

Comparative studies on Sino-Canadian higher education

YANG Hong

(Tourism College, Hainan University, Haikou Hainan 570228, China)

Abstract: Today education is internationalization. Both China and Canada have their own strong merits of higher education. This paper approaches comparative studies on differences of Sino-Canadian higher education from new points, so as to achieve an inspiration to the development of Chinese higher education: preserve relative independence between higher education and politics, establish Degree Quality Assessment Board and formulate Degree Authorization Act, and open up to promote international exchange of Sino-Canadian higher education.

Key words: Sino-Canadian higher education; comparative study; inspiration

Higher education is a capital-intensive career and needs a large number of investments from governments, communities, corporations, institutions and families. How to promote Chinese higher education development has aroused wide attention nowadays. The comparative study of Sino-Canadian higher education and its inspiration to China as follows have special and practical significance.

1. Comparative studies on differences of Sino-Canadian higher education

1.1 Administrative setups of higher education

1.1.1 Administrative setups of Chinese higher education

The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China is the supreme education administration department in China. It is responsible for carrying out related laws, regulations, guidelines and policies of the central government; the planning development of the education sector; integrating and coordinating educational initiatives and programs nationwide; and guiding education reform in countrywide. Starting from the 1990s, substantial structural reform has been implemented. The central Ministry of Education, known from 1985 until 1998 as the State Education Commission, is still responsible for overall policy, and the development and reform of higher education. Education authorities in the major cities and provinces, however, have been given the responsibility for local higher education policy, programs, quality assurance and implementation of the central reform program.

1.1.2 Administrative setups of Canadian higher education

Canada has no national or federal Ministry of Education. Canada is divided into ten provinces and three territories, each of which designs its own Ministry of Education or Department of Education. Canadian Constitution Act (1867) gives the provinces exclusive jurisdiction in education. The provincial and territorial legislatures have developed their own educational structures and institutions, creating thirteen education systems with many similarities and some differences. Each province or territory has one or two ministers in charge of education. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), founded to act as the national voice of

YANG Hong (1968-), female, Master, lecture of Tourism College, Hainan University; research fields: applied foreign language, cognitive linguistics, studies of translation and Canadian education.

education in Canada. CMEC is the forum in which the provincial and territorial ministers meet to discuss matters of mutual interest. CMEC monitors international development in Canadian higher education through an agreement with the federal government to ensure Canadian representation at international discussions on higher education development. CMEC provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels, contributes to the fulfillment of the constitutional responsibility for education conferred on provinces and territories.

1.2 Conferment authorities of academic degrees

1.2.1 Conferment authorities of Chinese academic degrees

The Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council and the Ministry of Education are responsible for administering graduate education and degree conferment. In principle, all degrees and examinations throughout the country are the same. The Academic Degrees Committee, education commissions of autonomous regions, provinces' degree committees and municipal higher education bureaus under the provinces and autonomous regions, are responsible for administering graduate education and degree conferment in higher education institutions under their jurisdiction. Generally awarded Bachelor degrees after four years' full-time study. Programs in medicine, dentistry, architecture and engineering in some universities, however, may take five or six years to complete. Most Master degree programs involve three years full-time study after Bachelor degrees. However, in some universities, students are possible to earn a Master degree in 2 or 2.5 years. Doctor degrees are offered at degree-granting universities, involving three years of study and research work or writing a thesis, usually take a minimum of three years.

1.2.2 Conferment authorities of Canadian academic degrees

The Degree Quality Assessment Board is responsible for administering graduate education and degree conferment. It reviews and makes recommendations to the Minister of Advanced Education on degree application. The Degree Quality Assessment Board is usually comprised of voting members and three non-voting members. Canadian university degrees are offered at three consecutive levels—Bachelor, Master and Doctor—with the possession of a degree from the lower level generally a prerequisite for admission to the next. Bachelor degrees require three or four-years full-time study, depending on policy of different provinces, whether the program is general or specialized. An honor degree may require an additional year of study for a higher level of academic achievement; Master degrees typically require two years of study after successful completion of an honor baccalaureate. Although the normal prerequisite for a doctoral program is a Master degree, students are allowed, in some special circumstances, to go directly from an honor baccalaureate program into a doctoral degree. Doctor degrees require a minimum of three years and up to four or five years to study, research as well as a dissertation.

