

The Influence of Globalization of Education to the Chinese Higher Education: Enhancing Global Competitiveness or Tackling Social Inequality?

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ABSTRACT. *As a developing country that is experiencing rapid transformation, China's educational reform and development is carried out in the context of globalization, and is also the result of globalization. In order to find the influence of globalization of education to the Chinese Higher Education, through a lot of literature review and analyses, the author thinks that the impact of globalization of education on Chinese higher education has greatly promoted China global competitiveness, but in the aspects of tackling social inequality, China still need to strengthen in the future. Furthermore, the author also tries to make one bold suggestion, that is for those students who meet the high school enrolment requirements but from poor family, Whether the China government or institution can provide grants without repayment. The results showed that the role of higher education in China is not only the past "full support", but also to change to the current and future "proactive leading". China's higher education should rationally take the western developed countries as the reference system, learn and absorb its advanced experience, and actively build their own higher education strategy based on the local, national values, cultural views.*

KEYWORDS: *Influence of Globalization of Education, Chinese Higher Education, Global Competitiveness, Social Inequality*

1. Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, the rapid development of information technology has made globalization become the focus of human attention in the 21st century (Brown, 1999)[1]. How does education respond to the tide of globalization? It has automatically become the concerned issue that each country conduct education research in recent years (Brown & Lauder, 1996; Green, 1999; Jones, 1999; Peng, 2010)[2][3][4][5]. As a developing country that is experiencing rapid transformation, China's educational reform and development is carried out in the context of globalization, and is also the result of globalization. What impact does globalization of education have on Chinese higher education? Is to enhance the China's global competitiveness or to tackle social inequality? How does globalization of education affect Chinese higher education? The purpose of this study is try to answer the above questions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Globalization & Globalization of Education

Globalization can be said to be one of the most difficult concepts in the world today. Levitt [6] first proposed the concept of globalization in 1985. Although it had long been one of the most popular discourses in academia and mass media, Chinese and foreign scholars and schools had different interpretations of this concept. Cheng [7] argued that globalization referred to the transformation, adaptation and development of values, knowledge, technology and behavioral norms in different regions and societies of the world, thus affecting the process of society, community, institution or individual. Giddens [8] defined globalization as one thing happening in a region that can be something else in another area and was influenced by other regions. Martin and Scurman [9] proposed to see the world as a management unit that overcame boundaries and differences, and thought the globalization was the radical and strategic activities in economy, politics and cultural areas based on the neoliberalism. Integrated all kinds of viewpoints, the process of globalization can be described by the following

vocabulary or concept, such as standardization, normalization, socialization, politicization, infiltration, cultural transplantation, multiculturalism, colonialism, hybridization, and networking [1][10][11].

Through the analysis of the meaning of globalization, we can infer that globalization of education was produced with the economic globalization and was the inevitable outcome of the integration of world economic. Hence, globalization of education was the education in all regions, in order to achieve the integration of educational behaviour, to overcome the boundary restrictions and differences, interrelated and interdependent educational activities of the development process and phenomenon system [12]. It should include the largest global link between school, teaching and learning, as well as support from around the world, academic resources and impetus [13][14]. Online learning, internet learning, international visits, immersive learning programs, international exchange programs, international partners in teaching and learning, as well as interaction and sharing of video conferences between countries, communities, institutions and individuals, the new curriculum content related to science, economic, social, political, cultural about globalization, are examples of globalization of education [7].

2.2 The Process of Globalization of Chinese Higher Education

After reform and opening in 1978, Chinese higher education began to gradually integrate into the trend of globalization of education [15]. First, the CPC Central Committee promulgated “decision on the reform of the education system” in 1985, which established the basic goal of structural adjustment for Chinese higher education [16]. Then, China became one of the WTO in 2001 and made no unrestricted commitment to higher education services. This indicated that Chinese higher education had taken a substantial step towards globalization [17].

