Traditional Reform Philosophy and Challenges of Higher Education Reforms in China

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Abstract

Modernization in China is subject to Western impact. As the development of Chinese modern higher education is a part of social modernization, a particular challenge for China is how to afford a symbiosis between western modernity and its own tradition. Since the late 19th century, China adopted a ti-yong theory—borrowing from the West what was useful (yong) without losing the essence (ti) of Chinese values—to start its modernization process. Theti-yong theory alsoinfluenced the development of modern higher education since the late 19th century and even the transformation of higher education in the past three decades. This study specially argues and explains that the nature of ti-yong reform philosophy has inevitably caused challenges in the post-1990s Chinese higher education reforms.

Key words: Culture, Higher education, Development, Modernization, Reform, China

1. Introduction

Since the late 1970s, China has launched continuous reforms together with the introduction of an "open door" policy, especially in the economic sphere. Throughout this period, China has been largely transformed from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one. To meet the requirements arising from this economic restructuring, China has initiated a series of higher education reforms. The most important changes have taken place since 1993, when the "Outline for Education Reform and Development in China" (Hereafter referred to as the"Outline") was issued. According to the Ministry of Education's official statement, the overall objectives of higher education reform are to streamline the relationship between government, society and higher education institutions, with the aim of developing a new system in which the State is responsible for overall planning and macro management, while higher education institutions follow the legislation and exercise autonomy in providing education according to the needs of society. Based on scholars' observation, the recent reforms have been claimed to be moving away from the Soviet model towardsAmerican patterns (Yang, 2000, p. 48).

The application of international experience as a source of expertise is expected to offer a shortcut for China to advance its own higher education system. However, such an effort also causes a variety of problems confronting Chinese higher education, such as tensions between socialist ideology and Western values, tension between weak legal consciousness and the requirement for a legal system, and tensions between the traditional absence of a concept of competition, weak creativity and global market competition (Cai, 2004). Similarly, Xu(2005) points out that the dilemma in Chinese higher education reforms is how to reconcile the market mechanism as well as decentralization learned from the West and the strong Chinese traditions focusing on hierarchy and centralization. All these exemplify the challenges of Chinese higher education reforms in the cultural dimension.

Along with the recognition of the importance of culture to education research, a cultural approach has been developed in China since the late 1980s. In general, two features are highlighted in the Chinese literature on this subject: it takes a broad view of relations between education and culture (Fu & Liu, 1988; Pan & Wu, 1989; Pan & Zhu, 1995) and describes specific features of Chinese culture as well as their contradictions to modern education (G. Ding, 1990; Gu, 1998). However, the cultural approach is not often seen in Chinese higher education studies, especially policy research. Although culture does not directly affect higher education as do politics and economy, it permeates the whole process of higher education. Acknowledging that culture is an indispensable factor in higher education development, this paper asks: How can the development of Chinese higher education be interpreted into a cultural framework?

Particularly, why there are unavoidable challenges in Chinese higher education reforms?

One basic argument is that the challenges are, to a large extent,subject to China's traditional reform philosophy—*ti-yong* theory, originating in the late 19th century when China's modernization started. The basic idea of the *ti-yong* theory is to preserve the Chinese essence (*ti*) while adopting Western means (*yong*). Although the theory is not explicitly advocated, it underpins the recent higher education reforms in China.

The paper elaborates its argument by conceptualizing the *ti-yong* theory into a cultural framework, which consists of material, institutional and spiritual layers (Pang, 1988, pp. 37-73; Shao, 2003, p. 434). In terms of the ti-yong dichotomy, it is safe to say that the material layer corresponds to *yong*,while the spiritual layer is close to *ti*. The*ti-yong* theory tends to make an artificial distinction between cultural layers, and this is contradictory to the nature of culture,wherethe different layers of the construct are closely interrelated (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Schein, 1992).

Based on this analytical framework, this study first explains why and how the *ti-yong* theory became the reform philosophy for Chinese modernization in general and the development of modern higher education in particular. It then analyzes how the reform approach underlined by the *ti-yong* theory has caused challenges in the recent higher education reforms. Finally, it comes to a discussion on possible alternativereform approaches.The lessons drawn from this study willhopefullybe useful for the new round of Chinese higher education reforms in the 2010s, initiated by the Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) issued in July 2010 by the State Council.

