Ways of International Exchange of College Students and Teachers in the Period of the Republic of China

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Keywords: Universities in the Period of the Republic of China, International Exchange of Students and Teachers, Internationalization of Higher Education.

Abstract. The international exchange of students and teachers is the most intuitive way of internationalized development of universities and also an important form of internationalization of higher education. The paper uses the method of historical research and examines the ways of the international exchange of college students and teachers during the two decades from the foundation of Nanjing National Government in 1912 to the complete outbreak of Anti-Japanese War in 1937. It shows that the important forms of the internationalization of Republic universities include the overseas educational investigation of university presidents, teachers’ studying abroad, foreign experts’ lectures in China. The efforts and explorations of educational internationalization in the period of the Republic of China can provide reference and example for the construction of “Double First-rate” universities.

Introduction

The internationalization of higher education is a development tendency of higher education and an important way to construct high-level universities in the modern world. According to The Encyclopedia of International Higher Education, the internationalization of higher education includes: the internationalization of the curriculum, the internationalization of exchange and the educational assistance and international cooperation. International exchange of students and teachers is the most intuitive way of internationalized development of universities and also an important form of internationalization of higher education.

The idea of education internationalization was advocated by Chinese scholars in the period of the Republic of China. Numerous studies show that the higher education in that period was indeed in the process of internationalized development. During the two decades from the foundation of Nanjing National Government in 1912 to the complete outbreak of Anti-Japanese War in 1937, the educational exchange between China and foreign countries was most active. A large number of overseas students returned to China and dedicated themselves to the career of higher education. They were the main faculty of modern universities. Those intellectuals who had studied in Europe and America and had made some achievements in their respective fields introduced foreign advanced educational ideas into China, carried out the modernized reforms in traditional universities, made Chinese universities in line with the international standards in system and practice and ushered in a golden age of universities in the period of the Republic of China. The paper will put emphasis on the ways of international exchange of college students and teachers from 1912 to 1937 so as to demonstrate the efforts and explorations of educational internationalization in the period of the Republic of China and provide reference and example for the construction of “Double First-rate” universities.

The Educational Investigation of University Presidents

In order to promote the development of higher education in China, the presidents of universities including Cai Yuanpei, Zhang Boling, Fan Yuanlian, Guo Bingwen visited European and American universities for many times, studying the theories and characteristics of college management. Cai
Yuanpei, as the president of Peking University, went abroad twice to study foreign higher education. In November 1920, right before he went abroad, Cai Yuanpei talked with his students about his motives, “I went abroad for several reasons. From the first reign year of the Republic of China to now, our university has been in the process of reform. In recent years, we have undertaken several reforms. After World War I, the universities in various countries have had some reforms, mostly with the aim of popularizing higher education, changing universities for the minority into those for the majority. I am willing to know their state of reforms... After World War I, they have made some achievements in their reform, and I want to go abroad again. I haven’t been to Britain and the United States. On my way back to China, I must go to these two countries.” “It is undeniable that the scholars at Chinese universities were few in recent years. I go abroad this time in order to find out the overseas Chinese students who are studying hard in their specialized fields. I will manage to help them and sponsor them for further studies so that they will return to China after graduation and teach at our university. On the other hand, I also want to invite foreign professors to teach at our university.” “The instruments at our university are insufficient. I’d like to buy some personally.” “Our library is not well-equipped. I attempt to go to the British colonies and Dutch colonies to raise donations on my way back.” Furthermore, on this trip, Cai Yuanpei also planned to discuss with those European and American countries the issue of returning the Boxer Indemnity, and negotiate with France and Belgium the issue of joint education.[1] This investigation took Cai Yuanpei nine months and basically achieved the original aims.

Zhang Boling had been abroad twice for the establishment and development of Nankai University. From August 1917 to November 1918, Zhang Boling studied in the Teachers College of Columbia University in order to establish Nankai University. The study there made him determined to establish Nankai University: “The education in China is not developed and scholars are few. Every time I think of this, I feel a sense of frustration and am determined to establish a university.” After he returned to China, with intense preparations, Nankai University was established in September 1919. From December 1928 to September 1929, in order to raise donations and improve Nankai University, Zhang Boling went successively to the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, etc. After the investigation, Zhang Boling gained a more adequate and comprehensive understanding of European education and American education and a more thorough knowledge of how to learn western higher education. He believed “the experiences of other countries can be used for reference only and not for a model”. That is to say, we must combine foreign experiences with Chinese realities and could not blindly copy their practice. The schooling conception of Nankai University was the localized development of higher education. After a series of reforms in discipline construction, curriculum provision, teaching methods and scientific research, Nankai University had developed into a university as famous as Peking University and Tsinghua University in the 1930s.

