

# Government Responsibility in the Education Reform and Development in China

## Summary of the Fifth Annual Conference of the National Education Policy and Legal Studies Professional Committee

*Lin Zhou and Chen Chen, Beijing (China)*

(click here for the text in Chinese language: [education conference chinese version](#))



Picture: [www.pixelio.de](http://www.pixelio.de)  
(Photographer: Thommy Weiss)

October 12, 2007 13, the National Education Policy and Legal Studies Professional Committee of the Fifth Annual Conference met in Beijing Normal University, the meeting's theme was "Government Responsibility in the Education Reform and Development – of contemporary education policy and the legislature issues and trends.

The participants conducted an in-depth discussion about basic education and government responsibility, higher education and government responsibility, relationships among the government, the market and schools, education fair, education publicness and education legislation, as well as the formulation of education policy and such issues.

### **I . Basic Education and Government Responsibility**

Participants pointed out that the responsible subject to promote the balanced development of compulsory education is the government, whose responsibilities include overall planning, policy development, funds input, effective management, and so on. At the same time, the governmental responsibility is not unlimited. In the market economy, the government is in a period of transformation, in which its functions are also changing.

How to protect the migrant children's educational rights has been the focus in the field of basic education. The scholars paid great attention to the government responsibility in the inflow districts.

Some scholars introduced the government responsibility and education equity of foreign countries in the field of compulsory education. They also analyzed the compulsory education policies and typical cases of Japan and Canada respectively for China to learn from.

Other scholars devoted to the accountability system of the new Compulsory Education Law. They mentioned that this is an important new innovation of the Law, and introduced the system comprehensively.

### **II . Higher Education and The Government Responsibility**

In some participants' opinion, the role positioning of the government is becoming more and more important, as the relationship between government and college has already changed. The idea of "limited government responsibility" is widely accepted. The government should strive to be the leader of the higher education reform, the promoter of the market-oriented process, and the provider of the funding and operator of the service.

Some scholars discussed the role of the government from the perspective of educational legislation. In the process that our government turned from pure management-oriented to the multi-role government, the corresponding trend of educational legislation is: soft and hard law

of mixed governance, educational administrative behavior diversification and methods flexibility, comprehensive relief of both the administrative acts and executor. Other scholars pointed out that higher education has a significant public nature. Despite the intervention of the market mechanism, governments should never pass their responsibility to maintain the publicity of higher education when they search for the diversification of education. The government's responsibility should be strengthened through legislation.

### **III. Relationship between the Government, the Market and Schools**

First of all, we must be clear about the government functions in the management of school education. Some scholars have pointed out two basic functions of the government: services and security; management and norms. Because of that four changes in the government should be realized in the education reform, including changes from control into service, authority into democracy, the rule of man into the rule of law, and experience administrative into scientific administrative.

The market impact on the development of education is another important factor. The participants held that education market-oriented operation is an indisputable fact, but the market must be limited. In particular, how to maintain the education independence in the tripartite game of the government, the market and the society is worth further exploration. In the context of popularization of higher education, a reconstruction of the relations between government and university is needed. Participants held that the establishment of a modern university system in China must be based on the law, adhering to two principals, combination of the decentralization and accountability, as well as separation of the decision-making power and executive power. The core issue of the legal relationship between universities and government is the distribution of power.

### **IV. Fair Education, Education Publicness, Education Legislation, and Formulation of Education Policy**

The relationship among various interest subjects kept changing in today's social transformation. However, the educational legislation has lagged far behind the social need, so we must speed up the modernization process of the educational legal system. Some scholars believe that the most basic features of modern education is popularization, the nation has the responsibility to establish public school system, and provide a fair public education service. On education policy formulation, some scholars believe that the basic function of modern government is the fair and efficient supply of education policy. While China's macro educational decision-making is mainly the elite decision-making, this is hard to protect public welfare, public participation and the fair distribution of interests.

Some scholars have further pointed out that, education policy would easily be led in the public interest alienation as the ambiguity and uncertainty of policy content, the diversity of educational needs, and the self-profit of government. We must improve the items of the education law that involves public welfare; establish the expression mechanism for interest groups, a fair compensation mechanism for the educational interests, as well as a strict government accountability mechanism.

*Lin Zhou and Chen Chen are postgraduates from the school of education at Beijing Normal University in Beijing (China).*

Picture: [www.pixelio.de](http://www.pixelio.de) (Photographer: Thommy Weiss)