

Master of Philosophy Studies in
Higher Education

**A POLICY STUDY OF THE POSITION OF RURAL STUDENTS
IN THE TRANSITION
FROM ELITE TO MASS HIGHER EDUCATION IN CHINA**

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the 1999 higher education expansion policy and the preliminary realization of mass higher education in China from the perspective of Chinese rural students. The objective of the study is to identify the major features of mass higher education in the Chinese context and the general position of rural students in higher education, so as to call wider attention to Chinese rural students and rural education. With this purpose, the study integrates the theoretical achievements in mass higher education, rural construction, education equality, etc., and discusses the status quo of rural China and Chinese higher education from multiple perspectives.

The thesis adopts a large amount of data analyzing the participation in higher education by rural students, from which it can be concluded that rural students as a whole are in an underrepresented position. In order to track down the factors underlying the disadvantaged position of rural students, the study applies the theories of policy analysis to examine the Chinese higher education expansion policy.

The analysis of the policy reveals that Chinese education policy has a preference toward efficiency, without having given due consideration to the disadvantaged group with respect to equity and equality. And it also reveals the great disparity between rural China and the urban areas in the field of higher education under the urban-rural dual system.

Higher education is an important means for the development of rural China, and vice versa, the condition of rural China determines the development of Chinese higher education in the long run. But from the study it can be seen that the improvement of the condition for rural students, and in turn for the peasants as a whole, not only lies in the elimination of the problems in higher education, but also depends on a comprehensive structure reform.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Appendix 1	5
Acknowledgements	6
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	7
1.1. Research Background and Rationale	7
1.2. Research Aim, Problem and Questions	10
1.3. Methodology	11
1.3.1 Paradigm choice	11
1.3.2. Information source	13
1.4. Delimitation and Limitation	14
1.4.1. Delimitation	14
1.4.2. Limitation	14
1.5. Structure of the Thesis	15
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.1. Introduction	17
2.2. The Concept of Mass Higher Education	18
2.2.1. Overview of the progress in mass higher education	18
2.2.2. The definition of mass higher education in general	19
2.2.3. Definition of mass higher education in the Chinese context	23
2.3. Literature on Education Equality and Equity	25
2.3.1. Literature on education equality and equity in general	25
2.3.2. Literature on education equality and equity in the Chinese context	31
2.4. Literature on Quality	32
2.5. Literature on Chinese Rural Areas and Rural Education	37
2.5.1. Pioneering researchers	37
2.5.2. Contemporary researchers	39
2.6. Literature on Policy Theory and State-Higher Education Relationship	42
2.6.1. Theoretical framework for policy evaluation	42
2.6.2. Status quo of policy study in China	47
2.6.3. State-higher education relationship	52
2.7. Summary	54
CHAPTER THREE: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	56

3.1. Introduction	56
3.2. Background Information	57
3.2.1. The socio-economic background of rural and urban China	57
3.2.2. Evolution in higher education	
before the enrollment expansion	60
3.3. The General Situation after the Enrollment Expansion	61
3.3.1. An overview of the status quo	61
3.3.2 Rural-urban comparison	62
3.4. Analysis	69
3.4.1. Imbalanced geographic resource	
distribution unfair recruitment criteria	69
3.4.2. Deficient higher education funding and exorbitant tuition	71
3.4.3. Weak basic education	74
3.5. Consequence of the Urban-Rural Differences	77
3.6. Conclusion	79
CHAPTER FOUR: POLICY ANALYSIS	81
4.1. Introduction	81
4.2. Background of the Policy Making	81
4.3. Policy Analysis	84
4.3.1. Policy problems the Chinese higher education context	85
4.3.2. Policy objectives	88
4.3.3. Policy normative basis	92
4.3.4. Policy instruments	96
4.3.5. Policy linkage	99
4.3.6. Policy Implementation	100
4.3.7. Conclusion	102
CHAPTER FIVE: PROSPECT	105
5.1. The Past of the USA vs. the Future of China	105
5.2. Proposals Based on the Status Quo of China	106
5.2.1. The abolishment of discriminative admission	
standards and preference of rural students	106
5.2.2. The feasibility of an increase in student financial aids	107
5. 2.3. Reform of the credit and qualification system	108
5.3. Epilogue	109
References	111
Appendix 1	119

Appendix 1: The Basic Data in Chapter Three

Table 3. 1. Rural-urban Demographic Structure from 1999 to 2001

Table 3.2. Rural-urban Student Proportion in Higher Education
before and after the Expansion

Table 3.3. Statistics on Quinghua University and Beijing University,
the Elites of the Elites in the HE Hierarchy in China

Table 3.4. Enrollment Proportion of Rural Students in Hebei Province

Table 3.5. Rural-urban student ratio in Hebei Science University

Table 3.6. Rural Student Proportion in Medical University of Hebei Province

Table 3.7. Rural Student Distribution in
Chemistry Dept of University of Hebei Province

Table 3.8. The Student Proportion
that Some Universities Enroll from Their Host Places

Table 3.9. Different minimum requirement scores respectively for student
from Beijing and some other provinces (in 1999)

Table 3.10. The Makeup of Revenue for Regular Higher Education
Institutions in 1998-2001

Table 3. 11 The Proportion of Fiscal Education Fund in GDP
from 1993 to 2002

Table 3.12. The situation of tuition fees and average income
in China in the 1990s

Table 3.13. Town to Rural Student Ratio in Regular Primary
and Middle Schools

Table 3.14 University Entrance Rate before
and after the Enrollment Expansion

Table 3.15 Education Funds Distribution within Central Government Budget

Table 3.16 Components of Rural Compulsory Education Funds

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background and Rationale

Mass higher education, which first started in the United States after World War Two, is not a new phenomenon in the field of higher education. However, a renewed interest in it can be observed since the end of the last century, when “most nation states are going through a transformation process that is strongly affected by global trends and pressures” (Maassen & Cloete 2002, p14) and when higher education is considered as an obvious means to modernize the society and to enhance national competitiveness in the global arena. “All these ‘planetary’ changes created environments within which nation states had to consider a reorientation and repositioning of their still predominantly public higher education systems” (Maassen & Cloete 2002, p13-14). The increase in participation in higher education has captured the attention, not only of educationists, but also of governments; not only in North America and West Europe, but also in developing and transitional countries.

In China, higher education had long remained for the elite. The opportunity to receive higher education was considered a privilege, especially for peasants who rarely have other ways to merge into the main stream of social life. Through the 1990s, the reform in the Chinese higher education system had continued as a government response to the global change and also as a consideration for the domestic situation, but the system scale, in spite of the great demand from the society, did not undergo much fundamental change. The proportion of the age group admitted into higher education institutions had been lingering under a level of 5 percent until 1997 (Word Bank, 2002, p47)

However, the end of the last century witnessed a great change in the Chinese higher education system that quite stands out in the global landscape of higher education. In 1999, the government decided to greatly expand higher education and realize mass higher education in China by the year 2010. Meanwhile the idea of education cost sharing was adopted, which was introduced into the domestic system as part of an internationally accepted institution. The policy intended to solve the problems caused by the great

imbalance between the scarce supply and the huge demand for higher education. The objectives of the policy, as was claimed, include 1) to increase domestic consumption; 2) to release the tension in the labor market; 3) to increase the size of higher education system; 4) to eliminate “examination-oriented” education (Tang Min, 1999).

Pretty soon, the increase went beyond the expectation of the policy makers, with students on campus having more than doubled. Thus started the transformation from elite to mass higher education in China, and the numeric index of mass higher education, 15% of the age group admitted into the tertiary education system, has been reached much earlier than scheduled by the government. This expansion in scale has greatly released the long existing tension between supply and demand in the field of higher education. But increasingly more visible in every part of the Chinese higher education system are the problems caused by the growth, as described by Martin Trow (1973, p 1). By the year 2003, when the higher education expansion policy had been in action for five years, chorus of criticism could be heard through out the media. The enrolling season of that year witnessed a climax of severely condemnation with respect to the introduction of education cost sharing into the system, criteria for student selection and employment prospects for university graduates. Especially widely concerned are the problems in tuition charge and the plight it had inflicted upon students from peasant families.

Meanwhile, the problem of Chinese peasants has mounted to the extent that compels for an ultimate solution. Peasants have long been marginalized in social life. The piling-up crisis was notified by some intrepid and insightful sociologists as early as 1987. Wen Tiejun, a specialist in the field of rural study, raised three problems concerning rural China: the problem of the peasants, the problem of the rural areas, the problem of agriculture, jointly referred to as “the Three Problems of the Farmers”. Presently, the deterioration in rural China has become so salient that the government and the society in general have become alert to “the Three Problems of the Farmers”. However, in the late 1980s, raising the questions alone demanded great courage and insight, because it was the first challenge posed upon the conservative agricultural theoretical system (Cheng Xiaonong, 2002). In recent years, profit from agriculture suffers a great decline, and peasants’ income shows stagnancy or even decrease. More critical is that the bureaucratic structure administering rural affairs is overstaffed with peasants under an unprecedented heavy burden (Chen Guili & Chuntao, 2003). As Li Changping, an official at the grass-

root level, puts it: “Peasants are in real bitterness; rural areas are in real poverty; agriculture is in real crisis”. Cheng Xiaonong, a specialist in Chinese problems at Princeton University, suggests that in the twenty-first century, China faces many challenges, of which the most severe one is probably “the Three Problems of the Farmers” (Cheng Xiaonong, 2002). Of the three problems, the core is the problem of peasants.