In the decades after the Revolution of 1911, the modernized development of higher education in China accelerated. The development of higher education was shown not only in the increase of numbers of colleges and universities, but also in the transformation of schooling conception. Those universities became the shining stars of the times with their identifying schooling characteristics and academic achievements and developed into the hard core of Chinese modern higher education in later years, such as Peking University in the charge of Cai Yuanpei, Beijing Higher Normal School in the charge of Chen Baoquan, Nanjing Higher Normal School and Southeast University in the charge of Guo Bingwen as well as Nan Kai University and Xiamen University which gained their reputation soon after their establishment. The reasons were multiple why these universities gained the above achievements, but one important reason was that the presidents of these universities went to Europe and the United States for many times, studying and absorbing their valuable experiences of university management and gaining an international insight. “Consider the tendencies of development of foreign countries and formulate educational policies.”[2]

**Teachers’ Studying Abroad**

The faculty with abilities of an internationally advanced level was the core of the
internationalization of universities. The internationalization of the faculty was an important guarantee of the internationalized development of higher education. In the course of modernized development of higher education, due to the lack of the faculty, many universities employed foreign teachers. Therefore, training the faculty of our own country to replace foreign teachers was one of the important ways to realize independent development in the period of the Republic of China. Promoted by the government, universities and the Education and Culture Foundation of China, the system for the faculty to study abroad was constantly improving, and the international academic competitive power of the faculty was rapidly increasing.

In the first year of the Republic of China, Yan Fu, president of Peking University, proposed that the faculty be mainly composed of knowledgeable intellectuals of our own country and the returned students from Europe and the United States, and he believed that only through this could we realize the aim that “the universities of our country could be expected to be independent”. The presidents of Peking University and Beijing Higher Normal School both suggested that teachers should be sent abroad to study because they worried about the abilities of the faculty. In 1915, Chen Baoquan, president of Beijing Higher Normal School, proposed at the first conference of the Association of National Education Committee The Bill of Sending Abroad the Teachers of Normal Schools for Study, suggesting that universities send abroad the teachers who had worked for more than three years and had done an excellent job. The proposition was adopted by the Ministry of Education. In October 1916, the Ministry of Education issued Regulations on Sending Teachers Abroad, stipulating that those can apply for government-sponsored overseas education without examination who have worked as professors or assistant professors at domestic universities successively for two years or as professors in domestic technical colleges and higher normal schools successively for two years.[3] In order to encourage teachers to study abroad, the Ministry of Education issued Regulations on the Employment and Salary of the Faculty in National Universities, stipulating that “the president, university leaders and professors who have not worked successively for more than five years must go to study abroad for one year and will be paid the same salary as before during the year with transportation expenses reimbursed”. [4]These regulations stipulated that the teachers were required to study abroad and showed that sending them abroad was part of their professional requirements.

After the Ministry of Education set up the system for teachers to study abroad, universities and colleges all sent teachers abroad to study western learning and improved their teaching and researching levels. In December 1917, Peking University issued The Bill of Sending College Teachers to Study Abroad, stipulating that the professors who have worked successively for five years at the university should be sent by the university to study abroad for one or two years. During the year of studying abroad, the teachers can still be paid half the salary as before and tuition and transportation expenses are reimbursed by the university. If tuition is not required, the teacher should be paid the same as before with transportation expenses reimbursed.[5] It was evident that Peking University had made a new breakthrough in the length of schooling and the amount of money on the basis of the system of government-sponsored studying abroad of the Ministry of Education. Tsinghua University also set up the system for teachers to travel and study abroad. The professors who have worked for five years can have a vacation of one year. If the professor wants to carry out a research abroad, he or she will be paid half the salary as before and given $520 as transportation expense and $100 a month as the research fund. A lecturer or a teacher with an inferior professional title can also apply for studying abroad. From 1929 to 1936, the numbers of the teachers studying abroad were constantly increasing, adding up to 70 people. Those teachers attended international conferences and made lectures at famous universities, promoting academic exchange. For example, Sa Bendong was invited to Ohio State University and Yale University to make a lecture and attended the international academic seminar held in Washington; Feng Youlan was invited to make several lectures in Britain and was met with great favor, contributing a lot to the academic exchange between China and Britain.

Promoted by both the government and universities, the program of teachers’ studying abroad had remarkable results, solving the problem that the teachers are few and the academic levels were low.
in higher education of China and injecting new vitality to the discipline construction, academic research and internationalized development of higher education in modern China. In the late 1920s, with the establishment of Overseas China Education Foundation, the system for college teachers to go abroad was constantly improving. The ways of studying abroad gradually became diversified and multi-layered; the teachers sent abroad became more and more excellent; the research programs became more and more professional and profound. [6]

**Lecturing in China of Foreign Experts**

Science is borderless and knowledge is stateless. Only by means of strengthening international exchange and integrating the Chinese culture and the western culture can Academic research get rid of the stale and bring forth the fresh and make creative progress and development. Whether universities can be internationalized depends on whether the faculty have international insight and advanced teaching ideas. The internationalization in the period of the Republic of China was realized through two ways: one was to select excellent teachers to study abroad, improving the academic levels of teachers; the other was to invite famous foreign experts to make lectures in China.

