Dickinson State hosted eight students and two instructors from Voronezh State University. In return nine students and two instructors took Russian language class and made their three-week trip to Voronezh in May 2006.

Implications

Over the past several years, Dickinson State University has been busy living up to the goals as stated by President Dr. Vickers, putting together a strong programs which bring the world to Dickinson State, and gives students, faculty, and staff a chance to participate in the global community through exchange programs and partnerships with Universities in China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and England.

One of the missions of higher education for the future is to make students more globally aware and I believe we were successful in developing the important partnership programs with China that will enable us to better achieve that mission. One of the Chinese students Minmin Luo from Hangzhou, China stated:

Dickinson State University has offered me a great study environment and enriched my life experience. Students' lives here are combined with good quality education and all kinds of fun activities. The partnership program with DSU provided me a good opportunity to study abroad, challenge myself to handle various difficulties, and also broaden my

views about the world. Studying here is an enchanting, challenging, life-enriching experience. My year at DSU is an unforgettable journey that has overwhelmed my life.

Dickinson State University, Nizhniy Novgorod State Agricultural Academy and Voronezh State University have established a long-term cooperation and documented their interest and intention in Memorandums of Understanding in 2004 and 2005. A student exchange program was designed. In this program, students from Dickinson, Nizhniy Novgorod and Voronezh are given the opportunity to visit each other and spend up to two – three weeks at their partner's school and to live with the family of their exchange partner during the weekends.

Dickinson State University, Nizhniy Novgorod State Agricultural Academy and Voronezh State University sponsor this program. Departments of International Relations, VSU/NNSAA and Department of Agriculture and Technical Studies, DSU are responsible for all onsite coordination.

Participating students improve their linguistic proficiency in English and Russian, gain knowledge in International Agriculture, Trade and Business and become more familiar with a new culture and a new Higher Education system. The offered International Agriculture Internship program will grow through new challenges and become more efficient and useful. The increase in linguistic and cultural proficiency as well as personal growth can only be achieved in long-term exchange programs. Therefore students may explore the opportunity for long-term study at partner's institution. As Russian student Olesia Tkachenko indicated:

...participating in different student activities helped me to develop my English skills, make good friends, and better cope with homesickness. Studying here is an exciting, challenging, and enjoyable process. I believe studying at DSU is the perfect way to gain a lifetime experience and to grow as a person.

Conclusion

Both American and foreign universities are in a unique position to promote understanding, open-mindedness and informed dialogue regarding globalization. According to DSU President Vickers (2000), the complex 21st century geopolitical environment and global economy require a new paradigm for American colleges and universities. The model for today's universities must be one that educates students to be competent in their discipline and intentionally prepares them to successfully participate as world citizens in the global economy.

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Moving In Different Directions: The Changing Role of Community Colleges in America and a Comparative Look at the System of Higher Education in China

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Community colleges in the United States of America have become an extension of government's concept for initiating, supporting, and managing attempts of social planning. The hidden qualities of community colleges are, in essence, transforming them into something like "Settlement Houses"¹ of the new millennium. Selecting China's system of post-secondary education for comparative purposes, we find that while America is moving toward greater government control and influence, China has been moving in the opposite direction from total government control in quite recent times toward a more decentralized institution. This paper focuses on the convergence of social reform and public policy; a development that is leading many community colleges in the USA to adapt a broader interventionist approach to higher education

¹ "Settlement Houses" historically addressed the economic and social needs of recently arrived immigrants to urban centers, along with English classes, assistance with immigration matters, housing concerns, health care needs, etc. Today's community colleges are providing such assistance to students whom are recent arrivals to this country. See: Wald, L., *House On Henry Street*, New York: Dover Publications, 1915, for an example of such an institution.

Using China's system of higher education for comparative purposes, we can determine the extent to which community colleges in the USA have moved in the direction of government control (Hin 1998), as well as demonstrate the extent to which the Chinese system has gone to a less centralized concept in more recent years. Until quite recently, the Chinese central government controlled adult education system, epitomized an institution of higher education for purposes of economic and social development by implementing regime dictated social reforms. Looking at two major social policies in American society as examples that have come from government-welfare reform and work force development training—we see how community colleges are becoming extensions of government, socially tracking the masses of poor citizens and immigrants. By comparing these two policy reforms, we begin to determine the extent to which community colleges in the USA have come under more government control and influence. We begin to suggest the level to which low-income students truly have selected a method of reaching their educational goals in the USA, or, as been suggested by others, they are stratified and tracked away from an education and toward vocational training, on the basis of social class (Karabel 1972; Brint and Karabel 1989; and Woodbury 2005). It is worth noting that such control of educational outcome for low-income classes is not a new phenomenon. In the United Kingdom stratification in education existed for decades, separating college based students, from those who are tracked toward numerous professional institutions like City and Guilds of London Institute schools.

The first section of this paper provides a brief overview of community colleges in America. As two-year institutions that recently celebrated 100 years of providing educational services, they are now playing a prominent role in the lives of many Americans, as well as having great influence in the nation's economy.

The second section discusses the impact that welfare reform and workforce development have had in changing the role of community colleges. In recent years there has been a growing role of community colleges in the social policymaking process in the USA. As social, economic, and political changes occur, community colleges have been increasingly asked to play the particular and key role in helping with the task of preparing tomorrow's workforce in the global economy (Zeiss 1999).

In the third section the developing Chinese system of higher education is discussed, highlighting the major characteristics that made it for many years, until quite recently, the ideal typical government controlled institution of

learning. This third section also highlights recent changes to China's system of higher education toward a more decentralized structure, demonstrating how China and the USA are moving in different directions.

