

Study on Higher Education Fund Guarantee System of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in Yan'an Period

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Abstract

With the institutionalism theory as the breakthrough point, this paper analyses the composition and functional characteristics of the CPC's higher education fund guarantee system in Yan'an period. According to the document analysis and historical data investigation, it is thought in this paper that the CPC's higher education fund guarantee system in Yan'an period was actually composed of the subsystems of the following three levels: government subsidy system, school production system and social contribution system. Thought they had different significance, they all had the functions of helping to realize the higher education for the people in Yan'an, strengthening the relation between the government and the colleges, weakening the individualism and strengthening the collectivism, which provided sufficient talents for the ultimate victory of the CPC's revolution.

Key words: Yan'an period; Higher education; Fund guarantee system

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INTRODUCTION

The "system" study was started in the 19th century, when Veblen, an American socialist, put forward the earliest

concept of system in the book *Theory of the Leisure Class*: "In essence, a system is a general thought of individual or the society about certain relations or functions." (Thorstein, 1964) In the 1940s and 1950s, the politics, economics and sociology stepped into the new system research stage respectively. Even though these disciplines are varied in the angles of view on studying the system, they also have a general consensus that they all consider the system as certain form of formal and informal norm between an organization and individual.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, the "system" has also become a hot topic of the higher education study in China. A representative viewpoint thought that the higher education system is a system arrangement and operating mechanism which coordinates and standardizes all behaviors of higher education institutions and makes them become an organic integrity, reflecting the development status of the higher education institutions and the features of era development. Specifically, the higher education system includes two systems: Internally, it deals with the relations among university organization members, such as the relations among teachers, students and the school administrators, which consequently formed the school's internal management system, teacher employment system and student cultivation system; externally, it deals with the relations between the universities, the government and society, which consequently formed the educational administration system and school-running investment system, etc.. (Gao, 2003)

The higher education fund guarantee system, which is subject to the higher education system, refers to the systematic specification for raising and distributing the related education funds and relevant educational materials in the higher education. For the higher education, it is a significant means to guarantee the smooth development of higher education and to realize the goals of the higher education, and it embodies certain value cognition logic

among the higher education institutions, the government and the society.

1. PRIMARY FUND GUARANTEE SYSTEM FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION IN YAN'AN PERIOD

When the CPC passed through Wuqi Town and entered into Yan'an in October 1935, this place was poor, undeveloped and culturally wild. Just in terms of the economic conditions, Yan'an was still in the natural economy stage; the production tools are primitive, production management is extensive, and the production organizations are monotonous. After investigation in this place by journalists and scholars from all over the world, all of them were deeply impressed by the backward economy in Yan'an: "The northern Shanxi is one of the poorest areas I've ever seen in China." (Snow, 2010) "Between 1928 and 1933, famine swept northwest China, including Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region; millions of people died and a large scale of land left uncultivated." (Lyman, 1994) What matched with the backward economy was that there were a lot of illiterate people as they could not afford the tuition fees: Among the 1.40 million of populations in the border region, 99% of them were illiterate. There were totally 120 elementary schools, 1 middle school, 1 secondary normal college, and 250 middle school students (Zhou, 1986).

Taking this place as the foothold, the CPC's border region government relocated the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University, Party School of the Central Committee of the CPC and other schools in this region, and also newly established, as required by the situation, the Shanbei Public School, Women's University of China, Yan'an University, etc.. — There were totally 29 higher education institutions established in Yan'an within 13 years. For school running in such a poor place, the establishment and improvement of the fund guarantee system became very important. In the Yan'an period, the higher education fund guarantee system was roughly divided into the following three levels.

1.1 Government Subsidy System

For most countries in the world, governments are the primary sources of financial and material support for higher education. Before the promulgation of the *Interim Regulations on Education Grants for Students and People* in May 1949, the CPC implemented the basic needs supply system and the complete public expense system for higher education in the base area, namely: The total funds for running higher education schools would be raised and arranged by the border region government, and students' tuition fees and textbook expenses would be completely paid by the border region government; meanwhile, the border region government

would also provide the students with foods and living goods as required.

In January 1937, it was said in the enrollment advertisement of Anti-Japanese Military and Political University that: "Our admission office will send the recruited students to our school in Yan'an and we will provide these students with bedding and clothing, meals, books and stationeries." By December 1944, it was also said in the enrollment advertisement of Yan'an University that: "All board and lodging, clothing, books, teaching materials and necessary stationeries will be provided by our university." Besides, the contents of supplies stated in the recruitment notice of the Northwest People's Anti-Japanese Red Army University were more detailed:

Exempt all the fees for tuition, meals and textbooks, provide clothing, blankets, shoes and socks, and enjoy the preferential treatment equal to that of the Red Army. If the students want to work elsewhere after graduation, we will provide travelling expenses for them, send them to their desired places and introduce them to the work units.