2. The concept of ti-yong theory in a cultural framework

After numerous military defeats in the late 19th century, a larger number of Chinese officials in the government of the Qing Dynasty (1639-1911) decided to reform the country by learning from the West. Some Chinese bureaucrats and scholars advocated absorbing Western advanced science and technology, but rejecting the Western values of "liberty", "equality" and "democracy" at the core of their culture and traditions. The attitude could be concluded as an idea *zhong*(Chinese) *ti*(essence) *xi*(Western) *yong*(means), *or ti-yong* theory—the theory of maintaining Chinese morality and making use of Western science and technology.

The *ti-yong* theory became a primary principle of the reforms in the late Qing dynasty. Many Western aspects pointing to modernity, such as those providing practical results in weaponry, industry, commerce, and education were introduced into China. The quest for China's modernization in that period was mainly concerned with the relationship between Chinese essence and Western means. With the influence of this idea, the confused mixture of moral education based on Confucianism and the educational mindset focusing on imparting Western science and technology, was also considered as an ideal model for the Chinese modern education system (J. Luo, 1998).

Since then, the *ti-yong* formula as a reform approach continued intermittently throughout much of the 20th century.

It tends to divide learning into two parts: *ti* and *yong*. Such a theory can be conceptualized into a three-layer cultural framework. Culture was originally defined in an academic sense by the British anthropologist Edward Tylor in the 19th century. He made a list of what might be included in culture, such as "knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, and other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871, p.1). Since then, studies have increasingly engaged in theoretical debates on culture, defining culture in many ways (Jelinek, Smircich, & Hirst, 1983). In the early period, each of the various definitions emphasizes a particular focus and level. Since Schein (1985) published his book *organizational culture and leadership*, more researchers have recognized culture as a multidimensional and multilevel concept. Schein distinguishes three levels of culture, namely artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying beliefs.

Hofstede (1991) proposes an onion-like model. It consists of four layers, namely values, heroes, rituals and symbols, each of which encompasses and is dependent on the inner level. Likewise, Spencer-Oatey (2000) also describes a model with four levels, but with different labels: the level of basic assumptions and values, the level of beliefs, attitudes and conventions, the level of systems and institutions, and the level of products or behavior. Some Chinese scholars tend to understand culture in three levels, namely material, institutional and spiritual (Pang, 1988, pp. 37-73; Shao, 2003, p. 434). The external layer is material culture, including equipment, products and technology etc. The middle level is institutional culture, including social system, policies and regulations.

The internal layer is spiritual culture, including basic philosophy, value orientation, and the common attitudes of people.

Gu Mingyuan (1998), a leading Chinese specialist in comparative education, suggests that education traditions also comprise corresponding layers of material, institutional and spiritual. The material layer refers to the material and technical basis for higher education; the institutional layer implies the system and structures of higher education; the spiritual layer consists of educational ideas, attitudes, and values.

Comparing the three layers of culture to the *ti-yong* dichotomy, it is safe to say that the material layer corresponds to *yong*,and the spiritual layer is close to *ti*. With respect to the institutional layer, the emphasis of the debate on *ti* and *youg* has varied in different historical periods (Figure 1), and is described as follows. Although a clear line is drawn between *ti* and *yong*in the figure, it should be noted that the boundaries between *ti* and *yong*are not clear in practice.