The peasant problem in China is a long-time sedimentation of problems in history. In modern times, it has always been the sticking point of Chinese social problems. Historically, solutions to the peasant problem have revolved around equal distribution of farmlands, which easily appealed to peasants and to idealists alike because of the immediate effects. But as early as the 1920s, some social reformers pointed out that the ultimate way out for China lay in the solution of peasant problems, and the ultimate way out for peasants lay in education. Unfortunate for China, however, war and turbulence had dominated the early half of the twentieth century, while political movement and class struggle had not only eroded away decades from the later half of the century, but inflicted heavy losses upon Chinese education. Consequently, education has not been able to play its due role in the solution of the peasant problem even till today. In the struggle against poverty most attention has been attached to income poverty, but it is the lack of knowledge and abilities that constitutes the major cause for income poverty. Only by investment in infrastructure of knowledge and in human capital in rural areas is it possible for rural economic development to get support and stimulus, and for rural areas to eliminate income poverty in the long run (Liu Yao, 2003).

In an age of ICT and knowledge economy, an adequate knowledge preparation for citizens has been upgraded from primary and secondary education to tertiary level. With a large population in need of professional training, mass higher education has become the only choice. The nature of mass higher education suggests that its center should be laid at the grass-root level of the society, and in the Chinese context, it is the concept of “peasants” that overlaps with the concept of “the mass” and “the lower stratum”. According to *The Research Report on Contemporary Social Strata in China* published by Chinese Social Science Academy, Chinese society is divided into ten strata according to the share each stratum occupies with respect to economic, political and educational resource. In this classification, agriculture laborers are at the ninth level (Chinese Social Science Academy, 2001). Given the low status of peasants in Chinese society and the great proportion they

take in Chinese population, study in mass higher education will inevitably get entwined with the problem of peasants, with the achievement in the field of mass higher education hopefully to help solve “the Three Problem of the Farmers”. By now, when the labor force is seriously in surplus and competition for work opportunities is dangerously intense, the attention of the whole society has become focused on how to solve the Three Problems of the Farmers. This study on mass higher education cannot possibly overlook the problem of peasants. And in the evaluation of the enrollment expansion policy, a most important measurement for success and failure would be based on how much the policy can benefit the peasants. In this case, a study on rural students in the process of mass higher education is in fact a study on The Three Problems from the perspective of higher education.

Policy analysis focusing on mass higher education in rural China is also justifiable from the global perspective since its significance might go beyond the boundary of China. In the international context, the theme of higher education keeps on gaining in importance, because “[A]s the 21st century opens... the role of education in general, and of tertiary education in particular, is now more influential than ever in the construction of knowledge economies and democratic societies” (World Bank, 2002, p 1). With respect to the study of mass higher education, China is a unique case because of the large population, the agriculture tradition, the transitional economic mode, the still prevailing dominance of the government in spite of the recent evolution from centralization toward decentralization, and the drastic expansion of the tertiary system unprecedented in the history of higher education. For countries that bear resemblance to China as well as for the future development of China per se, studies on how government initiation influences mass higher education, experiences and lessons obtained from the process will be of great value to policy makers.

1.2. Research Aim, Problem and Questions

For a big country like China, mass higher education may differ greatly within it. The diversity cannot be captured if the participation rate of 15% is used as the only measurement. The complexity of the demographic and geographic structure tends to push the question further: whether the expanded participation rate is stimulating, increasing and upgrading certain groups traditionally excluded from higher education; whether certain

fields that are vital to economic development and tend to absorb a large amount of work force, such as engineering, technology, physics, have been enhanced. In other words, the increase in the opportunity of access is an access for whom, and to what? In order to reveal what underlies the numeric index of the 15% participation rate, the overall purpose of the study has been formulated as:

Through the application of policy analysis theory, analyzing the problems China, especially rural China, is confronting in the transition from elite to mass higher education.

Consequently, this purpose has been used as the foundation for developing the central research problem of the study:

What are the main problems rural China is confronting with respect to higher education participation, and how is the government addressing the problems in its higher education policies?

The central research problem is further elaborated upon in the process of searching for answers to the following questions:

- What are the main differences between urban and rural areas in China with respect to participation in higher education?
- What are the main factors underlying the development of the enrollment expansion policy of the Chinese central government?
- How do the Chinese higher education authorities at the system level address financial, social, and educational problems resulting from the transition from elite to mass higher education?
- How does the transition from elite to mass higher education in China compare with the transition from elite to mass higher education in USA in an earlier period?

1.3. Methodology

1.3.1. Paradigm choice:

Because the nature of the problems manifest too much complexity and multiplicity, this study falls into the category of the interpretive approach, which emphasizes “the unique features of specific contexts and meanings”, and which aims at the “systematic analysis of socially meaningful action” and “understanding of social life” (Neumann, 2000, p71, p74). In the choice of paradigm, therefore, the study prefers a qualitative method, which belongs to the interpretive repertoire, rather than a quantitative method. A quantitative study demands a body of literature established by previous researchers, rich known variables and existing theories on which the study can build (Creswell, 1998, p 9), while mass higher education with respect to rural China has just recently been brought under attention so that there is a conspicuous lack of theory and data. Consideration from other aspects of the study will also result in the choice of a qualitative approach: The exploratory and interpretive nature of the project has decided that the intent of the study is “to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group, or interaction” (Creswell, 1998, p 161). The design of the study is one “in which the ‘rules’ and procedures are not fixed, but rather are open and emerging” (Creswell, 1998, p 8-10). The investigator, “rather than remain distant and independent of that being researched”, “admits the value-laden nature of the study... as well as the value nature of information gathered from the field”. The information is context-bound, which leads to “patterns or theories that help explain a phenomenon” (Creswell, 1998, p 6-7)

But “no single paradigm is all-powerful” (Neumann, 2000, p65). The interpretive approach is criticized as being “too subjective and relativist” (Neumann, 2000, p65). In order to secure objectivity and reliability, this study involves some elements of the positivist approach, which is broadly defined as “the approach of the natural sciences” (Neumann, 2000, p65). Consequently, quantitative method, the instrument of positivist approach, is adopted in data presentation, not only to add “internal validity” (Dereshiwsky, 1999), but to identify broad patterns and test theory (Ragin, 1994, p 51). This combination of the two paradigms is acceptable because of the assumption that “qualitative methods can be combined with quantitative approaches, often with good effect” (Weiss, 1998, p 256), and also because of the argument that “researchers should make the most efficient use of both paradigms in understanding social phenomena” (Creswell, 1998, p 176). This study may find its model defined as “the dominant-less dominant design”, in which “the researcher presents the study within a single, dominant paradigm with one small component of the overall study drawn from the alternative paradigm”. “The advantage of

this approach is that it presents a consistent paradigm picture in the study and still gathers limited information to probe in detail one aspect of the study” (Creswell, 1998, p 177). To put it simply, qualitative method allows this study to “tell a story” (Ragin, 1994, p 43; Neumann, 2000, p73), while quantitative method is meant to make the story more convincing.

Because the transition from elite to mass higher education first started in the US and Western Europe, and now in many developing countries, it follows that some form of comparison is made between the mass higher education in China and that in other countries. Comparison will benefit this study in that “[C]omparative research... would be useful from the academic view point, and would also have relevance to planners and policy makers” (Altbach, 1970, p14).

1.3.2. Information source:

The most important information source of this study is the Internet. The Internet portals most often used include: “yahoo”, for literature in English; “baidu” for literature in Chinese; and “google” for literature in both languages. Another important source is publications such as books, educational debates, documents and yearbooks. The Chinese version of these materials has been mailed from China by the author’s colleagues and friends, who work in the educational field, according to the requirement and description by the author. Since officially published data concerning the difference between urban and rural areas are not abundant, the author has contacted some specific schools through email, telephone or post to get data or to collect institutional brochures. These information sources, however, cannot be exempted from the lack in accuracy and coherence. The author worked in The Medical University of Hebei Province and had a chance to closely observe the period of enrollment expansion between 1999 and 2002. The author’s university is located in the middle level of the higher education institution hierarchy, which enrolls a considerable amount of students from rural areas. This has rendered the author an opportunity to get into direct contact with students from peasant families. This first-hand material makes part of the information source, albeit its use will be combined with much care because of the biased nature of personal experience.