1.3 Categories of higher education institutions

1.3.1 Categories of Chinese higher education institutions

In China, there are formal and non-formal higher education institutions. The former has the characteristics as follows: Admission based on scores obtained in the unified National College Entrance Examination; curriculum guidelines are prepared nationally. The latter based on the unified National Entrance Examination for adult higher education or self-study examination system, and educational programs usually offer training in knowledge or skills important to the Chinese economy. Enrolment quotas are not part of the central government plan, and the government has no responsibility for their job. As for formal higher education institutions, there are universities, specialized colleges and vocational universities in China. As for non-formal higher education institutions, there are administrative colleges, evening colleges, employees' colleges, radio and television universities and spare-time universities.

1.3.2 Categories of Canadian higher education institutions

In terms of categories of higher education institutions, there are universities, university colleges, community colleges or colleges of applied arts and technology in Canada. Universities in Canada range from large urban, multi-campus and research-intensive universities, offering a wide range of undergraduate, graduate and professional programs, to small liberal arts colleges with a focus on undergraduate education. Universities and colleges in Canada undertake degree programs as their primary activity and provide three-years and four-years Bachelor degrees. They generally offer smooth university transfer opportunities. Community colleges or colleges of applied arts and technology are mainly set up by provincial governments to cater for the needs of the society. These colleges provide Arts, Business, Technical and Vocational training courses of one to three years that lead to a certificate or diploma responding to the training needs of business, industry and the public service, as well as the educational needs of vocationally oriented secondary school graduates.

2. The inspiration of Canadian higher education to the development of Chinese higher education

2.1 Preserve relative independence between authority of higher education and governments

Through the above-mentioned comparative study, it is clear that there is no upper and lower relation between the levels of governments and higher education institutions in Canada. Politics and Canadian higher education are relatively autocephaly. All higher education institutions implement self-administration or self-rule management and advocate free academic vogue and independent creative spirit. In China, the inner management of all higher education institutions involves the silhouettes or shadows of governments that control the educational fund. Even the appointment and removal of the president of university are intervened by the government. The way of managing Chinese higher education adopts the model of centralism with the central power of authority, involving the Ministry of Education, Department of Provinces and Bureau of Cities to interfere in the education affairs completely. The government management relatively restricts the development of higher education institutions. As a result, the administrative setups of Chinese higher education should take in and learn from some of the advanced concepts of Canadian educational management.

2.2 Establish Degree Quality Assessment Board and formulate the Degree Authorization Act

In order to become a degree-granting body, Chinese universities have to apply for authority of awarding degrees from the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council and the Ministry of Education that are responsible for administering graduate education and degree conferment. Nevertheless, there is no board or body to receive the application for degrees, set up the criteria for degrees, carry on consultation and recommendations to the President, to assess the quality of degrees, or supervise the degree-granting and so on. The Degree Quality Assessment Board and Canada Degree Authorization Act publish the criteria to apply for the purpose of giving or refusing consent, or attaching terms and conditions to consent and the process of degree quality assessment. In the light of Chinese specific conditions, it should take in and learn from the experience of Canadian higher education, and try to establish the Degree Quality Assessment Board or work out the Degree Authorization Act to show fair and scientific trial to assessing degree quality, and granting the degrees to those qualified students.

2.3 Open up to promote international exchange of Sino-Canadian higher education

Through the comparative study of categories of Sino-Canadian Higher Education Institutions, each country has its own merits. Every university or college of both countries has its own specialty to meet the needs of the market economy. Therefore, Chinese higher education should take in, learn from each other and draw references

from Canadian higher education to run schools domestically and internationally, and carry out international education cooperation with Canada. Besides, Chinese higher education should exploit and make good use of Canadian education space, attract more foreign students to construct an educational environment with multi-culture for promotion of international exchange of higher education between China and Canada.

3. Conclusion

Chinese and Canadian regimes, population and traditional culture have great differences. Therefore, in view of Canadian higher education, Chinese higher education can use for reference and take in to learn from Canada's educational administration system, the degree conferment management, the funding systems of higher education, concepts of running various institutions and the model of admission to universities or colleges to ensure excellent quality and sustained development of Chinese higher education.

References:

- Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and Statistics Canada. (2000). *Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program 1999*. Toronto and Ottawa: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and Statistics Canada.
- China Education Association for International Exchange. Retrieved from <http://www.ceaie.edu.cn>.
- Lemieux, Thomas & David Card. (2001). Education, earnings and the "Canadian G.I. Bill". *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 34(2). Ministry of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.moe.edu.cn>.
- National Education Examination Authority. Retrieved from <http://www.neea.edu.cn/buttom/english.htm>.

(Edited by Victoria and Lily)