At present, the globalization of Chinese higher education globalization is still in its infancy, and lack of systematic strategy. But from “The opinion on accelerating the reform and the positive development of ordinary higher education” of 1993 and “China Education Reform and Development Program” of 1994, “Action Plan for Educational Revitalization for the 21st Century” of 1998, “The Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Sino-foreign Cooperation in Running Schools” of 2003, “Action Plan for Education Revitalization in 2003-2007” of 2003, to the “National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)” of 2010, We can see that the issue of globalization of Chinese higher education is getting more attention. For instance, it involved supporting the study abroad, expanding dispatch, strengthening exchanges and cooperation, teaching Chinese as a foreign language, improving the relevant policies, the introduction of foreign intelligence, joint schools and other aspects in “Opinions on Accelerating Reform and Positive Development of Higher Education” [18] and “China Education Reform and Development Program” [19]. It further involved that introducing the high quality educational resources, attracting well-known schools, educational and scientific research institutions and enterprises beyond the borders to run many of demonstration Sino-foreign cooperative schools and projects, attracting more world-class experts and scholars to China, the introduction of overseas top talent and academic team, the introduction of foreign excellent teaching materials, etc., in the “National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)” [20]. These were aimed at improving the international level of education in China.

We are currently implementing a major strategy for higher education, which are the strategy of rejuvenating China through science and technology (1993), constructing world-famous universities (1998), strengthening the nation on talent (2002), strengthening the nation on higher education, building an innovation-oriented country (2007), “The Belt and Road” (2015) etc. The main strategic initiatives (in chronological order) include management system reform, education open to the outside world, “211 project”, “985 project”, internationalization of Chinese language, quality engineering, modern university system, along the way education action, education action of “The Belt and Road”, etc., which are related to the global situation [17].

According to incomplete statistics, until 2016, China has established bilateral and multilateral education cooperation relations with more than 180 countries and regions, signed the degree and diploma mutual recognition agreement with 41 countries and regions, of which 24 countries are from “The Belt and Road” [21]. China has 1,112 Chinese-foreign cooperative schools or projects and nearly 184,700 students studying in Chinese universities. China has held 5 overseas institutions and 98 overseas projects in 14 countries and regions, and nearly 500 Confucius Institutes and nearly 900 Confucius Classrooms were held in 132 countries. After more than 30 years of reconstruction and change, China’s higher education has steadily taken the pace of globalization.

3. The Influence of Globalization of Education to Chinese Higher Education

The famous comparative educator, Carnoy [22] wrote in his book “Globalization and Education Reform”, if knowledge was the basic element of globalization, then globalization should also have far-reaching impact on the spread of knowledge. For developing countries, the impact of globalization of education to higher education may be mixed. From the perspective of advantages, first of all, it can use the advanced education level of developed countries to cultivate high-level talents for the developing countries, to make up the insufficient national governance resources, to provide personnel support to achieve leapfrog development in national education, science and technology and economy. Secondly, developing countries can learn and introduce advanced technology, methods and cultural paradigms of developed countries through communication and interaction, to improve their scientific and technological level and cultural, and to lay the foundation of academic structure for the integration, innovation and self-development of talent at different levels [23].

However, from the perspective of disadvantages, the process of globalization of education will not only cause the explicit loss of talent and implicit economic losses in the third world countries, but also the long-term unilateral or unbalanced flow of educational elements will also make developing countries to rely on the developed countries, thus making the loss of their innovation capacity. At the same time, the most intuitive and most important adverse effect is that the globalization of education will, to some extent, lead to the affinity of foreign culture and the alienation of local culture, resulting in the conflict and confrontation between local culture and external culture, finally the local culture was distorted or even lost [23].

The impact of globalization of education on higher education in developing countries also applied in China. Combined with the above-mentioned globalization, globalization of education, the process of globalization of Chinese higher education and other related knowledge, this article focuses on two important indicators, whether to enhance China’s global competitiveness and whether to tackle the social inequality in China, to analyze the influence of globalization of education to Chinese higher education.