1.4. Delimitation and Limitation

1.4.1. Delimitation:

Ever since the notion of mass higher education emerged after World War Two, it has given rise to much literature. It is the center of much discussion, not only in the United States and Western Europe, but also, especially in the 1990s, in many developing and transitional countries, which look upon higher education as an indispensable means to develop the national economy and civil society. As a result, mass higher education covers a very extensive scope. Even if narrowed down within the Chinese context, mass higher education is by no means much less complex and multi-facet. In order to have a focus, the study is limited within the scope of rural China after the year 1999 when the enrollment expansion policy was initiated.

Given the limited capacity, this study will not elaborate all the problems listed by Martin Trow (1973, p 1) but will specify two of them: the problems of finance and the problem of student recruitment and selection, which will be examined mainly through exploring tuition charge and enrollment pattern. Other problems such as curricula, quality, job replacement, the relation to adult education, etc, will inevitably be touched upon, since all the problems in the transition from elite to mass higher education are in fact “different manifestations of related cluster of problems” that “arise out... in a broad pattern of development of higher education” (Trow, 1973, p 1), but they will not be discussed in details. Also, although there will be retrospection of history, the main part of the study does not go back farther than just the past few years.

1.4.2. Limitation:

By now, mass higher education has already become one of the center topics in Chinese education, but this was not the case just five years ago. The time is not long enough for ample theories on mass higher education to be developed that specifically targets at problems of Chinese features. For this reason, most of the theories that this study employs are intended at an international landscape in general or tailored for an exotic region in particular. In other words, there are not many indigenously produced mature theories to employ or ready model to follow in this analysis.

Another limitation concerns the authenticity and objectivity. Because it is just six years since the enrollment expansion, as has been mentioned above, there are not yet much official data published that are detailed and specifically reflect the situation of rural students. To make up for that, the author did some data collection as a personal effort, which unavoidably lack generalization, for they cover a very limited scope and are all from institutions at the middle or bottom level of the system that are geographically close to the author. And because of the localization of the author's social activity, biases will exist in the study, which may shape the way the data and literature are perceived and interpreted, in spite of every effort made to ensure objectivity.

Timeliness of the data is a third limitation. Since mass higher education is increasingly gaining importance in the society, new materials are coming up all the time. But considering the time that has elapsed between the start and the finish of this thesis writing, substantial progress in literature and experiment will not be caught timely so that the data in the thesis can hardly be satisfactorily up-dated. And also, the study is based on data published at different times by different institutions, which may change and sometimes even conflict. This will invariably erode into the ground of the study, though the citation of the data is after careful selection.

A fourth limitation is that, since higher education is a long-term process, it takes time for the consequence of many endeavors in the field to be felt. Therefore, when comments are required in the study, tentative recommendations are preferred to definite conclusions.

1.5. Structure of the Thesis

Following the introduction in Chapter One, Chapter Two is devoted to literature review, which provides the general background, furnishes a stage for this study, and outlines a theoretical basis for the evaluation of the policy. This chapter reviews literature that is most relevant to this study including literature on mass higher education, literature on education equality and equity, and literature on quality. Since the thesis is focused on the problems of Chinese peasants, literature about peasant problems will also be discussed. European policy analysis theory will be reviewed as a basis for evaluation to make

possible the policy analysis in the Chinese context. Theories and development in policy study in China will be reviewed too, to show the relevance of Western theoretical system to the Chinese context. Literature on the relationship between the state and higher education will also be touched upon in both China and Europe, in order to outline the policy context.

Chapter three is data presentation and analysis. Data presentation will reflect the research problem by comparing the situation in urban and rural areas with respect to mass higher education. In analyzing the data, the underlying economic, social and political reasons, as well as consequence, will be pointed out.

In Chapter Four Gornitzka's policy analysis theory will be employed to examine the enrollment expansion policy from a theoretically perspective. The chapter analyzes the factors incorporated in the 1999 expansion policy that lead to the great acceleration in Chinese higher education system expansion and the factors that give rise to the major problems in the transition. Chinese theorists, because of their direct connection to Chinese affairs, will also be combined in the analysis.

Chapter Five includes discussion on the implications of the findings in the study. Situations in USA with respect to mass higher education will also be referred to as an example of how government policy can shape higher education. Tentative proposal for policy making will be posed, which will also bring the study to a close.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the concept of mass higher education will be discussed. The present study is related to the larger, ongoing dialogue in the literature about the topic and shares the results of other studies. Through a discussion of previous studies on mass higher education, it provides a framework in which to locate the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of the study with other findings (Creswell, 1998; Hart, 1998). The review is a progressive narrowing of the topic, which will lead to the identification of areas overlooked by past studies, of what remains to be explored. As such, it provides the conceptual framework to this study.

In the past decades, researchers in the United States, where mass higher education was first initiated, and in Europe, where the modern university was originated, have put much effort to the study of this phenomenon and produced a great wealth of literature. This gives rise to the writing of the second section of the chapter, reviewing the literature by writers in the United States and Western Europe, relating how the mass higher education theory has developed since early 1970s till the present time. This section will also refer to literature on mass higher education in developing countries. Literature by Chinese writers will be reviewed, too, to point out the focus of the study. But rich Chinese academic writing on this aspect is yet to be produced even though mass higher education has become a much-discussed topic in the Chinese context.

The third section will deal with the problem of education equality and equity, a problem that almost goes hand in hand with mass higher education. Literature by both foreign and Chinese writers will be reviewed. But literature by foreign writers takes a greater proportion of this section, since Chinese theories on this aspect are yet to be produced. Literature on quality, an aspect that is closely connected and yet comes into conflict with the aspect of equality and equity, will be reviewed in the fourth section.

The fifth section deals with the problem of peasants and rural education. The specificity of China is that, demographically, the majority of the population is made up of peasants;

financially and politically, state policy has long been biased against peasants. For this reason, the education of the rural youth is an issue that mass higher education is bound to confront, and equity and equality in higher education for rural youth is salient among the cluster of problems. A multi-dimensional probe into the rural society is necessary if one intends to understand the issue of mass higher education in rural China. What is more, the problems of rural China have already become a nationwide concern at the beginning of the new century.

Considering the dominant role of the government in the whole affair it is necessary to take a close look at government policy and its effects. In order to present a theoretical basis of evaluation for the policy analysis in Chapter Four, there is the sixth section, in which literature on policy process (Gornitzka, 1999) is discussed to help understand the concepts and theoretical aspects of policy analysis. Theories on Chinese policy study and on state-higher education relationship will also be included, in order to cope with the complexity of the Chinese context and to illustrate the relevance of European theory to Chinese higher education.

2.2. The Concept of Mass Higher Education

2.2.1. Overview of the progress in mass higher education

Mass higher education is a phenomenon that had caught the attention of the modern societies since WWII (Thow, 1970, p 3 and 2003, p 7; Calhoun, 2000, p 53-55; Scott, 1998, p113). The grand secular shift from elite to mass higher education was first obvious and first articulated in the USA, where a pattern of rapid growth was already underway at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth century (Scott, 1998, p113; Calhoun, 2000, p 53-55). Many continental European systems began a similar transformation at about the same time but less self-consciously (Scott, 1998, p113), so that elite higher education had remained dominating in Europe until the 1960s (Altbach, 2001), when European systems began to move towards American models (Trow, 2000). The growth in the US was more or less continuous until the 1980s (Calhoun, 2000, p 53-55), while European universities are still trying to adapt to the growth in mass enrollments of the past three decades (Trow, 2000, p1). The experiences in US and West Europe have demonstrated that the transition

from elite to mass higher education takes place step by step based on long-term accumulation, following its natural course to reach its maturity. This progress is not isolated from the development in other aspects such as economy, society, etc. Excessive efforts to unduly accelerate the progress without adequate preparation and with no consideration to the environment have the danger of spoiling everything.

Post-secondary education expansion after WW II was a universal phenomenon, though the extent of expansion varies from country to country. In the third world, the expansion of the higher education system, on the basis of small, elite system, is noteworthy. The participation rate of higher education in the third world has reached the level of some industrialized countries. But difference exists within the third world. Some newly emerged industrial countries and districts such as South Korea and Taiwan head the list in expansion and participation rate, and Philippines enjoys very high participation rate, while the expansion has come to a halt in other areas obsessed by war and economic difficulties (Altbach, 2001). On the whole, the enrollment gap between most developing and transition countries and OECD countries has not diminished despite the rapid growth of tertiary enrollments over the past decades. In fact, the opposite has occurred (World Bank, 2002). This renders the higher education systems in the developing world a very heavy task to continue the expansion of the system and the increase of participation rates. The World Bank (2002) points out that in large countries of Asia, the need to invest in expanding coverage at the tertiary level is more visible than anywhere else. China is cited as an example because its enrollment rate was only 5% by 1997 (World Bank, 2002). But soon afterwards, in the year 1999, China began to drastically increase its higher education system, and consequently the theories on mass higher education have ever since become a source of great interest among Chinese educationists. With rich indigenous theories not yet having been developed, some European and American theorists are frequently referred to as relevant for interpreting Chinese phenomena.