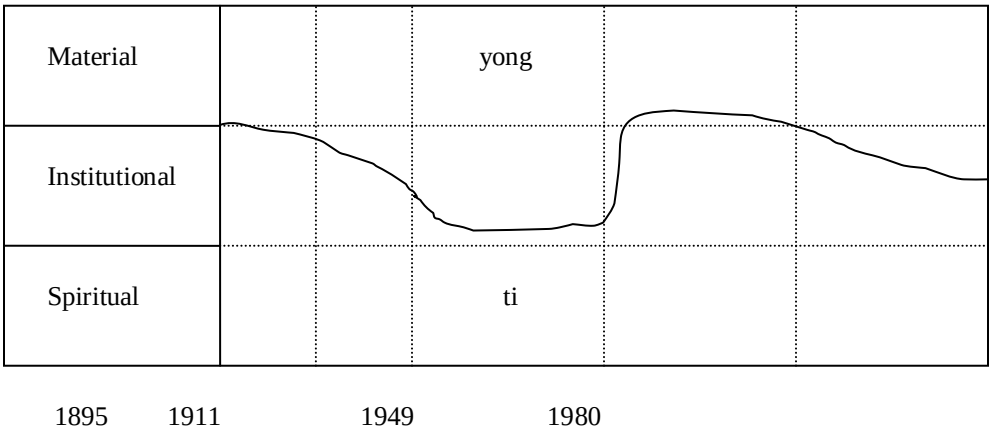

Figure 1. The historical changes of *ti-yong* foci

When the *ti-yong* philosophy was initially formed, it was mainly concerned with the relationship between techniques and institutions. The learning from Western *yong* was initially limited to the military, industry and education, while the imperial political institutions considered as *ti* remained intact. Soon, the attitude to institutions gradually changed from advocating an improvement of monarchy to calling for the introduction of Western politics. After the first Sino-Japanese war (the Ji*awu* War, 1894-1895), the focus of the *ti-yong* debate had clearly shifted from the relation between techniques and institutions towards the relation between institutions and social values (Kui, 1995). When Sun Zhongshan (1866-1925) led a revolution and finally overthrew the Qing dynasty in 1911, he forged his social, economic, and revolutionary ideas largely on the Western model and put forward three People's Principles: nationalism, democracy, and equalization. However, it was evident to Sun that the Chinese people were not ready to practise democracy. He believed that a certain amount of time would be necessary for Chinese people to learn how to make use of their democratic power. He assumed that the learning process consists of three stages.

The first stage would be plain dictatorship.

The second stage would allow people a certain amount of regional autonomy while the country would still remain a military autocracy. The third stage would see the abandonment of the military autocracy in favor of an all-out democracy. Sun's successor, Jiang Jieshi (1887-1975), who assumed leadership of the Nationalist Party in 1926, was particularly committed to the second stage. Jiang, as an ardent Confucianist, believed Confucian moral values to be the foundation for social and human life, as well as the basis for a possible democracy. When the People's Republic of China was established, *ti* was entrusted with a new meaning—a combination of Marxism and Chinese tradition, and the Western *yong* was limited to science and technology. "Mao Zedong tried to wipe out Confucianism but in the meantime his own rule contained Confucian elements"(Hofstede, 1991, p.40). Since the 1980s, a Western style market mechanism has been imported into the Chinese economic system as the useful *yong*, but under the precondition that the country must retain its socialist ideology and political system conveyed by the coining of "Socialism with Chinese characteristics".

3. Development of modern higher education in a cultural frame

Development of modern higher education is part of the process of modernization. Modernization, which occurred in the pastfew centuries, is a multi-dimensional, all-encompassing process of social transformation. It includes the economic sphere of industrialization, democratization of the political sphere, socio-cultured sphere and concepts of urbanization(R. Luo, 2004; Yu, 2008), covering all three layers of culture. From the perspective of modernization, Levy (1972, p. 6) distinguished three types of countries in the world:

> *(1) The firstcomers, those cases where modernized patterns apparently developed slowly over a long period of time, and with no previous models before them. … (2) A large number of cases, especially European ones, whose people were in rather close contact with the first comers during the development…. (3) other latecomers, most of whose people were, or were kept, largely out of the contact with the modernized patterns of the first comers, and who came increasingly into contact with those patterns only after they were highly developed.*

Accordingly,Luo Rongqu (2004), a leading Chinese scholar of modernization theory, put forward two types of modernization, namely "first comer endogenous type" and "latecomer exogenous type". The former type of modernizationhappened in the first comer countries,such as the UK, USA and France. These countries had no examples to follow and faced no external pressure when modernization was initiated. The modernization in these countries is a unique culture phenomenon (Kim, 2005, p. 3), and itstarted from shiftsin internal value orientation. For instance, the French Revolution (1789) has become central to an analysis of the specificity of modernization in relation to the medieval world (Fehér, 1990). Among a variety of reasons triggering the Revolution, the shift in social theory and value orientation has been considered substantial; "[i]ts motor was … the complicated cultural transformation of the country's possessing, administrative, and educated elites in the preceding century" (Higonnet, 1990, p.69).The shifts of cultural values gradually caused changes in social institutions. It was the new arrangements of social institutions that stimulated the technological innovation and economic development in Western Europe(North, 1981). The process of modernization is characterized as "slow", "gradual", "stable" and "harmonious"(Liu, 2007, p. 1).