Finally, our analysis concludes with a comparative review of both community colleges in the U.S. and China's system of higher education, especially their two-year technical schools. In the last section we attempt to demonstrate the extent to which the USA as a nation, which is supposedly based on freedom of choice, has moved community colleges toward becoming a mechanism for socially controlling the poor, for the benefit of government, and most especially corporate elites.

A Historical Review of Community Colleges in America²

Community colleges in the USA began to develop in the early part of the 20th century. Initially called "junior colleges," these two-year schools played the key role of bridging rapidly growing communities, with high schools and traditional senior colleges. The belief of early founders of community colleges was that both the freshman and sophomore years of college could be taught outside of traditional universities (Coley 2000). Junior (or community) colleges provided an avenue of opportunity for many young people who otherwise would be denied access to higher education. Today's more than 1,100 community colleges grew from this early perspective and vision.

Major periods and events in America's history, such as the Depression of the 1930s, post World War II economic shifts, and the GI Bill, forced transformation of community colleges, expanding student enrollments, development of new vocational programs, and thereby increased revenues. By 1948, the federal government created a network of publicly funded, community-based colleges to serve local needs. By the 1960s, community colleges underwent additional shifts with higher enrollments from the baby-boom generation, the Vietnam War, and the Higher Education Act of 1965, which introduced the concept of "open enrollment" (Higher Education Act 1965). Both new student constituencies and increased funding forced community colleges to expand by leaps-and-bounds.

² Historical overview based on Richard J Coley, *The American Community College Turns 100: A Look at its Students, Programs, and Prospects*, Educational Testing Service, Policy Information Center, Princeton, NJ, 2000, and Tony Zeiss and Associates, *Developing The Worlds Best Workforce: An Agenda for America's Community Colleges*, American Association of Community Colleges, Washington, DC, 1999.

While in their early years of development community colleges provided vocational training, in the 1960s these schools began to introduce more traditional liberal arts curricula. It was argued, that community colleges were a good "stepping stone" for students interested in transferring to a four-year baccalaureate program. This was especially true and beneficial, it was further argued, for working-class and poor students since community colleges cost less to attend than traditional four-year schools. This rational perhaps was true between the 1960s through the late 1980s; however, research shows that "baccalaureate aspirants are much less likely to receive a bachelor's degree if they enter a community college" first (Dougherty 1992, p. 188). Studies have shown that a gap exists between community college entrants and four-year college students in rates of attaining a bachelor's degree. More specifically, while 70 percent of four-year college entrants receive a baccalaureate degree, only 26 percent of public two-year college entrants who wish to transfer reach this goal (Astin et al. 1982; and Velez 1985). Today, community colleges are still articulating this notion of they're being a good stepping stone to a four-year school, while at the same time continuing their hidden transformation by accommodating new low-income student (e.g., welfare recipients), all the while shifting from vocational training to workforce development for corporate America.

Welfare Reform and Workforce Development: The Catalysts for Change in America's Community Colleges

This section examines two recent and major social changes in American society that have pushed the nation's community college system to act as the mechanism by which government introduces cultural, economic, and social values and characteristics upon their low-income population. Specifically, "welfare reform" and "workforce development" have in recent years been the social forces pushing community colleges to serve the function of socially reconstructing the value systems of their low-income students through a process by which more government intrusion introduces changes. While for the purposes of this paper, these two concepts have been separated for analysis; they are not mutually exclusive but instead have worked hand-in-hand to afford these changes and influences.

Welfare Reform

The concept of "regulating the poor" developed by Cloward and Piven (1971) is useful in providing a better understanding of how welfare reform in 1995 helped develop the new role of community colleges. More specifically, Cloward and Piven argued, "expansive relief policies (were) designed to mute civil disorder, and restrictive ones to reinforce work norms," (p. XIII). In this way, government regulated discontent, channeled potential unrest toward acceptable behavior, and generally controlled the poor. It is evident that government policies toward the poor have historically been designed to stifle any real or perceived discontent from the masses of poor people, or in other words for social control.

We must recognize the fact that the existence of poverty among people in the USA is not through conscious choice or behavioral characteristics as have been suggested by some (Moynihan 1967; and Jensen 1969), but often due to race, ethnic background, and gender (Jennings 1999). Development of the welfare system and its various periods of reform throughout American history was essentially attempts to alleviate potential discontent and social disruption that poverty and any movement of the poor precipitated (Cloward and Piven 1978). Prior to 1995, welfare reform had historically been used to "tighten" control over low-income people, and they have taken three basic approaches (Gueron 1986). One approach was to change the rules for determining eligibility. The second was to treat entitlement as a "bargain" by which benefits required the obligation of looking for work, accepting a job, and/or participating in a job training/education program. The third strategy had been to cut back cash benefits and rely more on alternatives like child support through enforcement, changes in tax policy, and job placement. From the mid 1960s to mid 1990s the government implemented a variety of such policies within the welfare system in order to instill work ethics and values among its recipients.

In 1995, however, welfare reform included all three previous approaches, as well as term limitations imposed by both federal and state governments. It is at this point when we begin to see more restrictive policies for participation in order to reinforce work norms, values, and expectations. Both state and federal governments set up a myriad of new policy and structural reforms that resulted in short-term training for most welfare recipients, culminating with a job (thus termed "welfare-to-work" in describing this transition). These requisites were to be met by most recipients if they were to continue receiving non-cash benefits (e.g., Medicaid health care coverage). Perhaps the most significant change of the reforms was setting a time limit of receiving welfare to five years in a person's