From 1912 to 1937, as many as fifteen foreign scholars came to China to make lectures and investigate. The famous American educators such as John Dewey, Paul Monroe, George Ransom Twiss, Bertrand Russell, William Heard Kilpatrick were invited by Peking University, Nanjing Higher Normal Scholl and other universities to give lectures in China. During the two years when John Dewey stayed in China, he gave nearly two hundred lectures in various places of China and evoked a strong response in the society. His lectures introduced the latest conceptions of higher education and had specific realistic significance. These lectures included “Nature of College Education” made in Peking University, “Teaching Scientific Methods” made in Nankai University and “Student Autonomy” made in Beijing Higher Normal School, etc. Monroe stayed in China for more than three months, and he went to Shanghai City, Beijing City, Jiangsu Province, Guangdong Province, etc. He introduced the latest education theories of Europe and the United States, explained the function of universities, taught tendencies of reform and provided a most direct opportunity for Chinese scholars to know about the development of education in the world.

Inviting foreign experts to give lectures and lessons became one of the important forms of international academic and cultural exchange in the Republic of China. When Monroe acted as dean of the Oriental Department of the International Education Association, Guo Bingwen, president of Southeast University suggested for many times that he should help China develop higher education. The International Education Association sent famous experts to give lessons every year then. In April 1920, John Dewey taught courses like “Education Philosophy”, “New Outlook on Life”, etc. in Southeast University; in October 1920, Bertrand Russell taught “Logical Deduction and Scientific Methods” in Southeast University; in 1924, the world–famous master of letters Tagore gave a lecture in Southeast University and caused a sensation in Nanjing. Lectures like these widened the field of vision of teachers and students and made them form intense international consciousness. In the 1930s, Tsinghua University invited foreign experts to give lectures for many times, including American physicist and chemist Irving Langmuir, American politician Arthur N. Holcombe, etc.

World-famous experts giving lectures in China was one of the important characteristics of the internationalized development of universities, and it could convey theories and information of academic research frontiers, update thinking and innovate educational and teaching method. On the one hand, it created a favorable environment for academic research at universities and had a constant influence on the students to make them study wholeheartedly; on the other hand, it promoted effectively the improvement of the academic levels of universities in the Republic of China and the whole elevation of the quality of talent training.
International Exchange of Students

Since children were sent to study in the United States in 1872, sending students abroad has always been a major way of international exchange in modern China. In the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic period, the United States returned part of the Boxer Indemnity. Starting from that, modern education of overseas study took on a new look of diversified development. In 1908, the United States Congress decided to return part of the Boxer Indemnity and the money was used to sponsor Chinese students to study in the United States. From 1909, in the first four years, at least 100 students should be sent to the United States every year; from the fifth year, at least 50 students should be sent to the United States every year until the indemnity was used up. 80% of the Chinese students studied agriculture, mechanical engineering, mining, physics, chemistry, railroad engineering, banking, etc. The rest 20% studied law, politics, economics, education, etc. This was the famous “Overseas Study Sponsored by the Returned Boxer Indemnity” in modern education development history. Although there were profound historical reasons and aims behind the Boxer Indemnity, it was undoubtedly favorable and significant to the development of modern Chinese education. After the United States returned part of the Boxer Indemnity, Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and other countries followed the example and also returned part of the Boxer Indemnity, sponsoring Chinese cultural exchange and students’ studying abroad. Promoted by this event, a new situation of studying abroad was gradually forming after the Republic period. Statistics showed that by the end of the 1920s, there had been Chinese students in nearly 20 countries including Japan, the United States, Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Canada, Switzerland, Poland, Germany, etc. From 1909 to 1929, the number of overseas Chinese students sent only by the program of the Boxer Indemnity added up to more than 1800 people.[7]

In order to select students to go abroad, the US Office of Student Affairs founded Tsinghua School in 1911, which was renamed National Tsinghua University in 1928. In 1935, Tsinghua University signed an agreement with the German Institute of Far East Affairs about exchanging postgraduates, and drew up *The Brochure of National Tsinghua University Selecting Exchange Postgraduates to Germany*, setting a precedent for exchanging postgraduates with foreign countries. From 1935 to 1937, Tsinghua University and German universities exchanged postgraduates successfully twice, and altogether fourteen postgraduates were exchanged. Although the number of the exchanged students was limited, these activities showed the basic meanings of the internationalization of higher education. The postgraduates of Tsinghua University had considerable research capability and qualified for studying at world-famous universities. Tsinghua University also achieved the international standards of schooling and was among the world-class universities.

Conclusion

Sending students abroad was not only an important characteristic of the internationalized development of education, but also a major way of teacher training. By means of sending students abroad and making them acquainted with academic frontiers, the universities of the Republic of China could rapidly develop into world-class universities and the internationalized level could be effectively raised. As for the overseas students, the experiences of studying abroad promote the transformation of their structure of knowledge, ways of thinking and values. After they returned, they brought new vitality to higher education.

References