The second type of modernization occurred as a national response to the demonstration, stimulation, challenge, exploitation, or even invasion by countries for which endogenous modernization has tremendously strengthened national wealth and power. China is a country which has been modernized mainly in the third wave in Levy's category, and also a typical case of exogenous modernization.

From a cultural perspective, the modernization in the West is mainly a process of change from spiritual cultural to material, while in China the process is in the opposite direction.The different ways of pursuing modernity can also be observed in the development of modern higher education system. When higher education institutions were established in Europe in the 12th century (McLean, 1995), the mission of higher education was no more than the transmission of intellectual heritage, such as reading and interpreting classical texts. This situation did not change until the modern higher education systems emerged at the end of the 18th century. Such systems, despite geographical differences, were commonly characterized by an emphasis on specialization and engagement in both teaching and research. The emergence of modern higher education, as the part of consequences of social modernization, also indicates a shift of value orientation and ideological changes (Ben-David, 1992).

The major higher education systems in most countries in the world, regardless of ideology, economic system, or level of technological development, have their roots in a few Western university models developed in the 19th century in Britain, France, Germany and the United States (Altbach, 1989; Ben-David, 1992). Although the four countries established their own modern systems of higher education in different ways, all had one thing in common: each system was developed on the basis of the nation's special cultural context. Each nation's historical background and social context can help us understand the distinct characteristics of its higher education system. In this sense, the emergence of modern Western higher education can be viewed as a change originating on a spiritual level and then progressing towards the institutional and material level. Such a "bottom-up" approach is important to ensure the stability of the system.

In contrast, the modernization in China, particularly the development of the modern higher education system, shows an opposite approach. In the mid-19th century, when the Western countries' modernization exerted influence over China, Western technologies were considered useful but treated as wholly marginal to China's core values.

China began to pursue a modern system of higher education under such background, and, therefore, the development of modern Chinese higher education is through borrowing from foreign experience. The process started from the material level, then gradually moved to institutional layer and affected the spiritual core.

In company with the establishment of modern universities in China in the 1890s, a variety of western ideas with respect to higher education had influenced China, but only the Japanese model was applied in the legislation of 1902 and 1903. The Japanese system of higher education reflected both French and German traditions. After the collapse of the Empire in 1911, there was a stage of constant fighting among warlords (1916-1928). During that period, there was a lack of a strong government. This provided opportunities for universities to experiment with a variety of patterns. Consequently, American influences became prominent when new legislation was enacted in 1922 and 1924. The American model was reflected in several aspects in the system: a broad definition of university incorporating any higher education institutions; the introduction of boards of trustees for universities; and innovative and unregulated approaches to the curriculum.

However, the American model did not satisfy the authorities of the country. On the one hand, the credit-based curriculum system could not match the requirement arising from national re-construction. On the other hand, the American patterns with their emphasis on decentralization and democracy at the local level resulted in student activism, which threatened the government. Against this background, the authorities turned their attention to European approaches. In 1932, at the invitation of the Chinese government, a number of European advisors from Germany, France, England and Poland came to China joining a national project on higher education reform. The reform made the higher education system more centralized and standardized(Hayhoe, 1999).

The restructuring of higher education after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 was largely influenced by the Soviet model characterized by centrally-planned mechanisms, such as "governments allocating higher education resources, appointing university leaders, assigning graduates jobs and deciding enrolment numbers for individual institutions" (Cai, 2004, p. 158). Other examples of learning from the Soviet Union can be seen in the higher education mergers in the 1950s. The emphasis was on regrouping and realigning HEIs and faculties along specialization lines (Cai, 2007, p. 8). However, the degree systems basically followed the models developed during the old regime. For instance, the 2-3 year short-cycle vocationally oriented higher education programs remained, although such programs were not available in the Soviet Union. Such a system continued until the 1980s.