life. What had historically been a boundless entitlement program was now limited to five years, with new strict eligibility criteria. The push to get as many welfare recipients into short-term training and into the labor force initially produced a boom of potential students for community colleges. The Bush administration, however, proposed policy changes that decreased "participation in education activities to only 16 hours within a 40-hour work week" (Kent 2002). The decline of welfare consumers within more traditional community college student cohorts, as a result of the 1995 reforms,³ increased the number of low-income immigrants of color from urban settings, shifting also the cause of poverty from economic terms to that of gender and race (Jennings 1999). This help conjure up an environment for these educational institutions to take a more significant role as social reformers. By positioning themselves to serve as the vehicle by which government could introduce reforms to the indigent, community colleges increased enrollments and developed new revenue streams at a time of declining traditional funding. In many states, there was a transformation for community college students on welfare from full time, working toward an associate's degree, to workforce trainees in short-term, non-credit, and non-credentialed training programs. The position of government was clear when it made available less money for social services, or public assistance, and more resources for what they termed "workforce development" for those on the public dole. Legislation aimed at workforce development training, at a period when the nation's economy was enjoying an unparalleled boom, made available more money for short-term preparation, job placement, and "credentialing" (Carnevale and Desrocher 2001) and less for longer-term education for an Associates Degree. This shift was especially prominent among initiatives aimed at the low-income student on welfare who originally were afforded the benefits of a real education via the 1965 Higher Education Act and "open enrollment." A formal education and degree has been historically argued to benefit an individual on a longer-term basis than short-term training, which usually benefits employers. While education has not realized its objective of economic equality among the different classes as has been envisioned, it is still nevertheless better than short-term training (Bowles and Ginitis 1976). Many job-training providers took advantage

³ See: Chacon, R. Welfare Law Changes Hit Community Colleges Hard. *Boston Globe*. March 21, 1998, for an example of how welfare reform in Massachusetts impacted the 15 publicly funded community colleges.

of this shift and new revenue stream, especially the community college system. The institutions of post-secondary education in the USA are stratified by social class, with one-half of all low-income students in community colleges. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), an organization in Washington, D.C. that community colleges belong to, indicated that by the late 1990s approximately 53 percent of 1,124 community colleges surveyed had developed welfare-to-work programs, illustrating that many of these institutions were taking advantage of this new funding source (1998). It is apparent that participating community colleges that had developed workforce development initiatives under the rubric of welfare-to-work became the "social buffer" between the low-income classes and the elite (Pfeffer 1994). Workforce development, as has been developed by these community colleges for low-income students, reinforce norms, values, and work habits consistent with the American work ethic, for the benefit of corporate America in terms of increased profit, as well as for realizing the goal of government social reforms.

Workforce Development

Most of the welfare reforms that took place in the mid 1990s shifted emphasis from income maintenance and education to that of a shorter term on public assistance along with a "work first" modality (Leonard 1999). Education, as a formal option for those on the public dole was dropped in many states, and instead short-term training, something quite different from a formal education, was put in its place for the poor on public assistance. For many community colleges, initiatives directed toward welfare consumers were categorized under the training activity of "workforce development."

In the last 45 years, the role for community colleges has been to help students' transition into a four-year educational setting (Coley 2000). Government sponsored reforms, such as we witnessed in the welfare system of the USA during the mid 1990s, however, provided opportunities for community colleges to shift the role of "professional reformer" on to themselves. Community colleges, positioned themselves as the major avenue by which the low-income student can be indoctrinated into the labor force. Under the rubric of workforce development, significant numbers of welfare recipients were provided short-term non-credit training in order that they enter the job market. According to AACC data, 44 percent of the 1,123 community colleges responding to the 1998 survey reported that job-readiness instruction was the most common type of training activity for welfare recipients. Further, according to the AACC survey, "welfare-to-work programs at community colleges primarily emphasized entry-level

training (69.9 percent of respondents), adult education and remedial education (53.3 percent), as well as basic technical training (47.6 percent)" (Phillippe 2001, p. 91). Such workforce development efforts were not construed to benefit the students attending these institutions. Instead, as has been argued above, such short-term, mostly non-credit, training was developed for corporate employers seeking a better-trained, cheap labor pool in order to eke out more profit. In addition, from government's perspective, welfare recipients forced off public assistance by the reforms of 1995, workforce development programs in the community colleges provided a mechanism for indoctrinating these poor people into a work ethos that served the function of social oversight. There was, and continues to be, little "freedom" for these students to pursue a traditional liberal arts education. Instead, it is predetermined by government and corporate sponsors, with the help of community colleges. For many low-income individuals not based in the traditional "welfare population," community colleges have devised a method of tracking them toward a similar fate as their counterparts on the public dole. The major group affected is that of recent immigrants of color. "Workforce development" as defined by the AACC and its member institutions involves preparing individuals specifically for American employers in order that these companies may compete more effectively in the global economy (Tony Zeiss & Associates 1997). More and more American corporations are turning to community colleges, as partners, to help with the task of providing training for employees already on the job according to the AACC.⁴ Looking at what he described as a "complex set of forces" that structurally changed America's system of higher education, Karabel highlighted six characteristics of community colleges and their environment in stratifying individuals on the basis of social class tracking low-income students away from a traditional academic education and into what was then vocational training (or workforce development training today) (Karabel 1972, p. 233). He argued that, while at face value, the community colleges were consistent with American society's ideology as "the land of opportunity" and "open admission" to its system of public education; these characteristics were in reality false for poor students since they were "tracked" away from a four-year education and "stratified" into low-paying vocational careers. Studies have shown that keeping students at the lower end of the educational scale (whether by tracking or other

⁴ See American Association of Community Colleges, *Businesses to Advocate for Two-Year Colleges*, Community College Times, December 5, 2006.