3.1 Global Competitiveness

At the practical level, all countries responded to the “opportunistic challenge” of globalization from a competitive standpoint. Competition provided the driving force of sustainable development for the country and the organization. Countries responded to global competition in the main line, was not to intercept, but open; not stick, but innovate. China was no exception. Under the driving force of knowledge economy competition, Chinese higher education was becoming the core agenda of national development [16]. Since 1993, in the reform and opening and the rapid development of the global economy under the dual drive, Chinese higher education had also entered a rapid development track. It has played a huge role in enhancing China’s global competitiveness [15]. These can be proved by the following points:

To begin with, in the latest release of “The Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017” by the World Economic Forum (2016), China ranked 28th in the global competitiveness, and ranked 28th for the third consecutive year, leading the “BRIC” countries, to maintain the most competitive emerging market position. This was mainly due to the improvement of China’s international innovation ecosystem, especially in the pillar of higher education, it ranked 54th, up 14 positions over last year. Then, comprehensive national power was a famous political concept created originally by contemporary Chinese. It was the most important indicators to measure a country’s basic national conditions and resources, also was comprehensive indicators to measure a country’s economic, political, military, cultural, educational and technical strength. In recent years, China always ranked the first three in global comprehensive national power ranking [24]. Furthermore, China as the world’s second largest economy, in 2016, its annual increments of GDP was 700 billion US dollars, and the average annual growth rate was 6.9%, doubled the United States’ GDP, which also made the world pattern in the quietly changing [25].

Finally, the position of China’s universities in the world’s four famous universities ranking was also changing, which was shown in the following data issued in 2016. In World University academic rankings, a total of 41 universities of mainland China on the list, of which Tsinghua University and Peking University got into the world top 100 for the first time, China University of Geosciences and other nine universities got into world top 500 for the first time. In Times Higher Education World University Rankings, there were 85 Chinese colleges and universities, including 52 universities in mainland China, 6 universities in Hong Kong, 1 Macau university and 26 universities in Taiwan. In QS World University Rankings, China had a total of 56 universities on the list, of which 33 in mainland China, 7 in Hong Kong, 1 in Macao, 15 in Taiwan. Tsinghua University, Peking University and Fudan University got into the international top 50. In US News World University Rankings, China had a total of 110 colleges and universities on the list, Of which 87 from mainland China, 6 from Hong

Kong, 1 from Macao, 16 from Taiwan. Peking University and Tsinghua University got into the international top 100 [26]. From the above, Chinese universities became more and more bright in the world, which was the common results created by great attention to education from China government and the continuous efforts and innovation from Chinese universities. These also showed the rapid improvement of the Chinese university's comprehensive strength and international influence.

3.2 Social inequality

Education equality as an important practice of sharing the development achievements, not only embodied a country's equalization level of basic public education services, but also the basis of social equality, was the cornerstone of social equality. In 2009, the former Premier, Wen Jiabao talked about education work to "promote education fair" in the first place at the Government Work Report of Tenth National People's Congress. This showed that government policy makers were highly concerned about the issue of education equality, but also shows the new direction of education reform.

However, in the meantime of the government to increase investment in education, especially in rural education investment, and in the meantime of high-speed expansion of higher education and the rapid growth in national economic level, we had found that more and more inequality phenomenon in rural adolescents, disadvantaged groups and lower social class, they automatically abandoned the opportunity to university then entered the labor market. On the one hand, it had exacerbated inequality in educational opportunities and thus exacerbated social inequality. On the other hand, it created many low-skilled new labors (Li,2010; Li, 2014)[27][28]. To provide higher education for disadvantaged groups should be the concern of the state and local policymakers, which was very important in China. China should pay close attention to the equal distribution of education and economic resources for nationwide, pay attention to the disadvantaged groups to share the achievement of higher education development, pay attention to the education development balance between regions. At present, the inequality was embodied in the following three aspects: the inequality of educational opportunities, the inequality of high resource input, the inequality of the quality of universities (Zhong, 2013)[29].