2.2.2. The definition of mass higher education in general

After WWII, with the importance of science and education in economic development increasingly looming large, there emerged the theory of human capital, which suggests an investment in people. In 1961, the US economist Theodore Schultz published *Investment in Human Capital*, in which he points out that both knowledge and skill are a form of

capital that is a product of “deliberate investment”. He makes a direct link between an increase in investment in human capital and the overall increase in workers’ earnings, arguing that the difference in earnings between people relates to the differences in access to education, and that in the long-term the yield from the investment in education will far outweigh the cost (Tamar Kaman, 2000). With the Theory of Human Capital revealing the underlying correlation between education and economy development, was paved the way for the theories of mass higher education.

A classic study on mass higher education is made by George Bereday, who makes three main points: 1) open admission and rapid quantitative expansion need not reduce quality in the long run; 2) enrollments need not be closely linked to the numbers the economy can absorb, since a continual upgrading of various kinds of position can be expected with the stimulus of mass higher education. 3) The basic principle of mass higher education is one of openness and a belief that all are infinitely educable; it is a compensatory rather than an egalitarian ethos in terms of provision for diverse groups (Hayhoe, 1996, p252). Around the same period, Martin Trow noted how the movement to mass higher education greatly changes the functions of the university, bringing formal and nonformal higher education closer together (Trow, 1973; Hayhoe, 1996, p252). Perhaps the most vivid depiction of the broadened function of the university in the North American context of mass higher education has been the “multiversity” depicted by Clark Kerr, which promises infinite variety. A key point in his statement is the belief that openness of access and diversity of level and program can coexist with the highest standards of academic achievement (Hayhoe, 1996, p252).

Presently, the most frequently cited, and therefore most influential writer in China, is Martin Trow, who defined the three-phase development pattern in higher education: a transition from elite to mass higher education and subsequently to universal access. Trow uses enrollment rate, which is very brief and symbolic, as an index to conceptualize and divide the three phases of higher education development: 15% under as the elite stage; between 15% and 50% as the mass stage; 50% above as the universal stage (Trow, 1973, p4-6).

The contribution made by Trow is not limited to the level of concept, but goes deeper into the process. His further definition of mass higher education concerns with the aspects

involved in the process: “mass higher education differs from elite higher education not just quantitatively but qualitatively” (Trow, 1973, p6). That is, the transition not only involves the size expansion of the system, but also involves several other aspects including the attitude towards higher education, the functions of higher education, the structure of the system, the standards for selection, academic standards (Trow, 1973, p 7-14). To relate in more details: First of all, as more students from an age cohort go to college or university each year, the meaning of college attendance changes: first from being a privilege to being a right, and then, to being something close to an obligation (Trow, 1973, p 5). Second, the functions of higher education change: at the elite stage, higher education is primarily concerned with shaping the mind and character of the ruling class; at the stage of mass higher education, the institutions still prepare elites, but a much broad range of elites that includes the leading strata of all the technical and economical organizations of the society, with the emphasis shifting from shaping character to transmitting skills; in institutions marked by universal access, the chief concern is to prepare large numbers for life, and to maximize the adaptability of the population to a world whose chief characteristic is rapid social and technological change (Trow, 1973,p 7-8). Third, the structure of the system changes, which requires not merely the further expansion of the elite university system, but the growth of popular, nonelite institutions (Trow, 1973, p 6). Fourth, the student body changes, which entails diversity, and in turn, requires changes in selection criteria. That means that the elite criteria based on meritocratic achievement measured by secondary school performance or grades on special examinations give way to criteria in accordance to the new phases: At the mass stage, there is a general acceptance of meritocratic criteria where access is limited, but this is qualified by a commitment to equality of educational opportunity, leading to “compensatory programs” and the introduction of additional nonacademic criteria designed to reduce “inequities” in the opportunities for admission of deprived social groups and categories. At the universal stage, the criterion is oriented to the equality of group achievement rather than an equality of individual opportunity, and efforts are made to achieve a social, class, ethnic and racial distribution in higher education reflecting that of the population at large (Trow, 1973, p 14). To put it another way, what is emphasized at the mass phase is equality for individuals at the beginning of higher education process, while what is emphasized at the universal phase is equality for groups at the end of higher education process. Fifth, academic standards change: in the systems and institutions of mass higher education standards become variable, differing in severity and character in

different parts of the system or institution (Trow, 1973, p13).

With the discussion on mass higher education lasting into the new century, the phrase “mass higher education” has become more familiar, yet it has meanwhile become less clear in meaning (Scott, 1998, p113). This has evoked continued effort to accurately define the phenomenon and to clarify the concept as it is applied in different contexts. Calhoun (2000) points to the tension between two contradictory ideals that are shaping struggles over the future of the university: the ideal in pursuit of highest “quality” of knowledge within a narrow scope versus the ideal to share and distribute knowledge as widely as possible. Scott defines the phenomenon from several perspectives: from the perspective of the relationship between higher education system and society and the economy, from the perspective of the system structure and institutional mission, and from the perspective of mass higher education process. Massification of the higher education system, Scott points out, leads to increasing financial dependence of the universities on the state, and hence, greater demands for accountability, and consequently, closer and more exact subordination to national political purposes. New sectors, comprising such institutions as those originally designed to fulfill quite specific national needs, generally vocational and professional, and lacking the traditional university’s internationalist rhetoric and commitment, are created, and, when absorbed into unified national systems, influence the behavior and values of the traditional universities. Institutions’ missions become multiple, both the input and output of higher education having been transformed (Scott, 1998, p113). Massification of the higher education system also leads to change with respect to the four major functions at the theoretical level --- generation and transmission of ideology, selection and formation of the dominant elites, production and application of knowledge, training the skilled labor force --- as is defined by Castells. The first two functions, either rooted in the Church-based universities, or originated from Anglo-Saxon tradition and the state-based European universities, have transferred their dominant position to the third function, which can be exemplified by American science-oriented universities, and to the fourth function, which is the focus of professional universities. Especially in the last thirty years with the development tasks in a modern, increasingly integrated world economy, it is the need to train skilled labor that gave a new impetus to universities as educational institutions (Castells, 2001, p206-210).

2.2.3. Definition of mass higher education in the Chinese context

In the late 1950s, the Chinese higher education system used to experience an inflation with a policy objective to realize universal higher education in fifteen years (Yang Dongping 2003). As a result of a typical “societal makeability assumption” (Maassen & Cloete, 2000, p21), this attempt was not only a doom, but later became an excuse to restrict higher education expansion. At about the same time, theoretical research on higher education in China was actually halted. It is in fact the expansion of university enrollment in 1999 that gives a restart to the theoretical research. But owing to the long time stagnation, research on mass higher education still remains at a level of concept and system, not yet having touched the deeper level of process (Mass Higher Education Project Group, 2000).

Pan Maoyuan, a pioneer in Chinese higher education theory, considers the specificity of the Chinese case and suggests a “transitional phase” between elite and mass higher education in the Chinese context. In contrast to Trow’s theory that assumes a “quantitative-to-qualitative-change” pattern, Pan Maoyuan suggests that Chinese higher education development features a “qualitative-before-quantitative-change” process. In other words, what is defined as “transitional phase between elite and mass higher education” is a stage when various qualitative changes characteristic of mass higher education emerge “ahead of time” before the quantitative index, the 15% participation rate, is reached. In China, a country with “posterior movement toward mass higher education”, government policy acts as explicit guideline and reform measures as necessity, which lead to qualitative changes emerging ahead of time, and which in turn lead to a “supernormal” development in the transition from elite to mass higher education (Pan Maoyuan & Xie Zuoxu, 2001, refer to Zhang Tong, 2002). The proposal of the “transitional phase” implies that the development of mass higher education system in China might bear some premature features because it has skipped some necessary preparations, and that government policies will be critical to eventually perfect and mature the system.

Before the initiation of the enrollment expansion policy by the government, with small-scale expansion already underway for several years and many problems such as quality, finance, etc, already emerging, Chinese education scientists began to turn their attention to Martin Trow’s works. At the beginning of 1999, the eve of the large scale enrollment

expansion, there was an article interpreting Trow's ideas and identifying several prerequisites for mass higher education in a Chinese context: 1) quantitative development; 2) the creation of "prototype" institutions, i.e., open institutions different from traditional, elite universities to cater for the mass; 3) universal secondary education; 4) the development of market mechanism; 5) GDP appropriate to support the development of mass higher education (Shi Chao, 1999). There was another opinion pointing out that mass higher education, apart from increasing enrollment rates, intends to increase the proportion of citizens with tertiary education among both present and future employees, and to orient substantial higher education institutions to popular application and market. Or, higher education should be open to the public with respect to system, content, instruction form, etc. (Liu Qinyong, 1999)

In 2000, the Mass Higher Education Project Group held a research conference in Xiamen University and summarized the status quo of the theoretical research on mass higher education in China and pinned down the concepts. Enrollment rate is an index to indicate the level of higher education development of a country, which is not to be applied to the comparison between provinces and districts within China. Mass education is a historic concept, which was first used to indicate mass education at the basic level, and later to indicate mass higher education. What really reflects a qualitative change in higher education, is not the quantity of university graduates in the whole population, but rather the proportion of the age group that enter tertiary education institutions of various forms. Elite higher education is a higher education mode as well as a phase in higher education development, while massification and universalization are phases in higher education development, not a mode for training personnel (Mass Higher Education Project Group, 2000).