Although Chinese higher education reforms started at the end of the 1970s, the major reforms were not massively implemented until the "Outline for Education Reform and Development in China" (Outline) was issued in 1993 (Yang, 2000, p. 32). Since then, a series of key reform policies have been promulgated. Basically, two reform strategies are used: "to introduce market forces to liberate education, create impetus for change, and encourage competition for improvement", and "to use legislation to regulate new social relationships, practices and behavior arising from the first strategy" (Law, 2002, p.579). The post-1990s reforms are obviously inclined towards the American model (Yang, 2002, p.48), with respect to the privatization of financing and provision, marketization, and decentralization of the administration. Generally speaking, the policies developed after 1993 have formed the agenda of current Chinese higher education reforms.

4. Cultural challenges of the post-1993 higher education reforms

The *ti-yong* theory undoubtedly played an important role in the introduction of modernization and modern education system to China in the late 19th century. Does the *ti-young* theory continue to work in the contemporary higher education reforms? The answer is yes. Some Chinese scholars extol the value of *ti-yong* theory in the current Chinese modernization process by arguing that it is an effective approach for China to adopt what is useful in Western modernization and to discard its unfit components (Cao, 2009; Wu, 2009; S. Zhao, 2008). Ideally, the *ti-yong* approach attempts to achieve a dialectical and harmonious relation between western modernity and Chinese traditional values. However, according to Bellah (1983) in his discussion on cultural identity and modernization in Asian countries, such an effort is largely a hope rather than a reality.

Although the*ti-yong*theory is not explicitly advocated, it does underline the post-1990s higher education reforms. On the one hand, China's reform policies and approaches are based on the learning experiences of western developed countries (Cai, 2010; Yang, 2000). This position has been emphasized by former Chinese Education Minister, Chen Zhili.

In the first World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE), she stated, "the Chinese government always attached great importance to learning from the successful experiences and practices of other countries for the benefit of developing its own higher education" (UNESCO, 1998). Her successor, Zhou Ji, repeated the point in his speech at the second WCHE that one experience of Chinese higher education reform is "learning and assimilating advanced experience of foreign countries" (2009, p.8-9). On the other hand, the government is reluctant to change its political ideologies and traditional values (Cai, 2004; Mok & Chan, 1998). As some scholars point out, the application of foreign experiences in China's social context is either used as an instrumental strategy or is used to solve some similar problems, rather than making a fundamental shift of value orientation (J. Zhao & Guo, 2002, p. 216).

Following the understanding of the *ti-yong* dichotomy in the framework of cultural layers, the theory is about an artificial separation of cultural layers. However, as stated earlier, the different layers of culture are very much interrelated. With respect to culture in education, Gu Mingyun (1998) explains that changes to one layer affect the stability of the others. This indicates that the borrowing western higher education system will naturally have an impact on the core values of Chinese culture.

The history of the development of Chinese higher education development shows a number of imported models. As the imported higher education patterns usually appeared very distant from the Chinese cultural context, it is not easy to find common grounds to fit the two. How has China dealt with the problems resulting from a mismatch between traditional culture and modernity of higher education with particular reference to the recent reform policies?

The fundamental problems addressed bythe post-1990s reform policies indicate the fact that Chinese education is lagging behind the times and cannot meet the demands arising from the social transformation, "opening up" and modernization. The problem concerns all three cultural layers. The 1993 "Outline", for example, recognizes that education on the whole is lagging behind the social development: In the material layer, "the investment in education is insufficient; teachers' salaries are relatively low; the condition of education is poor". In the institutional layer, "the education system and management mechanism do not adapt to the demands from the reforms in the fields of economy, politics and technology system". In the spiritual layer, "educational thoughts, contents and methods, to different extents, lose contact with reality". The "Plan of Action for Rejuvenation of Education at the turn of the 21st Century" (Hereafter referred to as the "Plan") in 1998 and the "Decision on Deepening of Education Reform and Advancement of Qualification-Oriented Education" (Hereafter referred to as the "Decision") in 1999 supplements and enhances of the "Outline". The "Plan" points to the problems concerning educational values that impede students' creativity and their concept of competition; "The status of Chinese education development is still relatively low, the education structure, education system, educational thoughts, teaching methods and education model cannot meet the demands of modernization".