means) usually translates to limiting employment opportunities to the lower end of the wage scale (Carnavale 1999). On average, in 2002, a male student kept to just a two-year associates degree earned 732 dollars a week while those who continued their studies and were awarded a bachelor's degree earned about 1,089 dollars according to data from the U.S. Department of Labor (2003). For females the figures were 545 dollars and 809 dollars respectively. These data highlight the importance of helping all students acquire the highest educational level so that they can reach a much higher pay scale. From the general point of view, diverting so many individuals from acquiring the highest educational levels limits America's economic growth. The key components of Karabel's premise are highlighted in Table 1. Data show that 68 percent of employers, who choose community colleges for workforce training, do so because of its cost effectiveness (Phillippe 2000). Further, about 55 percent find that the level of customization of training curriculum is why they also choose community colleges; and about 52 percent feel it is convenient. The belief system of community colleges in the USA maintains a posture that they are open to all students so long as they have a high-school diploma or its equivalency. It provides the illusion that just about anyone can attend college. In reality, however, these institutions serve the purpose of channeling low-income individuals away from particular academic programs that may have led to four-year colleges, through a complex process of "cooling" them off⁵ in order that they never reach their educational goals. Data from the National Profile of Community College (Phillipe 2000) found that, although most students in community colleges express an interest of transferring to a four-year baccalaureate program, most never do. For example, the data for the academic year 1995-96 in this study demonstrated that, of those students expressing an interest of going to a four-year school, only about 42 percent actually transferred. Community colleges on the public dole serve the role of tracking, as well as the much higher function for government of controlling any real or potential discontent among the poor by "diverting the dreams" (Karabel 1972) of members of these social classes toward lower level

⁵ This process is most prominent in community colleges that have their environment demographically changed with the influx of poor people of color. In addition, English as Second Language (ESL) initiatives often are used as major components of the "cooling-off" and "tracking" systems. See: Santiago, J. *The New Social Reformers In Massachusetts: The Changing Role of a Publicly Funded Community College Within a Latino Community*, Private Communication.

career options, and indoctrinating them into America's capitalistic work ethos under the auspices of workforce development initiatives.

Table 1. Framework on the major functions of community colleges

(based on Karabel, 1972)

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1. A changing economic structure in the environment of community colleges fosters alterations in the role of these institutions.
 2. As a result of "educational inflation" particular groups within society (the poor) have their opportunities narrowed.
 3. Community colleges are "the bottom of a tracking system within higher education" because of their "open admissions" posture. Ultimately, their students are tracked into vocational training (workforce development) that keeps them away from a four-year education and in low-paying jobs.
 4. Community colleges use a complex system of pre-entrance exams, remedial classes, counseling from advisors, test scores, certain required courses, and probationary status as a "cooling-out" process with the function of convincing the student that they were at fault for not achieving their educational goals.
 5. The "cooling-out" process is directed toward the "latent terminal" student who desires to transfer ultimately from a two- to a four-year degree program, but does not meet entrance qualifications.
 6. Community colleges, with this elaborate system, serve to "track" students both within the college itself, and among these institutions of higher education on the basis of social class. They keep poor students in vocational programs (workforce development training), and away from academically oriented course of studies within the confines of the particular community college, as well as keeping these individuals away from four-year schools.
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Further, it gives the students from the lower social classes the false impression that if they fail to reach their educational goals of a higher education, it is mainly their fault and not the community colleges' "system" of cooling them off. It "blames the victims" (Ryan 1975) of workforce development not the system, which purposefully tracked them. Similar to what Cloward and Piven argued in the 1970s about the welfare system as a whole, social institutions under the tutelage of government (e.g., publicly funded community colleges), give the false

impression that they provide concessions and real opportunities to movements of the poor (1971). In reality, they serve only to regulate the poor.

Previous Structure and Recent Changes in China's System of Higher Education

In reviewing China's system of higher education as one that for many years has been controlled by government and only recently is moving toward decentralization, we must keep in mind that the entire structure is relatively new when compared to the 100 year old community college system in the USA.⁶ Chinese post-secondary education as it appears was established in December 1977 when the government introduced the formal process of examination; and in 1985 new programmatic, structural and oversight changes were implemented (Xiao and Tsang 1999). China's system of higher education represents a good example of a controlled system since national and party leaders continue to determine who attends, curriculum, credentialing, what area one will study, what instructors will teach, and when you finish in spite of the 1985 changes (FBIS 1985). Still, there have been improvements with an increase in decentralizing higher education from Central Government control in total to more local and provincial decision-making. Although the 1985 reforms gave faculty, administrators, local community leaders, and provincial governments more authority and oversight (Lofstedt 1987), agencies of the central government and the Communist Party still have final approval of any changes. Among the changes, was a shift within higher education from focusing exclusively on social reforms, to also tying education to China's urgency of economic development (Hayhoe 1993). Current Chinese leadership realizes that China's continued economic growth and modernization are closely tied to the nation's colleges and universities. "Chinese political leaders wish to transform knowledge patterns within (higher education) curriculum to serve explicit goals of economic modernization" (Hayhoe 1987, p.197). Before the 1985 reforms, all students were assigned jobs by the central government after completing their studies. Later, as a result of the reforms of 1985, "a considerable portion of the students will still be admitted and deployed in agreement with the long-term needs of China as a society, but greater efforts will be made to reconcile these national requirements with the individual preferences of the student, the recommendations

⁶ See *The American Community College Turns 100: A Look at its Students, Programs, and Prospects*, Educational Testing Service Policy Information Center, Princeton, New Jersey, 2000.

of the educational institutions, and the requisites of employers" (Lofstedt 1987, p. 329). Standardized teaching plans, teaching outlines, and textbooks were regulated nationally by the Ministry of Education (Hayhoe 1987). The Ministry of Education made all major curriculum decisions, in spite of more authority and oversight given to provincial, local, and autonomous regional input according to Lofstedt (1987). While college and university leaders have more authority and power today, communist party supervisors remained as an important determinant of any changes (FBIS 1985).