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To sum up, the most evident feature of a mass higher education system is its quantitative aspect, but the quantitative aspect alone cannot embrace the rich meaning of mass higher education. With increasing demand for resource, higher education system will become increasingly subordinate to other sectors of the society. With increasing diversity in student body, will come diversity in many aspects, such as in types of institutions, in student selection standards, etc.

The significance of the theories by Trow and other scholars lies in that they have interpreted mass higher education as an activity widely participated by youth of the whole society rather than privilege accessible only to a certain social group. So much attention has been attached to mass higher education, because it is indispensable to the modernization of the society, both technologically and democratically, and what is more, because the importance of individual has become widely recognized and education is regarded as a right entitled to every member of the society. Therefore, the extent of participation, to be exact, participation by individuals from all strata in the society, makes a very important hallmark for mass higher education. At the mass phase, the questions that higher education is confronted with “is not only a matter of increased access and participation; it is also a question of access for whom” (Maassen & Cloete, 2002, p24).

2.3. Literature on Education Equality and Equity

The emergence of the idea of equality in education can be traced back to the ancient times. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) in ancient China, for example, advocated equal education, his famous motto being “In education, there is no distinction between classes of men”. Plato (427-347 B.C.) in Ancient Greece, for another example, conceives open society and free education in his masterpiece *Republic*. However, for the most part of history, the ideal of equal education had remained only a myth. It is not until the end of the 18th century that the idea of education equality began to become institutionalized in some Western countries as legal measures, and equality began to dominate the education policy of many countries. The concept of educational equality was further enhanced when compulsory basic education, aimed at training cohorts of laborers adequate for new machinery operation, was introduced in Western industrialized countries (Ma Hemin & Xu Xiaoping, 2004).

2.3.1. Literature on education equality and equity in general

The indispensability of higher education for the development of both the society and an individual is self-evident. As early as the dawn of the twentieth century, the notion was voiced in America that “people skills” matter, that the wealth of a nation is embodied in its people, and that only an educated people can adopt new technologies, adapt them and innovate them (Goldin, 2001). By now, it is more than widely recognized that advanced

economies live and die by their educated labor forces, and how they are employed (Trow, 2000). In the developing countries particularly, universities are expected to play an important role in the process of national development and modernization (Altbach, 1970, p 6).

From an individual perspective, the importance of higher education has long been emphasized by researchers. Altbach defines the university as “a provider of jobs and of opportunities for social mobility”, especially “in societies characterized by highly stratified social system” (Altbach, 1970, p 2, p 6). Trow terms the university as “the home of the social and economic elite” (Trow, 1973, p5). Scott categorizes universities as “agents of social mobility” and “distributors of life-chances” that, in partnership with the rest of the educational system, enhance the life-chances of everyone (Scott, 1998, p111). Maassen and Cloete regard higher education as “a key re-distributor of opportunity” (Maassen & Cloete, 2000, p24). With the progress of the society, hierarchies based on class, race and gender become less important, while new patterns of discrimination based on academic qualifications will become more influential (Scott, 1998, p 111). Having a higher education degree has increasingly become a necessary condition for entering, not only the professions, but also the rapidly expanding service and technology-orientated jobs (Maassen & Cloete, 2002, p24). For low-income and minority students, tertiary education can offer better opportunities and life chances, and thereby increase their employability, income prospects, and social mobility and decreasing income inequality (World Bank, 2002, p5). The attention focused on education, the “Great Equalizer”, as defined by Mann, the “Father of American Education”, inevitably leads to the question of equality and equity in education opportunity.

The concept of equality and democracy in education became most wide-spread after WW II, with some documents as the landmark of this period, such as U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948; Plowden Report in 1966; *Theory of Justice* in 1971 by Rawls, etc. (Ma Hemin & Xu Xiaoping, 2004). With respect to equal education opportunity at the stage of mass higher education, unlike the earlier stage when the proportion of an age group going into higher education was very small and the political issue of equality of educational opportunity was centered much more on higher primary and secondary education, more democratic and egalitarian concerns for equality of opportunity come to center on the increasingly important sector of tertiary education

(Trow, 1973, p4-5). Equality of educational opportunity in higher education can be measured across several dimensions and notions relating to institutional access, institutional and program choice, and persistence to graduation (Lewis & Dunder, 2000, p11), which means equal opportunity at the starting point, in the process and at the end-point.

The attention given to equality in higher education is illustrated in more details by Trow in his relation of the change in the principles underlying the preparation and selection for university entrance, which has proceeded through a series of phases: First, there was the simple principle of admitting the “qualified”, but rested on marked social inequalities, a phase marked by demand for abolition of inequality versus emphasis on meritocratic procedure and criteria. Second, democratic pressures, economic needs and higher education growth combine into a set of complementary forces, which leads to an expansion of those secondary schools and the streams that qualify for university entry. This phase is mark by a growing concern for an increase in education opportunity for students from lower strata. However, the growth mainly exists in student proportion from middle-class. Third, partly as a result of the work by sociologist and partly under political pressures, there emerges a clear and more widespread recognition of the effect of social inequality on educational achievement, which leads to special efforts to reduce the effect of social inequality. Forth, there is demand for open access or expansion of non-university institutions, a phase marked by a shift from equality of individual opportunity to equality of group achievement (Trow, 1973, p 23-24). The Chinese case is hardly typical enough to fit into one single phase outlined above. If summarized in one word, it could be “imbalance”, because a concentration of phenomena that feature different phases exhibits simultaneously. But the phenomena in the first phase, for example, a wide spread resentment against inequality, are comparatively more salient.

The increase in access opportunity is a very important means to enhance higher education equality. But the expansion of educational opportunity is only part of the process. The ultimate results of a policy of equality of opportunity must be visible in the equality of achievement of social groups and strata, since any difference in the proportions of youth from different social groups or strata who enter higher education and gain its degrees and certificates must be due to patterns of social discrimination and not to variations in individual ability. In order to reduce and obliterate these differences that in an egalitarian

age are increasingly defined as inequalities and the product of injustice, very strong social and political forces are at work. The net result of these forces must be the expansion of places, if the proportion from every social class are to be equalized, for it is difficult to imagine that the fundamental democratization of the society will not also extend to the provision of places in higher education as it has for primary school and is in the process of doing at the secondary level (Trow, 1973, p 45). That is, equality during the process of higher education is significant, and equality at the end-point is the ultimate goal being sought, but in neither case can equality ever be imaginable without equal opportunity at the starting point. Only when the provision of places is increased will there be possibility of equality at the starting point, but increase in the provision of places alone does not necessarily guarantee the equality at the starting point.

With the new wave of transition and development in politics and economy in the international landscape, and promoted by national governments as well as agencies such as UNESCO, the OECD and the World Bank, increasing participation in higher education has become a global orthodoxy (Maassen & Cloete, 2002, p24). In many developing countries, where admission to higher education is administrated centrally through very competitive national examination systems, the social demand for higher education still greatly exceeds the supply of positions and spaces, in spite of the remarkable expansion of higher education over the past two decades (Lewis & Dunder, 2000, p11). This growth comes into conflict with the inadequacy in funds and the belief in an efficiency use of the limited post-secondary education resource. In addition, groups previously excluded from this opportunity also pose great pressure by declaring the right to post-secondary education. This increasingly associates the purpose of higher education with the compensation for the disadvantaged groups, in that the social responsibilities of higher education are now more likely to be expressed in terms of their duty to accommodate students from less privileged social backgrounds or from minority ethnic or religious groups in their own societies (Scott, 1998, p120). The necessity of the compensation to the disadvantaged is vividly illustrated by the American President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965: “You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and say, 'you are free to compete with all the others, and still justly believe that you have been completely fair’” (Savage, 2004, p297) This leads to a differential policy that takes into consideration the socio-economic circumstance in order to “level the socioeconomic playing field” (Studley, 2003). This

special attention to certain groups is also justified by the belief that the distribution of education matters (Ram et al, 1998), which once again points to the problem of “fairness” in education distribution, or equity in education.