Moreover, in the admission constitution for General Department of Yan'an Luxun Academy of Arts, it was said that: "We will provide the board and lodging, and will issue the subsidy of CNY 1.5 for each student per month."¹

In general, the fund and material guarantee for higher education in Yan'an period largely depended on the border region government. Besides, the way of fund guarantee of the border region government in Yan'an period was of direct granting, namely, directly paying the funds to higher education institutions for maintaining students' study and schools' operation while claiming to be charge-free for students; the equalitarianism was basically adopted for the supply of funds and materials, namely, taking the number of students as the basis and giving little consideration to the difference in students' individual economies and learning behaviors, nor to the difference in characteristics of different schools.

1.2 School Production System

Due to the backward economy in Yan'an, military siege by Japan and the Nationalist Party, and the strict economic blockade implemented by the Nationalist Party in Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region since the end of 1930s, the CPC's border region government had been facing a serious financial difficulty. It was very difficult to completely guarantee the normal operation of higher education just by relying on the government subsidy system. In 1938, Mao Zedong talked about the "working for school building" to the students and teachers of Anti-Japanese Military and Political University: "The Anti-Japanese Military and Political University is expanding constantly, and the number of students is increasing exponentially. We need to build schools, but we don't have sufficient funds. What

¹ Source: Yan'an Revolutionary Memorial Hall.

shall we do? There is only one way: working hard.” (Liu et al., 1989) Afterwards, the third-term students of the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University built 175 new cave dwellings within half a month, which solved the problems in terms of classrooms and dormitories for almost 2,000 students in the whole university. Thus, it could be seen that organizing students and teachers to participate in work and create materials and economy had become a very important systematically means to guarantee the large-scale development of higher education institutions in Yan'an period.

In 1943, the border region government put forward further requirements: “All authorities, schools and armies must strictly enforce the vegetable growing, pig raising, firewood collecting, charking, developing the handcraft industry and planting grains.”(Mao, 1981) Under this call, all higher education institutions in Yan'an period listed the productive work into the education plan, requiring teachers and students to widely participate in industrial, agricultural and sideline works as well as service-type works, with the purpose of creating tangible funds and materials for higher education. The *Production Situation of Yan'an University in 1943* indicated that the number of students of the university, including the newly merged Luxun Art and Literature College and the College of Nationalities, was increased from 824 students to 930 students between April and September. According to the production plan as per 900 persons, this university stipulated, as per the government's given standard, the production quantity of vegetables, meat, pork for festivals and new years, mediation cost, shirts, shoes, processed wool, entertainment cost, and charcoal. It was specially stated in the item “entertainment cost” that: “We did not provide subsidies for production as Yangge Group of Luxun Academy of Arts has deposits.”² It could be seen from the production contents that the productive works directly satisfied the living demands of students, which greatly eased the difficulty in funds for students' study and government's school running; for example, the amount of funds obtained by Yan'an University through productive works between December 1943 and May 1944 accounted for over 50% of the total expenditure; and in 1943, the amount the production by teachers and students of Anti-Japanese Military and Political University for their own needs accounted for over 58%. To some degree, after 1940s, many higher education institutions achieved the school running through semi-self-sufficiency.

1.3 Social Contribution System

In Yan'an area, the economic development lagged behind and the agricultural economy played a dominant role, thus the contributions were made mainly by the CPC's individual leaders and the people's army groups; besides,

partial democratic parties in the Kuomintang-governed areas also provided certain support. For example, in 1939 when the China Women's University was established, it obtained various social contributions through many ways; Mao Zedong contributed CNY 100 from his salary to this university for purchasing books; Dong Biwu and Deng Yingchao contributed CNY 300 from their salaries to this university; Li Kenong raised donations from the Eighth Route Army to this university; non-Communist friends also made some contributions to this university and wrote letters to express their concerns about the university's situation; besides, Qin Bangxian contributed the curtain used for the assembly place during opening ceremony of this university; Lin Boqu contributed gas lamps for this university; on behalf of the Eighth Route Army, Deng Xiaoping contributed a group of horses; on behalf of the New Fourth Army, Zhang Dingcheng promised to contribute some future war trophies to this university, etc..³

In general, social contributions aimed at the collective higher education institutions, rather than the individuals; though the amount of contributed goods was not too much, such goods basically met the actual needs for running the higher education in Yan'an period. However, there were no any mechanisms or restrictive regulations between social contributors and institutions who received such contributions; the relationship was not stable, and many contributions were occasional; thus, such a fund system was just supplementary to the government subsidy system and school production system, and was a relief when the funds were most insufficient at the beginning of establishing these universities.

2. FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGHER EDUCATION FUND GUARANTEE SYSTEM IN YAN'AN PERIOD

2.1 Having Facilitated the Development of the Mass Higher Education and Provided a Key Guarantee for the Victory of the Revolution

In Yan'an period, the CPC faced complicated international and domestic situations; it was required to widely mobilize the masses with knowledge quality, revolutionary quality and professional quality to support and even participate in the revolutionary struggle, so as to resist the Japanese invasion and break the Nationalist Party's political, military and economic blockade. However, these qualities could be obtained only by large-scale education—especially the higher education. Therefore, in 1940, Mao Zedong published the *On New Democracy*, regarding the “new education for the broad masses of the people” as one

² Source: Yan'an Revolutionary Memorial Hall.

³ Wang Ming's report in the Opening Ceremony of the China Women's University. (1939, August 11, 4th ed.).

of the important contents of the new democratic culture education.

Between 1935 and 1948, the masses of people in Yan'an border region were mainly composed of three parts: The first part was the local ordinary people who had been always living here; the second part was the people's army arrived here after the long march; the third part was the educated youth who broke various obstructions and arrived here with patriotic enthusiasm and ideal to participate in the revolution.

Generally, the three types of people were not "rich persons". Most of the CPC's army personnel were of worker or peasant origin; most educated young persons were of petty bourgeoisie origin whose economic status was extremely unstable. For example, there were totally 7,455 young students educated in the 4th and 5th terms of Anti-Japanese Military and Political University;

with respect to their family backgrounds, a large number of them were of middle peasant origin, accounting for 42.3%; the students who were of urban salary-based resident origin accounted for 18%; the students who were of rural poor peasant origin accounted for 12.5%; those who were of rich peasant and merchant origins accounted for 12.7%; those who were of landlord and capitalist origins accounted for 6.5%. Most of them discontinued their studies due to family bankruptcy or 'became unemployed after graduation' and faced various difficulties in life (Qu, 2006);

while the local ordinary people in Yan'an had heavier burdens and were much poorer:

(Yangjiagou County) Among the 137 households of farmers in the whole village, 94 households were tenant farmers, namely, 69% farmers were tenant farmers exploited by landlords.... "The rich have abundant pieces of land, while the poor have not any place to stand on". (Zhang, 1994)

"In some counties, rural people were just like standing in the water that reached their necks, and even a ripple could drown them" (Tawney, 1966; Scott, 2001); it could be seen that most of the ordinary people in Yan'an could not afford the high cost or even the self-care fees for higher education.

Therefore, the higher education fund guarantee system consisting of the three levels in Yan'an period greatly helped the broad masses to enroll in higher education institutions in Yan'an border region, and also actually guided the development trend to the mass higher education:

Firstly, it opened the gates of universities to those persons who were willing to receive the education. Though there were numerous schools in each area, most of them were based on money; in other words, they were opened to only the rich, rather than the proletarian ordinary people; such a disadvantage was firstly eradicated by Shanbei Public School, Anti-Japanese Military and Political University and the Central Party School. (Tian, 1938)

As a result of the mass higher education, the educated youth, the common people and the army in Yan'an were edified by the military knowledge, specialized knowledge

and revolutionary knowledge, and the preparation of sufficient talents were achieved for the CPC's ultimate war victory.

2.2 Having Strengthened the Relation Between Government and Higher Education

Actually, any higher education institution could not exist after separating itself from the government; even the knight Humboldt, who strongly disagreed the government's interference in universities, established the University of Berlin by completely replying on the financial support of 150,000 Taler provided by Frederick William III, the King of Prussia. Among the American higher education institutions, the politics, which had been in dispute with the epistemology for decades, had never been completely inferior. However, due to the special struggle situation in Yan'an period, such a relation between higher education and the government was unprecedentedly strengthened; the higher education fund guarantee system of the border region government reflected this trend, and in turn, further strengthened this trend.

Firstly, the public expense system was organically connected with the graduation assignment system, while the graduation assignment depended on the practical needs of the border region government's revolutionary struggle. For example, it was stated in the recruitment notice of Northwest People's Anti-Japanese Red Army University that the university would provide the traveling expenses for those students who would like to join in the anti-Japanese army, anti-Japanese guerrilla, anti-Japanese voluntary army, etc..