The "Decision" implicitly touches upon the problems deriving from Chinese educational tradition. It stresses that the under-developed "educational thoughts, education system, education structure, education models, curriculum and teaching methods…hinder the overall development of young people and do not adapt to the needs to improve national population quality". To eliminate or avoid these problems, the policy objectives entail changes in all three layers of the higher education system. However, the implementation processes are relatively problematic. The reforms have achieved remarkable success, such as a dramatic expansion of the higher education scale, progress in faculty development, increase in higher education financing, development of competitive universities, and advancement of the internationalization of higher education (Wang & Liu, 2009). From 1993 to 2010, the number of regular public higher education institutions increased from 1065 to 2,358, and the new intake of undergraduate students increased from less than one million to more than 6 million.

The number of private higher education institutions increased from nil to more than one thousand. Since the early 1990s, according to the principles of "gongjian, tiaozheng, hezuo, hebing" (joint establishment, adjustment, cooperation and merger), a new structure of higher education system has taken shape. Most institutions set up in a centrally planned system have been given into the hands of provincial and municipal governments. Meanwhile, more than 400 higher education institutions have been assimilated into less than 200 enlarged and upgraded ones. In the 1990s, China abandoned the principle of free higher education and abolished the system in which the government assigned graduates jobs. Since the 1980s, China has passed six education laws and a number of educational administration statutes.

While all of these mainly reflect changes in the material and partially institutional cultural layers, the implementation has been mostly hampered by the preserved ideologies and traditional values of the country (Cai, 2004). In other words, the implementation market mechanisms in Chinese higher education have been hampered by the cultural conflict between China and the West.

While the Chinese government wishes to obtain economic benefits from the international economy following Western reform tendencies, it does not mean that the government takes a *laissez-faire* attitude towards all the associated ideologies. Higher education, considered by the central authorities as an important ideological battlefield, is always in the front line of conflicts between Western ideas and the Party's principles. Therefore, for example, the policies that promote university autonomy have been undermined by the central authorities' overemphasis on ideological control. While the State exercises macro control through legislation, funding and planning, individual institutions are granted much more autonomy and decision-making power in education matters. However, to ensure the socialist direction of higher education, the state also places higher education institutions under the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The Higher Education Law of 1998 stipulates that "in higher education institutions run by the State, the system shall be applied under which the presidents take overall responsibility under the leadership of the primary committees of the CCP in higher education institutions" (Article 39). The committees not only assume the responsibility for enforcing the guidance of the CCP and maintaining a socialist direction for running higher education institutions, but also become involved in the internal management. As a result, some old functions of higher education administration have not necessarily been terminated. For instance, some recent studies on Chinese higher education indicate strong hierarchies in higher education (Vidovich, Yang, & Currie, 2007, p. 103) and a distinction between the policy rhetoric on decentralizing government controls and the reality of constraints that universities and academics continue to experience (Yang et al., 2007).

The reforms since the 1993 aimed to use legislation to regulate new social relationships, practices and behavior arising from the needs in the transformation of higher education from a centralized system to a more market oriented one. Regarding the implementation of this strategy, Law (2002) summed up four obstacles: poor quality of the new legal system, insufficient financial support for the enforcement of education laws, lack of a strong buffer between law and market in education, and the subtle relationships among the law, state and people in Chinese society. Among these the last one is most important; "[a]s in Imperial China, the ruling elite in the post-Mao PRC adopts the framework of rule of law under the rule of the party…. Such [a] framework undermines the role of law in governing education and facilitating educational change".

All these exemplified implementation problems imply that the market and legal system have not been effectively established in higher education due to the Chinese traditional culture at work. Chinese culture is rich and complex in content, but Confucianism is the most essential element of traditional values. It attaches importance to moral values in orientating human relations and regulating human behavior, but lacks democratic and legal concepts, as well as the intention to develop economy (W. Ding, 1998). Although China has been subject to strong Western influence since the late 19th century, the influence on the material and institutional level did not result in a corresponding shift of value orientation. The value system currently at work, a combination of Marxism and Confucianism, does not go far beyond the essence of Confucianism. Both traditional Confucianism and Maoism reflect upon fundamental ideas of Chinese political culture, e.g. "socialized human beings", "ruled by power or man", "centralization of state power" and "moralization of politics" (Zheng & Liu, 2002). The Chinese cultural values are in many aspects inimical to the Western industrialism (Wong, 1986, p. 307).

