

Dates of Meeting:

01-06-1950 – 08-06-1950

Type of Meeting:

Conference on Higher Education

Place of Meeting:

Beijing

Attendance:

Presided over by Ma Xulun

Major Agenda Items:

Attention to the socialist soviet model and the needs of national construction. the necessity for education to serve the state, the need for more centralized control over education, increased emphasis on science and technology and the creation of new types of specialized schools

Speeches/Reports:

Ma Xulun: (for many years a professor of philosophy at Beijing University and a highly respected non-party intellectual) He summed up the situation in terms of the 227 higher institutions that were the legacy of the Nationalist government, and the “people’s universities” that had been set up as short-term cadre training institutions following the model of Yan’an University and Kangda, as the Red

Army moved into the different regions of the country. The most serious problems were seen as geographical imbalance, with the majority of institutions being on the east coast, and the fact that few worker and peasant students had had access to formal higher education. The formal system was called upon to undergo curricular and administrative reforms that would ensure that it adapted

to the new circumstances. The revolutionary institutions were also to adapt to the new situation, with People’s University chosen as the center and prototype of a new kind of higher education, designed to serve the socialist polity in a special way.

The main task for future higher education development set forth at the conference was to “serve the economic construction, which is the foundation for all the other construction” (i.e., politics, culture, and national defense).

There was a call for careful curricular development to this end, which would ensure

both a strong theoretical basis and the application of the curriculum to national needs. Special provision was to be made through affiliated rapid secondary schools to open up higher institutions to workers and peasants. There was also a call for much greater integration and uniformity among all institutions in the system, with the central Ministry of Education exercising overall central leadership, and other ministries taking control over institutions in their particular areas.

First and foremost, our higher education must tie in closely with the needs of economic, political, cultural, and defence constructions of our nation, and it must first serve our economic construction because economic construction is the basis of national construction. Since our higher education has the objective of cultivating high level construction personnel, we must carry out a systematic, scientific education that is at once practical and theoretical, and on that basis put into practice a specialised scientific and technical education. Institutes of higher learning which offer an education that is void of systematic scientific knowledge are inadmissible. Meanwhile, this type of theoretical education must not commit the same old mistake of "knowledge for knowledge's sake," ignoring the needs of the people and the state.

The second important task is this: on the basis of the practical needs of the various constructions, the Ministry of Education shall co-operate with the respective organisations to strengthen the educational process of the Chinese People's University and other types of institutions of higher learning, and to create all types of technical institutes. Within the universities and colleges, we should also create necessary departments, specialised subjects and training classes to meet practical needs.

A-er-xin-jie-fu: Soviet advisor

„Nun, wie sollen wir die hochentwickelten Länder in Technologie und Industrie einholen und überholen? Erstens, indem wir eine moderne Schwerindustrie, Hüttenwerke, Bergenwerke, Eisenbahnen usw. bauen. Zweitens, indem wir unsere eigenen Kader ausbilden - Wissenschaftler, Techniker, Mediziner, Lehrer usw.

Sowjetische Hochschulen mussten erstens akademische Bildung für junge Arbeiter und Bauern zur Verfügung stellen. [Sie] mussten das kulturelle Niveau der Bevölkerung heben. Aus der Mitte des Volkes mussten sie Kader mit großem technischen Leistungsvermögen heranbilden. Nur eine Nation gebildeter und kultivierter Menschen, die aus dem Volk, aus den Arbeitern und Bauern, hervorgegangen sind, kann Nachwuchs auf hohem Niveau ausbilden, und nur eine solche Nation ist unbesiegbar.

Zum zweiten durften die sowjetischen Universitäten keine hochmütigen, aber nutzlosen Generalisten ausbilden, sondern spezialisierte Talente - Ingenieure, Ärzte, Lehrer, Ökonomen, Spezialisten für Landwirtschaft, Statistiker, Bergwerksfachleute, wissenschaftliche Arbeiter usw. usf.
 Zum dritten mussten die alten Universitäten, die schon vor der Oktoberrevolution bestanden, ihre Ziele und ihre Lehrveranstaltungen ändern, um sich den neuen Aufgaben des Landes anzupassen.
 Viertens [mussten wir] neue Hochschulen gründen, vor allem Technische Hochschulen [...] Ich bin überzeugt, dass die Aufgaben, vor denen die chinesischen Hochschulen stehen, im Prinzip die gleichen sind wie die, vor denen die Hochschulen der Sowjetunion nach der Grossen Oktoberrevolution gestanden haben“

Zhou Enlai: [Speech at the National Higher Education Conference](#) 08-06-1950

Other Decisions and/or Actions:

- leading professors were entrusted with the important task of undertaking a total revision of the curriculum, with four committees set up at the June conference to cover the areas of humanities, law, science, and engineering. The humanities committee had subcommittees for Chinese, foreign languages, philosophy, history, and education, the law committee for politics, economics, law, and sociology. In the sciences and engineering, there were parallel subcommittees for the various fields program, but lay down clear guidelines and teaching material that would gradually shape the different fields toward the new goals and conditions of the socialist state. Even the field of sociology, which was later to be summarily abolished, continued in place for a brief period. Private institutions and missionary institutions maintained their identities and received some state support over the first two to three years of the new regime, with the expectation that they would gradually adapt themselves to the new guidelines. The only fairly radical area of curricular change was the abolition of the political education practices of the Nationalist government and their replacement by new programs based on Marxist-Leninist texts.
- Admissions standards for peasants and workers will be lowered
- Temporarily regulations on the administration of private colleges (approved by 43rd meeting of GAC)
- Our objective of higher education is to cultivate and train, by methods that combine theory and practice, the kind of high-level personnel for national reconstruction who possess the qualities of being culturally advanced, masterful of the attainment of modern science and technology, and being wholeheartedly dedicated to the ideology of service to the people. In order to achieve this objective, our higher education must provide a revolutionary political education, eradicate feudalistic, comprador, and fascist thoughts, and develop the ideology of service to the people... Our higher education must be intimately coordinated with our nation's economic, political, and defense needs; above all, it must serve the needs of economic development... Inasmuch as our higher education has as its goal the training of high-level personnel for national reconstruction, our institutions of higher education must therefore systematically develop a scientific educational theory that is united with practice, and must, on such a basis, carry on specialized scientific and technological education. Moreover, our institutions of higher education must from now on throw their doors wide open for members of the peasant and working classes, so as to produce for our nation a large group of intellectuals of peasant-worker background.¹¹(Renmin Ribao (People's Daily), June 14, 1950 as quoted in: Chang-Tu Hu, "Higher Education in Mainland China," Comparative Education Review Feb. 1961.)

Remarks:

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