3.2.1 The inequality of access to higher education

First was the inequality between regions. In 2016, the gross enrollment rate of Chinese higher education had exceeded 40% (MOE, 2016)[30], of which Beijing's gross enrollment rate was 60% ("Education", 2016)[31], reached the level of popularity, while Yunnan Province's gross enrollment rate was 30.2% ("Yunnan", 2017)[32], a difference of nearly 2 times. Second was the inequality between urban and rural areas. According to the scholars' statistics, there were four times as city students to college opportunities as rural students and vulnerable groups. The majority of the rural students finally broke through the layers but into the second or third tier universities, even if they got the university diploma, they also faced with more difficulty to break - to find a work with promising future and stability. Third, the inequality of elite education. Since 2010, the proportion of rural students to the university had risen to 60%, but the rural students proportion of 985 and 211 key universities decreased year by year ("Why", 2015)[33]. Take Peking University for example, it only had 10% of new rural students from 2000 to 2010. In 2016, its rural students accounted for only 16.3% under the national policy support, while this ratio was 30% in 1980-1990 years ("Real", 2016)[34].

3.2.2 Unequal investment in educational resources

First, the uneven distribution of higher institutions, key institutions were mostly concentrated in the east areas, municipalities and provincial capital city. The number and quality of high institutions in Beijing, Shanghai and other large cities was far greater than the general provinces, cities and autonomous regions, and its admissions policy leaned to the local region naturally, seriously affected a lot of students' chance to university who lived in the less colleges and universities areas. Second, teachers were not equal. Well-educated teachers did not want to go to general institutions and mostly focus on prestigious universities. The treatment of teachers between different universities also made the gap increased between teachers. Third was the inequality of government investment. The Government investment to the "211" and "985" institutions was higher than the general institutions, resulting in widening the gap among the urban and rural areas, regions and schools [35].

3.2.3 *The inequality of the quality of universities*

Because of the above inequality of educational opportunities and educational resources, finally manifested in the quality of different universities, has a great difference. In 2019 China University Ranking 100 list, more than 70% universities located in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and southeast coastal areas. There were few colleges and universities located in the western region, and no one private colleges.

4. Discussion

Although the rapid development of Chinese higher education has recently jumped to a great country of higher education, which has played a great role for enhancing China's global competitiveness, China is far from becoming a power country of higher education. China's influence in the world knowledge system is still quite limited, and lack the voice of globalization of higher education. This is the reason why the current focus of China is to promote world-class universities and first-class discipline construction.

In recent years, although the government has adopted a few policies to tackle social inequality, which includes increasing investment in rural education, reducing the education burden of farmers, reducing tuition fees, promoting rural compulsory education, increasing financial support for poor college students, etc. However, these policies have little effect on narrowing the opportunities for higher education of urban-rural gap, and the gap is going to expand. This requires policymakers to think further about the practical effects of these policies. How to improve the educational income of rural residents, lower people and vulnerable groups, reduce their education costs and the risk of failure should be the basic idea of the relevant policy design. China government is also actively adjusting and implementing effective measures to promote equal education in rural areas, for instance, expanding the enrolment scale of major universities in poor areas, expanding the proportion and scope of scholarships, fellowship and student loans to poor students, improving the running conditions of the weak schools, expanding the coverage of quality education resource, and narrowing the gap among urban-rural areas, regions and schools [36].

This article would try to make one bold suggestion, that is for those students who meet the high school enrolment requirements but from poor family, Whether the China government or institution can provide grants without repayment. The benefit of this suggestion is that students have not to work around in part time for the repayment stress during the four-year university. It can not only keep the students' quality and effectiveness of learning, but also make students be able to fully into the working state after graduation. The aim is letting the student can accumulate work experience and family wealth rapidly, achieve the goal of sharing quality education for their next generation.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, we can see that the impact of globalization of education on Chinese higher education has greatly promoted China global competitiveness, but in the aspects of tackling social inequality, China still need to strengthen in the future. Therefore, we must realize that globalization is a historical process that is not transferred by personal will. As an intellectual of contemporary society, the critical attitude towards globalization does not mean simply opposing globalization, but through the critical thinking to remind people to avoid disadvantages, in the process of globalization to discuss the correct direction of Chinese higher education reform [11]. We can clearly see that globalization and the reform of Chinese economy, education has become an important process of historical development. In this process, higher education has been incorporated into international economic growth and development strategies. The role of higher education in China is not only the past "full support", but also to change to the current and future "proactive leading". China's higher education should rationally take the western developed countries as the reference system, learn and absorb its advanced experience, and actively build their own higher education strategy based on the local, national values, cultural views.

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