Besides trying to make sure that any changes in higher education are directly related to economic development and modernization for maintaining final say, national leaders also want to make sure that American capitalist ideals do not take root. Hayhoe (1993) notes:

While they (Chinese leaders) support and encourage scientific and technological development (especially as they pertain to economic development), the Chinese government is attempting to purge reflective and theoretical social sciences and the humanities of Western influences that (attempt) to mobilize support fostering a "peaceful evolution" towards capitalism-(Hayhoe 1993, p. 291).

As such, it seems that national and party leaders preferred European and Soviet curricular influences, "with their focus on classical disciplines of knowledge and narrowly defined technical specializations, over Anglo-American ones" according to Hayhoe (1993, p. 291).

By 1996, there were some 1,000 adult educational institutions in China of various types, including general universities, technical universities, specialized institutions, and teacher training colleges that comprised China's system of higher education.⁷ The State Education Commission administratively continues to supervise the system of post-secondary education.⁸ The Commission still largely oversees all aspects of post-secondary institutions, except for military schools. This government body maintains oversight of curricula, publishes the required textbooks for all fields of study, and formulates admissions guidelines to mention only a few of its functions. Within this larger structure of post-secondary education there are two-year technical institutions, non-university in nature, but which nonetheless are considered college level.

⁷⁻⁸ General information on China's system of higher education was obtained from two web sites: www.unesco.org/iau/educn.html; and www.sh.com/china/edu/chedu.htm.

Similar to what community colleges in the USA considers workforce development, these post-secondary technical schools offer more than 400 specialties, including light and textile industries, construction engineering, and commerce. As two-year institutions, these technical schools provide students with a "vocational education and training...for a specific job"⁹ targeting particular employers. Yang Xu Hin of Wuyi University highlighted some key and salient "problems" (his term) in China's system of higher education.¹⁰ An examination of these problems is important since they highlight the areas and level of government control over China's post-secondary institutions in spite of the 1985 reforms.

Specifically, Hin listed six problems including:

- a system is so specialized and detailed that students only learn the particular field and no knowledge beyond their major;
- no real and original research going on among scholars;
- too many tedious required subjects that students just cram for;
- textbooks produced by the Commission contain much irrelevant subject matter;
- instructors teach obsolete material, what they learned years ago, reflecting traditional not current scientific knowledge;
- required assessment examinations do not measure the student's knowledge but only how much they memorized in class and from textbooks.

By coupling together, both the structure of post-secondary education in China and the problems that Hin presents, we can see the extent to which government controlled this system.

Within the more recent system of higher education in China we see that several key characteristics are essential for labeling it still a "largely controlled" government post-secondary institution. Table 2 lists these major characteristics along with their particular explanation. Of significance among them is the fact that government continues to control all content within the classroom, the textbooks, and areas of specialization.

⁹ General information on China's system of higher education was obtained from two web sites: www.unesco.org/iau/educn.html; and www.sh.com/china/edu/chedu.htm.

¹⁰ See: Yang Xu Hin, Chinese Higher Education, In My Eyes, The Forum, Vol 7, Issue 1, Fall 1998, hakatai.mcli.dist.Maricopa.edu/labyforum/fall98/forum4.htm.

Further, it is through government controlled assessment tests that Chinese students gain entry to post-secondary education, as well as determine whether they are ready to receive their diploma. Finally, government determines the course of study for many Chinese students in technical/vocational training with a specific job in mind, thus determining what they will do for a living. With these facts in mind, the question is: To what extent does the publicly funded community college system in the U.S. compares with the recent government controlled post-secondary two-year technical schools in China?

Table 2. Summary of major similarities between China’s two-year technical colleges with the US community colleges (based on Yang Xu Hin, 1998)

Major Characteristics of Recent China’s System	Major Characteristics of US Community College System
1 Centralized Decision Making	Government education bodies make major decisions; centralizing decision making
2 Government Controls course content	State government employees as administrators (e.g. Deans) review and influence if necessary course content, determine curricula, etc.
3 Students have little ability to determine what they will learn	Students are tracked into specific areas of specialization and how far they can go based on social class.
4 Admission into and completion of course of study determined by government controlled assessment examinations	Most States have “high-stake tests” at K-12 level for diploma before entering college.
5 Little scholarly work by instructors	No real research going on; nor is it encouraged.
6 Education often targets a specific job	Workforce development efforts track many toward specific job areas.
7 Instructors have little input into course content	Instruction often controlled by various methods from administrators (e.g., course outlines must be approved by Deans).

Conclusion: A Comparative Review

While the publicly funded community colleges in America do not have overt government control of course content, workforce development efforts funded by specific corporations, who determine curricula in these cases, do have the tacit approval of government. Government encourages corporate America to seek out

institutions like community colleges to help with their workforce development needs. As such, these efforts within community colleges in the USA are often driven by corporate elites. In reality, it is questionable as to whether we can call these corporate programs "workforce development" or more accurately "human resource development" initiatives since they are driven by particular companies, for their specific purposes, with specific curricula. Data on workforce development demonstrate that initiatives specific to a company tend to more often than not benefit professionals and managers, and are not directed toward entry-level workers who may benefit from such training for job advancement (Training Magazine 1999). Thus, using the term "workforce development" for the type of training currently being offered to students in community colleges is therefore misleading.

Like their recent Chinese counterpart, publicly funded community colleges in the USA have a variety of assessment examinations aimed at determining whether an individual has the wherewithal to enter a post-secondary institution, and ultimately graduate once they complete course requirements. Such examinations in the USA are, in most states, required and approved by some government appointed board of higher education. In China, these examinations, determined by the State Education Commission, help determine the individual's course of study and the educational institution they will enter. It is these examinations in the community college system of the USA that analysts like Karabel, Brint, and Woodbury, for example, see as mechanisms for diverting the educational dreams of low-income students away from an education and toward vocational (workforce development) training—two vastly different things.