5. Concluding discussions

Modern higher education in China was a Western import. For over a century China has attempted to emulate Western patterns. As the philosophies and ideas underlying Western higher education systems are often alien to Chinese traditional culture or ideology, the development of Chinese higher education may inevitably confront paradoxes and challenges. The Chineseexperiencesshow that the *ti-yong* theory can hardly work in practice. The Chinese *ti*, instead of being well served by the Western *yong* as intended, has in fact been shaken by it.

Since the 1980s, China has been moving away from a centrally planned economic system to a market oriented one. As part of the social transformation, higher education faces the challenge in terms of renegotiating old values, and adapting to modern concepts.

Although the recent policies address the main problems confronting Chinese higher education, the implementation concerning the changes on the institutional and spiritual layers has been hampered by the traditional institutions and values. This is caused by the reformers' philosophy, the *ti-yong* dichotomy. With such a formula in mind, on the one hand, the reforms appear to neglect the political institutions and social theories that had fostered Western advances and innovations with respect to higher education. On the other hand, the reformers often overlook the fit between Western experience and Chinese cultural context when making reform policies.
As a latecomer to modernization, China has had no choice but to chart a new path in catching up with the Western world and achieving a modern economy. In such a discourse, advantages and challenges co-exist. While China may facilitate and speedup its modernization process by taking advantage of borrowing existing models and importing developed technologies, the challenges are primarily culture related. As Luo Rongqu (2004, p. 132) contends that exogenous modernization can hardly formulate stable cultural and institutional orders.If the *ti-yong* philosophy has become a constraint for the reform, what alternative should be considerd? Some modest suggestions will be discussed as follows.

The discussion in this study indicates that the*ti-yong* approach is too simple, if not naive, to understand the complexity of modernization process in China, and seek a balance between Western and Chinese cultures. The interpretation of *ti-yong* theory in the current Chinese reform is about adopting what is useful from the West but discarding the component that does not fit the Chinese context. However, the Chinese policy reformers should acknowledge that in practice it is impossible to separate the Western means and the Chinese essence. In other words, what China has borrowed from the West, concerning for example as governance models, is not a technical means but is intertwined with Western ideologies. Therefore, either the modernization process in general or the higher education reform in particular is a process of interactions among different social forces and selective processes of the existing culture.If we accept this proposition, some questions may be considered by the Chinese reformers for an alternative reform philosophy: how might Chinese *ti* or cultural values also be adjusted in the reforms? Can China retain its traditional values that support western modernization on the one hand while intentionally altering those contradictory components on the other?

Certainly, China should base its modernization and social transformation on its own contexts and tradition. It has been argued that some Chinese cultural elements indeed facilitate the adoption of industrial capitalism, such as "incorporative cosmology", "high achievement motivation", "familism and utilitarian discipline"(Wong, 1986, pp. 308-309). These cultural features are also favorable for the introduction of market mechanisms in higher education. However, China should be aware that some cultural elements may play negative roles, such as the culture of "ruled by man" rather than "ruled by law". Although legislation has been provided for running higher education, the actors do not always follow the rules. To complete a legal framework constituting laws is certainly an important step. However, sometimes a situation where a law cannot be implemented is worse than a situation where a law has not been created at all, because it will affect people's confidence in a legal system and consequently continuously weaken people's legal concepts.The development towards a legal society not only needs laws, but also effective implementation.

To successfully select cultures, the reformers should pay more attention to the institutional layer of culture. Based on the history of China's modernization, values as the core of culture are the hardest component to change. Neither can the culture on the spiritual level beeasily changed by simply promulgating governmental policies. However, policies can indirectly influence people's values and beliefs by making changes in the material and institutional layers.To affect the cultures on the spiritual level, the institutional level plays a vital role. To formulate a desirable institutional framework for higher education reforms in China, the government needs to ensure that the laws enacted and policies implemented are well implemented. Only in this way, can Chinese people's legal consciousness be improved step by step. Therefore, what is really needed in Chinese higher education reform is implementable policies. Only implemented policies will form new social institutions, through which people's values can be gradually changed.

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