In developing countries, the question of equity and equality in education has increasingly become a reason for concerns. However, seldom do we have conceptual understanding about what constitutes such fairness or how one might measure it, though almost everyone has some notion about the nature of equity. Equity may be defined as “equal treatment of equals” whereby people are grouped and everyone within the group is treated the same. This line of argument is often used to support the “fairness” of national examinations for university admission or for arguing no tuition for all enrollees. But it is frequently forgotten that in higher education, even within small groups, there will be individual differences. You then end up with equal treatment for all unequal participants and this often results in counterproductive equity effects. On the other hand, most people who have thought about the issue tend to mean that unequal groups should have unequal treatment and that differential assistance should be given to less advantaged groups or individuals. Two problems arise here, however, in that one still needs to define the groups or individuals in need of differential treatment and that one needs to define the differential treatment (Lewis & Dunder, 2000, p2-3). That is, justified as it is, differential treatment involves great complexity. But difficult as it is to manipulate in practice, differential treatment is compulsory if only equity is the goal.

The problem of equality can also be approached from the perspective of the supply and the demand side. On the supply side, it has been generally assumed that the expansion of national systems of higher education in most developing countries would contribute to greater equity in access through increased participation of traditionally disadvantaged groups (Lewis & Dunder, 2000, p2-3). Strategies to increase enrollments on behalf of equity concerns in developing and transitional countries have typically followed one or more of five major tracks: 1) sharp increase in enrollments in the existing institutions; 2) establishment of new universities, particularly outside of the major cities; 3) expansion of two-year vocational colleges; 4) expansion of non-conventional approaches to higher education such as distance education and evening programs; 5) permitting the development of private higher education institutions (Lewis & Dunder, 2000, p9). In many cases, such supply side expansion policies certainly have helped to increase the number of

students accessing higher education, but it has not necessarily led to greater equality of opportunity for all youth and young adults. The effects of the expansion strategies, a “supply-side policy”, have not yet been systematically examined or reported in most developing countries (Lewis & Dunder, 2000, p2-3).

On the demand side, there are still serious questions about the negative effects of various factors on students’ secondary academic achievement, and on their access, choice, and graduation rates in higher education. Students from the traditionally disadvantaged groups such as women and those from rural areas have also been historically under-represented among both the applicants and admitted students for university level education. In countries where the demand for higher education exceeds the supply of their education places, seats in higher education are often distributed by competitive examinations without any consideration to its equity effects. On the whole, little attention has been historically paid to the “demand side” of the problem by public policy makers in most developing countries (Lewis & Dunder, 2000, p2-3). More research on the supply side and demand side is needed in order to form a more comprehensive basis in public policy making. Alternatively, the society/higher education institution dimension should be strengthened in the “government-institution-society triangle of coordination” (Maassen & Cloete, 2002, p19).

When competitive examination is installed at university entrance to filtrate applicants, the university entrance examination mechanism is actually a test on the quality of primary and secondary schooling rather than on talent, which raises the question of equality at the level of basic education. Lewis and Dunder found that in many countries there are substantial differences in access to higher education by location as individuals from urban areas and developed regions of the countries have better access to secondary and higher education institutions. The bias against children whose parents are farmers begins with dropouts and inadequate primary schooling. Where primary education is universal in some developing countries, differences among socioeconomic groups occur mostly in access to subsequent levels of education (Lewis & Dunder, 2000, p13-14). Considerable under-investment and declines in the quality of primary and secondary education obviously have had negative effects on equal access to higher education, especially in the context of very competitive university entrance examination (Lewis & Dunder, 2000). That is, inequality in higher education equality is an ultimate concentration of a cluster of problems at different stages

of one's education. To tackle the problem of equality and equity in higher education, a comprehensive treatment is needed, which involves the equality problems in primary and secondary education.

2.3.2. Literature on education equality and equity in the Chinese context

With respect to equity and equality in education opportunity, the Chinese education system as a whole, and the higher education system in particular, has recently become the focus of public attention and criticism. A great part of the society, and not just education sociologists, has by now become alert to the fact that “in the Chinese context, the role of education increasingly stands out in the stratification of the society” (Zhang Yulin, 2003). The experience in the 1980s demonstrates that the social, economic, even political status of a citizen is to a great extent determined by the education he or she has received. Higher education qualification is a prerequisite for “decent” jobs, and it is even an admission ticket to some metropolis, without which one will almost necessarily remain marginalized. Therefore, equality of opportunity in education is far more than a topic for abstract theoretical research; it is of humanitarian significance. It has a direct impact upon the future of any young person by rendering him or her advantaged or disadvantaged in the future competition, and, through heritage, will possibly affect the development of following generations (Zhang Yulin, 2003).

In contrast to the public alert to equity and equality in education, the theoretical literature in this field in China remains inadequate. And also, the literature so far produced is not balanced in its emphasis. Zhang Yuling points out that the imbalance exists in two tendencies among present researchers. In the first place, attention has been given to differences between the three parts of the country: the East, the Middle, and the West part; little effort has been focused on the difference between rural and urban areas, and no effort on the differences within a province or district. In the second place, more research is carried out to investigate the correlation between difference in education and growth in economy, while little is done on how the pattern of the public education resources distribution has influenced education equality. But it is these two ignored aspects, the difference between rural and urban areas and the pattern in which the state distributes education resources that deserve most attention. The difference between rural and urban, which is the product of the existing Chinese social structure, not only leads to differences

in education opportunity for individual social members, but will also shape the future social structure in China. The argument for giving special attention to education resource distribution patterns are derived from the fact that, although the market is gaining in force, the way the state distributes education resources has been the most powerful of all the factors that influence education opportunity equality (Zhang Yulin, 2003). The exposure of this imbalance is a reminder of the need of more research on government policy with respect to higher education for the rural population.

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Equality in education as an ideal has long been advocated, but it had not been under serious consideration until inequality in education was so serious that it was obviously doing harm to the society as a whole. With the society increasingly democratized, the notion of education equality has risen from the level of basic education to the level of higher education. As an initial step, the expansion of the system is an important measure that deserves applause, but the expansion alone cannot enhance equality and equity in higher education. In fact, sometimes the opposite is achieved: as an opportunity distributor with a paradoxical character, higher education may well entrench social inequality. Inequality in access, that is, inequality at the starting point of higher education, is just part of a complex cluster of questions. If the problem is to be explored further, the focus of attention will have to be extended from the starting point to the process of higher education. To this extent, what we have come face to face with will not only be the question of increased access and the question of access for whom, but also the question of access to what, or, the question of quality, which goes hand in hand with but meanwhile comes into conflict with equality.

2.4. Literature on Quality

Presently in China, the public media is thronged with discussion mainly on the problem of equal access, with relatively less attention attached to the problem of quality. But in countries where mass higher education has been on the way for a long time, a wide spread concern about quality existed at the early stage of the growth (Trow, 1973, p38), and theories on quality consequently have been developed.

In spite of the many problems that come with the growth, everywhere the pressures for expansion met with surprising little resistance among academic, but growth alone begins to create strains in the traditional forms and functions (Trow, 1973, p30). It is observed that the steady expansion of higher education appears to constitute a serious threat to academic standards (Trow, 1973, p35) and mass higher education ceased to be selective in any serious sense, leading to diverse credit system (Scott, 1998, p113).

To the differentiation in the higher education sector, there exist different perspectives. One perspective is that of “elitist reformers”, which aims to modernize the university in its organizational structure without changing its basic character as the center for intellectual work at the highest standard. According to their view, a slowing down or even a cessation in the rate of growth of higher education or the shifting of growth wholly to the nonuniversity sectors may afford an opportunity for reestablishing and reinforcing those high standards threatened by the indiscriminate growth of unreformed structures (Trow, 1973, p31). Another perspective is that of “expansionist reformers”, which argues that the formal differentiation between the different forms and sectors of higher education almost always lead to invidious distinctions between them, and ultimately very marked differences in the quality of their staff and students, and in other respects as well (Trow, 1973, p36).

The expansion of higher education system that does not lower the quality and standards of the higher education already offered involves the achievement of education at a high and common standard of quality throughout the system, whatever the varied functions of the different institutions may be. The dual commitment--- to continued growth and also to high quality in all parts of the system---- poses the dilemma. The dilemma has three components: first, there is the strong egalitarian sentiment that all provision of higher education should be substantially of equal quality (and thus of cost); second, new forms of mass higher education are assessed against criteria typical of old costlier elite higher education; third, rapid growth at the per capita cost levels of the former small elite system places intolerable burdens on national budget (Trow, 1973, p35).

The truth is that the slogan of the “expansionist reformers”, “Nothing if not the best”, will inevitably come into conflict with a continued and rapid expansion of the provision for higher education, for no society, no matter how rich, can afford a system of mass higher

education at the same cost levels that it formerly provided to its elite research universities (Trow, 1973, p36; Trow, 2003, p6). Expansion without major differentials in per capita costs among various sectors of the system of higher education forces a leveling downward in costs, and perhaps in quality as well. Commitment to a high and common set of standards throughout the system will necessarily urge a restraint on expansion (Trow, 1973, p37). In the interaction of quality, equality and expansion, educators must accept the inequalities inherent in genuine diversity if they are to defend the highest standards of scholarly and academic life in some parts of an expanding system (Trow, 1973, p39).