While faculty may have more input in determining course content in American community colleges, the fact is that workforce development initiatives often have their material selected by the particular company financing the training. Further, in many post-secondary settings in America faculty members are required to provide department heads and/or the college with copies of their course outline to "review" for informational appropriateness and completeness. Thus, while faculty in the community colleges of the USA has a slightly higher level of academic freedom in determining course content than their recent Chinese counterparts, there are nonetheless boundaries in which they must work within, especially if a corporation is financing the workforce development training.

Perhaps the most significant area of comparison between community colleges in the USA under the oversight of government and the two-year technical schools of China is in the area of students being able to select their

course of study. Americans truly believe that they have the ability to choose the level, as well as the type, of education they wish. The fact is however, that, perhaps to the surprise of students, social class predetermines the type and level of their education, and thus how much they will earn. Once students complete their education, earning levels do not necessarily reflect the individual's earning potential. As noted above, entrance examinations, direction in which career counseling takes, assessment testing, and the system of "tracking" all conspire toward determining whether a student is given the opportunity to pursue a four-year education and beyond, or whether they are steered toward training for an entry-level job. In China, the government determined needs for a particular economic development initiative and job and this way strongly affected a student's educational fate. Thus, while Chinese assessment testing is more direct in making such decisions for the student, in the community college system of the USA processes and structures have the dual function of making this decision while at the same time giving the student the false impression that they made the choice themselves.

There are many similarities between the more recent post-secondary education in China and that of the community college system in the USA. As America leaves behind the industrial age of the twentieth century and enters the technological era of the twenty-first, it finds itself in need of preparing a workforce capable of working with the hardware and software necessary for producing the goods and services needed globally. America's economic and political leaders cannot afford to let low-income social classes develop a consciousness based on the understanding that they do not determine their educational fate. To do so government in the USA would be itself sowing seeds of discontent. As such, it must control any real or potential discontent, and it has accomplished this task by devising this complex system of tracking individuals from low-income classes while also providing the illusion that: 1) through an education beyond high school an individual will increase the likelihood of economic success; 2) community colleges represent the best avenue of acquiring such an education, especially if you are poor; and 3) it is the individual himself who determines their level of educational attainment. Of major difference between the recent system of education in China, and community colleges in the USA is that the former directly informs its people that its system is devised for benefiting society through the job they are destined to be educated and/or trained for, while the latter selects one's education on the basis of social class, provides the illusion of free choice, all for the benefit of major corporate elites.

The driving force nonetheless is the same in both systems - government! Their purpose is basically the same, social planning by government, much of which is driven by economic forces. In both societies not everyone can attend college since there are not enough resources to allow such to happen. Mechanisms are therefore in place to determine whom gets an academic education versus job training, and at what levels. While in China government overtly and directly determines these issues for its people, in the USA government covertly makes such determination. In the USA the community college system plays a critical role in this determination by providing the façade that there is an "open admissions" policy when, in reality, social class determines the kind and level of education that an individual will receive. In both systems, however, the results are the same, control of masses of people.

It is vital to understand the differences, similarities, and functions if we in the USA, as a nation, which prides itself in valuing "freedom," and professes to be "the land of opportunities," are to truly move closer to these ideals. Surely, not all of the hundreds of thousands (even millions) of low-income recent arrivals are incapable of performing well in a four-year course of education. Yet, the system in place discriminates against the poor, and tracks them toward the same dead end workforce development for the purposes of providing cheap productive labor to corporate America, while also maintaining control socially. This massive waste of human potential raises a research question that looms high above all others: Can we change the community college system in the USA to provide a good education to their constituents, not on the basis of their social class but on the basis of their dreams and potential? A challenge for American society!

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Teaching English In China: Lessons from Teaching at the Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications

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In the school year 1997–98, I was asked to teach English at the University of Posts and Telecommunications (CUPT) in Chongqing. We lived in a small village in the mountains up outside Chongqing, which was beautiful and above the smog, and historical besides. This was where the nationalist government had had its headquarters during World War II, and one could visit Chiang Kai-shek's and Stilwell's homes as well as numerous foreign embassies. It was a lovely area with resorts for rich Chinese, much easy hiking in beautiful countryside and many sightseeing areas. There were two monasteries in our town, one Buddhist with the best vegetarian food I've ever had, and one Taoist, with the cave where reputedly Lao Tsu had retired to write his poetry.

Two foreign languages, Russian and English, competed a long time for a prime position in China. The traces of this competition are evident in the not very distant past and can be seen even now. Sun Yat-sen, China's great revolutionary leader, was educated mainly in American schools in Hawaii and in an English medical college in Hong Kong. In 1911, he decreed that English be taught to Chinese students. His successor, Chiang Kai-shek, was educated in Moscow, but Mao Tse-tung shunned most contact with the non-Chinese world. Indeed, even today, foreign experts are invited to make their short contributions and leave.

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In the 50s Russian was taught, but in the 60s the native Russian teachers were expelled and the Chinese Russian teachers were retrained. Now Russian is understood mostly by people of the older generations. Nowadays all Chinese learn Mandarin in school though its only one of the four main languages. There are at least 100 regional dialects. Today's computer generation needs and learns English. Little kids would be pushed forward by beaming parents to say hello or wave goodbye, school kids would shyly practice, "Hello" and "How are you? Fine, thank you."—usually one long sentence. Everyone could say, "OK," and "Bye!" but this seemed to be the bulk of what is spoken by the general population. There were English lessons on TV as well as a daily news broadcast in English, which had a very high level of proficiency; only occasional mispronunciations or substitutions of, for instance, "lie" for "lay." The English language newspaper, *China Daily*, was in impeccable English—I never even caught a proofing error—but English ads, directions, tourist notes, university's home pages on the Internet, even Chinese texts for teaching English could be improved.