Secondly, the contents of textbooks provided to students of higher education institutions under the basic needs supply system were also strictly examined by the border region government. In February 1942, with respect to the problems existing in higher education, such as alienation of theory from practice, subjectivism and dogmatism, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee issued the *Decisions of the CPC Central Committee on On-the-job Cadre Education*, in which there were the following requirements specially made for textbooks, teaching materials, etc.:

For political science, the strategy-related Marxism-Leninism writings should be adopted as theoretical materials, and the history of our Party's 20-year history of struggles should be adopted as the practical materials; for science of thought, the Marxist thought methodology should be taken as the theoretical materials, and China's hundred-year history of thought should be used as practical materials; for economic science, the Marxist political economy should be taken as the theoretical materials, and China's hundred-year history of economic development should be taken as the practical materials; the science of history should focus on the history of foreign revolutions and the history of China's revolutions.

Besides, "all materials must be examined by the leading organizations, and anything containing subjectivism,

sectarianism and Party jargon must be strictly eliminated and criticized.” (Peng, Sun, Ge, & Zhong, 2012)

In some sense, the public expense system and the basic needs supply system in Yan'an period guaranteed not only the realization of the mass higher education, but also the highly consistent political direction and value orientation between the higher education and the government, which cleared the ideological and cognitive obstacles for the ultimate victory of the revolution. Among the over 600 young persons educated and graduated from the second term of the Anti-Japanese Military and Political University, about 70% of them participated in the Chinese Communist Party; in 1943, over 200 students who would graduate from Yan'an University soon “waited for job assignment by the government; all of them were full of enthusiasm after being assigned with economic construction and education works, and did not show no any bargaining.”⁴

2.3 Having Strengthened the Individual's Obedience and Fusion Into Collectivity

Strengthening the productive work in education was not initiated by universities in Yan'an. In 1900, Dewey, an American educationalist, drew up a blueprint about university buildings in *The School and Society*, in which the workshops for woodworking, metalworking, sewing and spinning were included; when talking about the women's education, the professor Cai Yuanbei in Peking University also took the American normal schools as an example to tell the significance of setting up the housekeeping course in universities. However, the purpose of introducing the production work into universities, as proposed by Dewey and other people, was not to solve the funds required for running the schools, but to try to further understand, through the productive work consistent with the daily life category, the deep universal laws contained in the objects of work and in the work itself, and to hereby cultivate students' spirit and method of exploring the unknown things; in other words, productive work—namely the “learning by doing” called in education—directly serves the purpose of personal knowledge growth.

To more extent, the school production system in higher education in Yan'an period was a passive choice based on the economic environment, and the most important premise to implement it was to overcome the problem of insufficient educational fund; therefore, the purpose of productive work organized by universities in Yan'an period was to effectively obtain achievements (materials and funds), rather than let individuals obtain the principles of knowledge during the productive work. With respect to the needs of obtaining large-scale achievements within a short period of time, it was required to rely on the collective power, change the thought of individualism,

learn from the masses of workers and peasants who have good working skills and become really integrated with them.

It could be seen that the higher education fund guarantee system in Yan'an period not only solved the difficulty in education fund, but also indirectly facilitated individuals' drawing close to the collectivity and the integration of higher education students with ordinary people. And in turn, the development of such collectivity and affinity to the people helped the army, educated youth and ordinary people in Yan'an area to unify the understanding in a faster and better way and to strive for the common goals.

CONCLUSION

The scholar Lang Yifu thought that the production and living activities in the modern society were numerous and complicated, and that each activity was a combination of multiple contents and has multiple attributes such as politics, economy, culture, etc.. However, due to the difference in the nature and content of the social activity, the characteristics and levels of its political attribute, economic attribute and cultural attribute were also different (Lang, 2007). The higher education fund guarantee system in Yan'an period embodied the important orientation of political attribute of the higher education.

In October 1935 when the CPC tried to take Yan'an as the base area to develop and expand its revolutionary cause, it should not only internally face the backward economic and cultural conditions in Yan'an, but also externally resist the Japanese invasion and the Nationalist Party's blockade; these situations forced the CPC to “mobilize the masses during the revolution, unify their thought and arm their knowledge” within a short period of time. It was this political idea that hastened the emergence of the three levels of the higher education fund guarantee system in Yan'an period. And in turn, the three levels of systems provided a key guarantee for the CPC's ultimate victory of the revolution.

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⁴ Upcoming Job Assignment for Two Hundred Students of Yan'an University. (1943, February 2, 2nd ed.). *Liberation Daily*.

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