But that solution has its own costs--- morally and intellectually as well as financially and politically (Trow, 1973, p39). As is illustrated by Trow, at one extreme we think of a group of learned and imaginative scholars teaching highly selected and motivated students in a situation of rich intellectual resources. At the other extreme are institutions staffed by less well-educated and less-accomplished teachers, teaching less-able and less well-motivated students under less favorable conditions (Trow, 1973, p35). According to the observation of “expansionist reformers”, the weaker or lower-status segments of the system are those characteristically associated with and used by students from working and lower-middle origins, so that the status differentiation in higher education is closely linked to that of class structure as a whole (Trow, 1973, p36).

The pressure is great in that in many societies, the demand for higher education has reached the status of a social need, regardless of the actual functional requirements of the economy or of the institutions. This social need is an expression of the aspiration for all societies to upgrade their education. The institutions respond to excess demand by downgrading some elements of the system and transforming them into reservoirs of idle labor. This function of universities as a mechanism of surplus labor absorption particularly appeals to those lower-middle class sectors that think their children are entitled to social mobility through the university system. But the more a university system is able to separate this “warehouse function” from the rest, the more it is both successful and unjust (Castells, 2001, p211).

Theoretically speaking, higher education system, as an organic system with its own inherent mechanism of regulation and adaptation, will ultimately approximate a balance between quality and quantity, once provided with the right ecology. As was predicted by

Bereday, growth, in the long run, need not reduce quality (Hayhoe, 1996, p252). But the impact of expansion on the quality of higher education would be greatly influenced in every society by how it deals with the dilemma discussed above (Trow, 1973, p39). That is, how long will the progress to the ultimate balance take, and what kind of price has to be paid, still remain a question yet to be answered by different countries respectively. But, presently at least, there is one point that seems certain: in practice, the perfect harmony between quantity, quality and equality still remains but an ideal to pursue. It seems likely that “only in rhetorical can all of these desirable characteristics be maximized within the same system” (Trow, 1973, p39).

Although Chinese public attention is presently mainly concentrated on the problem of equal access and theories on quality appears unsubstantial, there are indeed some educationists who have not overlooked the problem of quality, and write articles to define the concept of “quality” at the stage of mass higher education, and to give heed to the problem of deteriorating quality.

With respect to the nature of higher education quality at the stage of mass higher education, as one definition goes, quality mainly manifests in how the training of personnel is relevant to the society. It is a multi-dimensional, complex concept, with the characteristic of being 1) adaptable, 2) diverse and 3) developable. One of the standard to measure quality is based on the extent to which the higher education service satisfies the society and individuals (adaptability). Because of the diversification of higher education system, quality standards, accordingly, should be diverse rather than making a commitment as a nation to the maintenance of common standards across all the colleges and universities, or assessing the new forms of mass higher education against the traditional criteria (diversity). Adaptability, as one aspect of quality, should be measured in way of how much higher education is open to development (developable) (Fang Jiansen, 2001).

In relation to the development of the society, the concept of higher education quality is open to development and change. The concept of higher education quality formed at different historical period is specific and historically bound rather than universal. The criteria for higher education quality evaluation is based on the fact that a subject under a certain social condition combines its own need with the property of higher education and

expects the need to be satisfied through higher education. Under different social circumstances, the need of a social subject varies, and the criterion for higher education quality evaluation varies accordingly. The document of the First World Higher Education Conference held in 1998 further defines the concept of quality in relation to diversity, which points out that higher education quality is a multi-dimensional concept. Diversity should be taken into consideration and avoid using a uniformed criterion to assess the quality of higher education. Unitary academic standards typical of traditional elite higher education is no longer fit for the assessment of mass higher education quality, and new concept of quality and new criteria to evaluate quality must be established (Chen Xin, 2003).

With many tertiary education institutions having mushroomed at the late 1990s, it is necessary to be alert to the danger that some institutions may turn into diploma mills. It is important to make clear that diversity in higher education quality in no way ratifies the presently existing low quality in higher education institutions, nor does it simply justify the presently unevenness in higher education quality, or encourage all the institutions to establish their own quality criteria randomly. Rather, diversity means that institutions with different mission and scale should have different criteria and evaluate quality from different perspective (Chen Xin, 2003). Diversity in higher education quality and quality criteria is relative to the demand of the whole society and to the quality of the whole higher education system, but institutions of the same type at the same level, or of different type but at the same level should share quality criteria that are basically identical (Cao Dawen, 2002).

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The growth and diversification of higher education, along with associated changes in pedagogy will require that a society and its systems of higher education surrender any idea of broad common data standards of academic performance between institutions, and even between subjects within a single university (Trow, 1998, p15), but quality differentiation purely based on socio-economic status is, in any sense, “unjust”, as is defined by Castells (2001, p211). Government in general, as an important actor involved in higher education, and Chinese government in particular, as the top power in resource distribution, is obliged to step in to reduce this injustice to the minimum. Differentiation, whether at the starting

point of higher education, which manifests itself as access inequality, or during the process, which manifests itself as quality differentiation, is increasingly defined as unjust in a democratic society. In China, where rapid income growth has been accompanied by rising inequality between urban and rural areas and between provinces (World Development Report, 2000/2001, p26), this inequality not only disintegrates the present society by depriving rural youth of their due education, but will also disintegrate the future society by depriving the farmers' later generations of the same right, and eventually making them forever marginalized. In order to obtain justice and equality in higher education is necessitated comprehensive investigation into various socioeconomic dimensions that go beyond the boundary of higher education. Public policy making in China will include in its content much realism and modesty if it can be based on consideration to rural problems, and China, a traditionally agriculture economy with a large population living in the countryside, as a whole will benefit greatly if education policy is inclined in favor of rural youth.

2.5. Literature on Chinese Rural Areas and Rural Education

2.5.1. Pioneering researchers

As early as over seventy years ago, sociologists had identified the problem of rural areas as the sticking point in the Chinese context. They concluded that progress in China lay in progress in the rural areas, and that the solution to rural problems lay in education, a comprehensive education intended at elevating peasants to a higher level of knowledge and culture. For this purpose, many men of ideals had devoted their lifetime, leaving behind rich literature and making the period from the 1930s to 1940s a pioneering age in rural and mass education theory in China.

Yan Yangchu, who laid the foundation for Chinese mass education, proposed “the Freedom from Ignorance” for the people, as the Fifth Freedom added to Freedom from Want, from Fear, of Speech and of Religion. He diagnosed four pathogens for Chinese peasants: Ignorance, Poverty, Disease and Selfishness, and against these four diseases, he designed four education countermeasures: Culture, Production (Skills), Sanitation and Civism. The four countermeasures, which supplement each other, must be linked in

processes and synchronized in steps. According to Yan Yangchu, the ability of the people to reform their environment was the basis for any social, economic and political reform, without which any beautiful theory, design, policy and system would be but illusion (Cui Xiaohui, 2003). He also encouraged the organization of study mate association among peasants, which later served as a matrix for rural democratic reform (Cui Xiaohui, 2003). The significance of study mate association lay in that this new form of peasant organization was voluntary, with its members imparted with new culture and political ideals, which might eventually take the place of the traditional social grouping based on the clan.

In regard to higher education, Yan Yangchu found that the Chinese system copied the Western model, leading to Chinese students' ignorance of native problems. University graduates were captured by metropolitan life but had contempt of the countryside. As a means to cultivate and store personnel for mass education and economic construction, he decided to expand rural construction institutions into a mass university model consisting of four colleges: mass education college, mass production college, mass sanitation college and mass government college (Cui Xiaohui, 2003).

Liang Shuming was the pioneering scholar attending to social problems in rural China. He took the reform in rural China as a point of departure to reform China as a whole. As a social reformer, Liang Shuming emphasized the importance of education, to be exact, a new mode of education specially targeted at Chinese peasants. He said that, in one sense, the problem of Chinese social reform was by nature a question of enhancing civilization. The social reform movement in China had a tendency to imitate, yet with respect to social reform, there was actually no precedent to go by. In spite of the inadvisability of imitation, syncretism and adoption of modern civilization would undoubtedly promote the civilization of China per se. And this syncretism and adoption of modern civilization could only be achieved through education, which was bound to be an immense project. The purpose of rural education was to create a new agricultural society. For this purpose, nothing was more important than the creation of a new type of peasants. Education alone was not enough to rebuild the society, but education was indispensable to social rebuilding. With social reform as a purpose, the emphasis should be on adults rather than on immature members of the society as it was in regular education. In an age of social transition toward a new mode, most mature social members were immature as far as the

new life mode was concerned, which was why education became the only means. Regular education was normally carried out in an artificial surrounding, while education practice in an age of social reform should be staged in the real context (Liang Shuming, 1933).