Starting in middle school (7th grade), all students have English as a major subject through 12th grade, when they graduate. They must take it all four years of college and two difficult proficiency exams are required for graduation. They receive a thorough grounding in the structure and grammar of the language and can read fairly difficult passages. However, until college they have neither heard it spoken in any systematic way nor have attempted speaking it themselves behind the school lessons.

Although colleges are attempting to provide language-learning tapes, native English speakers are much preferred and are invited to come and teach. They are respected by students, Chinese English teachers, and teachers of other departments (for example, computers and medicine). All must use English in their work to read the latest technical journals and converse with overseas colleagues—all of whom use English as a *lingua franca*. Of course the World Wide Web requires English. Every college (and the really prestigious middle schools) attempts to have at least one foreign instructor and CUPT has a goal of two or three native English speakers on staff. A university degree is the main requirement for foreign instructor.

Soon I learned that the Chinese students didn't want me teaching literature (my university specialty) but rather just to do conversations with them, to give opportunities for discussion, and to correct pronunciation. The students' skills ranged from fluent speech to the absolute inability to speak or understand. When I asked my faculty classes how best I could help them, they requested conversations about using the telephone, shopping, meeting on the street, and

ordering in restaurants. Actually, I found soon that I need not to be worried, as the Chinese teachers (and the English department secretary) were extremely helpful. Indeed, kindness and care of strangers seems to be a Chinese cultural trait.

In addition to teaching six two-hour weekly classes (this was actually a reduced load as I was willing to teach night classes, and because of widely divergent ability levels, had only two similar instructors), participating in English Corner—an hour weekly of unstructured conversation—as well as clubs, parties, and English special events; we were expected to give each week an individual one-hour speech in auditorium. It was very useful to share the lecture with another English instructor. Though each of us would be responsible for a single topic, the other would be there too, to add anecdotes, ask questions, or otherwise support the speaker. We determined to have only one topic per week with an ordinary lecture on Tuesday, followed the next day by the same thing in a much slower, simpler, easier to understand format with available Chinese translation if necessary. The students seemed to prefer this mode and we were able to attract them and faculty from several proficiency levels. Some enjoyed coming twice to polish their listening ability. Hundreds came and, because of our newly relaxed style, and all had a good time.

In one of lectures I compared and contrasted table manners that are very, very different. I said that Americans are taught to clean their plates, whereas Chinese consider it unmannerly not to leave something on the plate to indicate one has had enough. If you finish what is on a serving plate a Chinese host will rush to the kitchen and start cooking more or in a restaurant will lose face for appearing not to have ordered enough. Manners are different (and correct) in different countries and as our world gets smaller and smaller, it behooves us to learn what is right and proper wherever we go.

I daresay they learned more about Americans and our culture watching us be silly wearing Halloween masks, or teaching Christmas carols than they would have if I'd stuck to my earlier line-up of subjects: American Values, The Rule of Law, Community Based Long Term Care, etc. I did talk about what happens to the paycheck—taxes and services—and how Americans pay for what they get. We devoted an hour to Princess Di and Mother Teresa, compared growing up as a city slicker with being a country boy, talked about our pets, discussed “Home Sweet Home” by diagramming floor plans and city maps, and talked about age and rites of passage in modern life. Again, being an “expert” meant knowing how to speak English and doing so rather than demonstrating any breadth of knowledge.

English Corner, which happened for a minimum of one hour a week, was also very popular and the venue had to be changed to accommodate the growing hordes. Kids always surrounded us. They seemed to prefer asking us questions than having conversations in English among themselves, which is the real purpose of these “corners.” They exist in all schools and in many parks in cities around China. We learned how to gauge the success of an evening by how many new speakers had dared to ask us if we liked Chinese food or how long we’d been in Chongqing. Five of each meant we’d done a good job. There were occasional substantive discussions, which were our reward. Students (and teachers) liked also to visit and telephone us, which seemed somehow safer for them to practice.

Chinese students are great fun to work with. Unfailingly polite—they’d stand and say, “Good morning, Dr. Wendy,” when I’d walk in a room. They were also extremely well-behaved and quite shy and reserved in class but as noisy as anyone else during the breaks. When the bell rang they’d already be in their seats with all eyes toward the front. If someone dared to be late, he’d stand at the door, bow, and ask my permission to come in. Indeed, I felt part of my job was to shake them up somewhat, as learning to speak a foreign language involves the willingness to be foolish and to take risks. So I’d often make them get up, move all the chairs and do something like teach them the Hokey-Pokey or other songs and dances. The Chinese love to sing, are very fast to pick up tunes, and have incredible memories for lyrics.

Until the Communist reforms of 1992, all children were able to attend school, but now their parents have to pay to send them. Low-income college students might get sponsored by their whole villages. When China became the People’s Republic in 1949, 80% of the population was illiterate. Now that figure has reversed itself, but the papers are full of stories about rural youngsters who must drop out (even of primary school) because of poverty. This was the only worrisome condition I met in modern China and I used to exhort my students to do something about access to education for all when they came to their majority. Half of the students at CUPT are on scholarship and they shared my strong feeling about the rural students in remote provinces. Many people donate to a “Project Hope,” which helps send deserving children back to school. Whenever I had ask the kids to imagine winning a lottery, a significant proportion planned to give away their windfalls to rural schools. The way the Chinese economy is growing, it appears that many of today’s students will be tomorrow’s successful businessmen and I asked them to remember what they’d vowed in class. In one of my classes we read about a millionaire philanthropist Mr. Percy Ross of Minnesota. We made a class project of writing to ask him to help these rural kids.

I will enjoy hearing whether anything happens—if there is a positive result, I will feel my visit in China was really worth the efforts of the government to get me there.

Chinese students study all the time. Classrooms, though not the library, are left open and lighted on nights and weekends to provide a quiet place, as the dorms are so crowded. The usual class load is nine subjects, twice as many as in the USA; so college life is pretty circumscribed. Students declare their majors prior to acceptance and take all their classes, all four years, with this same group. They do not have jobs; so there is some time for sports (only intramural in China) and variety shows and parties within departments.

There were several special events sponsored by the English Club (a creation of the English teachers). About two hundred, mostly freshmen, students attended these hilarious events, which featured quizzes, “Where is the Statue of Liberty?”, with prizes; the enactment of short plays, singing, and musical performances, and recitals of poems. Even I got into the act with my ever-popular nursery school songs and finger plays. My singing is a treat not to be missed, but you haven’t lived until you’ve seen Chinese first year English speakers act out and very creatively pronounce the words of the justice scene from “The Merchant of Venice...”

In class, which ranged in size from 30–40 students, I usually came up with themes like “shopping” or “friendship” and did a lot of speaking and reading aloud. I had let the students follow me and then correct their pronunciation. Though there were some British texts, I had most success with Addison–Wesley workbooks of real newspaper stories from around the world, which were interesting and easy to read. Conversations worked best when I had questions written out, “What qualities do you look for in a friend, a spouse? Tell about your favorite book. Would you rather spend your money on entertainment or things?”, and I had them do a lot of partner work. The week Chairman Jiang Semin visited President Clinton I had them role-play this famous summit. In groups we planned what to take for survival on a desert island, had spelling bees, and designed fantasy vacations. Songs like “Jingle Bells” and “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” and games like “Simon Says” were always successful. In my early career I had taught both college English and English as a second language. Flexibility and the willingness to laugh at myself were my most important teaching skills. My goal was really just to help my students feel comfortable in their efforts to speak, as one semester is barely a beginning. The students had a harder time understanding each other than they did me and I now realize why “native” speakers are desired. At the end of the term, I was quite worried about grading. Chinese marks are based on a 100 point system with 60 as a passing grade. I had told all my students

that their grades would be based on a combination of three items, which would each weigh equally: attendance, participation, along with skill and learning, which included an oral exam and one or two written exercises based on their understanding of spoken English. Fortunately I did not have to grade my two faculty classes. The freshmen all had perfect attendance, tried hard and were wonderful to teach. My graduate students were fine. The only difficulty I had was with my one class of juniors who had been especially selected from out of all departments to participate in an elite honors English program. Most of these students were fluent in speaking and understanding English prior to their meeting with me and usually had experienced several foreign teachers in their careers. The thrill was gone and about 10% of their attitudes reflected this. Some did not bother to come to class or turn in papers, and only showed up for the final. Except for giving myself a failing grade for the few students I could not reach, teaching was a totally rewarding, confidence building, and happy experience. The night before we left, about forty student ambassadors came over to thank me, and present cards and gifts they'd all chipped into buy. One term is way too short to spend in China, and I will really miss all these wonderful students.

China was once likened to a sleeping giant. I doubt whether that was ever true, but the giant has decided to come out and play and I'm very grateful for the opportunity I had to play along.



Book Review

Chinese Universities and Colleges, 4th edition, Compiled by China Educational Association for International Exchange, Higher Education Press, China, 2004, ISBN 7040159309.

This book reflects the tendency of Chinese Education to be more and more included in the global educational system. The fourth edition describes 1,070 out of more than 2,000 existing higher education institutions in P. R. China.

It gives addresses, contact telephones, emails, and websites of these universities and colleges. It also gives information about administration, students and faculty members, colleges and schools within these institutions. Also it shows all undergraduate and graduate programs.

It is astonishing to see such an extension of education opportunities. In 2003 in Chinese universities and colleges were listed 749,000 faculty members including 73,000 full professors. For comparison we can mention that in the USA it is listed 1,175,000 faculty members at the universities and colleges of higher education during period of 2003-2004 (Digest of Education, US, Dept. of Education, 2005). Taking in consideration that major expansion of higher educational institutions in China started at the beginning of 1990th one can see that such numbers are at least comparable with the US numbers.

In 1999 the “project 985” had been started by the Chinese Ministry of Education. This project was devoted to the development of international first class universities. It has three stages: At the first stage the main support was directed to the Peking University and Tsinghua University; at the second state this list included Nanjing University, Zhejiang University, Fudan University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, University of Science and Technology of China, and Harbin Institute of Technology. At the third stage the development of other 30 universities are supported. Among them are Renmin University of China and Beijing Normal University. It is interesting to note that, for example, Beijing Normal University in 2003 had around 7,000 undergraduate students including more than 2,000 foreign students. It says about the success of the “project 985”. Foreign students less likely would come to study to the lower class university. They rate highly their time and money.

One of the important issues that need to be mentioned is that Chinese Ministry of Education develops together with the universities the state-level top-quality courses and make them available to all Chinese universities by Internet. This action introduces the high quality courses literally to each university or college that want to implement them.

Another important feature that worth to be mentioned is tendency to decentralization of education. The higher vocational (junior) colleges now are accredited not by the central government but only by the regional (provincial) governments.

The number of Chinese students and scholars studying abroad is around 700,000. They have been sent to study in over 108 countries and regions. Around 400 Chinese higher education institutions enroll foreign students. Chinese government signed very important “Regional Treaty on Asia-pacific Area Mutual Acknowledgement of Higher Education Certificate, Diploma and Degree” with the countries of Asia-Pacific region. Also there are agreements on mutual acknowledgement of higher education diploma and degree with: Germany, France, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

Important part of modern development of education in China is establishment of private educational institutions. China implemented a special “Law on Private Education Promotion” that covers these issues. Also the book mentions the special regulation devoted to “Sino-Foreign Joint Running of Schools”. All of these features are significantly different from the former orthodox concepts of Chinese education.

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