Liang Shuming realized that China's problem was a rural problem, whose solution should be put in the hands of peasants, the subject of the Chinese problem. But the peasants, still in poverty and ignorance, lacked such consciousness. Therefore the fate of China depended on whether intellectuals could go to the country to enlighten the peasants into such consciousness. To activate the vitality in peasants and arouse in them an upward life attitude was the first step toward this consciousness. So, the most important part of Liang Shuming's rural construction was the establishment of rural schools (Xia Shiqing, 2002).

While the center of Liang Shuming's rural construction was education, the center of his education practice was the arousing of individuality. To him, a society without the establishment of individuality was not a right society. The respect for the status of an individual was an eternal truth. This establishment of individuality came from the guarantee of social measures, but more from the awakening of individual lives (Xia Shiqing, 2002).

Contemporarily, there was a point of view that pointed out the importance of industrial development to rural construction, an advocacy of urbanization of rural areas (Wu Jingchao, 1936, refer to Zheng Hangsheng & Li Yingsheng, 2000). It is by now evident that this is a perspective of foresight, which goes beyond the frame of solving the problem of peasants purely by means of agriculture. It was, however, not well received by the condition of that time, which was immature in politics, finance, etc.

2.5.2. Contemporary researchers

Current China is a mixture of different stages of economic development. It has a traditional petty farming economy on the one hand, and highly modernized factories and facilities on the other hand. As a result, future prospects about China are disintegrated and conflicting. In this case, if science and technology development and economic growth are taken as the only measurement applied to the whole society, it does not shed much light on the modernization of China as a whole, and the modernization of Chinese education in

particular. An all-around consideration of Chinese problems, covering the aspects of history, culture, demography, politics and geography, is necessary (Yuan Guilin, 2002). The ultimate focus of such overall consideration will inevitably lock on the problems in rural China.

At the end of the 1970s, China witnessed a great economic reform that started from the countryside. For a time, noisy news and media impressed the public as if Chinese peasants had risen from poverty to wealth overnight. Later, with economic reform progressing in urban areas, Chinese peasants seemed to have faded from the memory of the world. However, since the last decade of the twentieth century, cohorts of peasant laborers emerged on the horizon of the city, leaving behind the soil that they used to deem dearer than life, the village of their ancestors, and the farming crafts that they have been familiar with, to endure loneliness, abasement and discrimination (Chen Guili & Chuntao, 2003). Thus, peasants again have become the focus of Chinese sociologists.

Chinese Peasants Investigation (Chen Guili & Chentao, 2003), a recent sensation in the publishing circle, attributes peasants' desperate situation to the following reasons: 1) peasants, mass but separate, do not have their own organizations to resist suppression; 2) the dual structure of the Chinese society, which administers the city and the village separately and hence hampers integrity and balance in economy and culture; 3) numerous taxes and fees as a heavy pressure on peasants, who have already found it difficult to make a living by farming. This article does not single out the poor education condition in rural areas as directly harming peasants, but it points out that the number one cause of the heavy financial burden is that peasants have to bear the costs of basic education.

Apart from the authors of *Chinese Peasants Investigation*, many scholars target at the dual structure of the society for criticism. Liu Yao is one who, from a perspective of higher education, comments on the influence of the dual structure on rural China. There is no hope in the near future, Liu Yao says, for China to eliminate the dual structure in society, economy and culture. The persistence of the two sections of the society will necessarily demand a dual structure in higher education to match it. But Chinese higher education system is unitary, very rarely giving consideration to personnel training for the rural areas. This makes the study on "the dual structure" of Chinese higher education important (Liu Yao, 2003). His argument, in addition to proposing cultivation of experts that serve the

need of the rural context, in fact suggests a compensative education policy for rural youth. Liu Yao defines the lack of education opportunity as the direct reason for rural poverty and argues for higher education to be the solution. In the struggle against poverty, he says, most attention has been attached to income poverty. As a result, “out-of-poverty” often goes hand in hand with “back-to-poverty”. Income poverty for rural populace is but a superficial symptom. It is the lack of knowledge and abilities that constitutes the major cause for income poverty. And this lack per se is also a lethal poverty for rural people. Once rural poverty analysis turns from superficial features to deep-seated causes, the focus is bound to be riveted upon knowledge poverty. The most severe deprivation of the peasants is the deprivation of knowledge and education opportunity, whereas investment in infrastructure of knowledge and in human capital is a most important, most economical and most efficient investment to poor areas. Based on this assumption, the elimination of poverty in rural areas depends on the development of higher education in rural areas (Liu Yao, 2003).

Wen Tiejun (2003), the first to bring the rural problem to the forestage by raising “the Three Problems of the Farmers,” confirms that the Chinese problem is the peasant problem; the peasant problem in the 21st century is the problem of labor surplus, i.e., the problem of employment for peasants. This again points to the question of the urbanization of rural areas, to the need to improve peasant quality, and particularly to the urgency in higher education with respect to rural China. Education in rural areas has been repeatedly emphasized as the key to “enhance agriculture to improve rural population quality”. It has been advocated that there should be a comprehensive reform in rural education and an overall plan for basic, vocational and adult education (Liu Yao, 2003). And there are also researchers, with rural reconstruction in their minds, who have outlined a rural higher education system based on the concept of science and mass higher education: a network with established higher education institutions as the center, rural community colleges as the main body, central government as the sponsor, a system that integrates education of various levels, including basic, vocational, adult and higher education, and that opens to students of various types, etc (Liu Yao, 2003; Hong Jun, 2001; Huang Honghong, 2003).

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Over 70 years have passed since the pioneers targeted at the solution of rural problem as the priority in Chinese society. With the elapse of the decades, China has undergone

tremendous changes. But many problems that used to obsess rural China continue to exist and some problems remain as serious as before. Present-day sociologists continue to devote to the pool of research on rural problems, but the achievements of the pioneers have hardly been excelled. Today, education is still highlighted as the most important means that can bring hope to rural China. But the literature focuses more on the pathology of rural deterioration and its evil prospect than on therapy. Some contemporary sociologists and educationists have visioned prospects for the future development of education in rural China, but for the most part, the blueprints sketched by contemporaries fall into the frame outlined by the pioneering scholars, but seem to have become less sophisticated, or mono-functional by emphasizing the dimension of science and technology. In contrast, pioneering researchers more focused on the enlightenment of the mind. Yan Yangchu, too, attached great importance to production, knowledge and skills for the peasants, but he also advocated the consciousness of citizenship. His ultimate education target was to form a new type of peasants that would be independent and autonomous (Wu Xiangxiang, 2001). While Liang Shuming explicitly advocated the establishment of individuality for peasants, implying that they would no longer be passive only as the subject of the problem, but would also be active and able to solve the problem by themselves (Liang Shuming, 1933).

2.6. Literature on Policy Theory and State-Higher Education Relationship

Scholars' theoretical achievements with respect to policy processes are a potential input for government activities. It is the government policy and its consequent implementation that substantialize the theories, and ultimately solve social problems and realize scholars' ideals. Government, so to speak, is the pivot in the society. This important position of the government in the society rationalizes the efforts put in government policy analysis. In the Chinese context, further effort is needed for policy studies to acquire due independence and to develop an indigenous system. Therefore, concepts of policy analysis developed in Europe will be outlined to serve as a theoretical framework for policy evaluation, against which the enrollment expansion policy will be measured and commented on in Chapter Four.

2.6.1. Theoretical framework for policy evaluation

This study, which can be categorized as an empirical approach to policy analysis, intends to examine the effects of a given policy (Dunn, 1981; Cai Yuzhuo, 2002). It therefore focuses on the implementation of the policy. In reality, however, policy and implementation processes do not fit the image of the perfect “parliamentary chain of command”, where an elected legislature makes a policy decision, whereupon an administrative agency executes them, and that policies travel untouched by the process of being carried out (Gornitzka, 1999, p14). Post-policy formation negotiations or leeway for adjustment can be expected (Gornitzka, 1999, p14), which integrates policy implementation with the whole policy process. Owing to the inextricable relation between the factors underlying the whole process and the outcome of the policy, this analysis discusses not only the policy implementation dimension, but also the policy making dimension as well. The multi-facet character of this analysis is in fact determined by the multi-facet nature of the topic of the study, which covers education, equality and equity, peasant problems, region balance, etc.

a. Policy

A policy is a public statement of an objective and the kind of instruments that will be used to achieve it” (Gornitzka, 1999, p14). It can also be interpreted as a hypothesis; policy program, i.e., the intermediary stage between policy and implementation (Gornitzka, 1999, p14), signifies the conversion of a hypothesis into government action, while policy implementation, i.e., the forging of subsequent links in a causal chain so as to obtain the desired results, signifies the degree to which the predicted consequences take place (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1971; refer to Gornitzka, 1999, p14).

Government policy can be mirrored by organizational change, for organization is in many cases the targeted subject of government policy. This relationship justifies the attention given to two perspectives of organizational change: resource dependency and the neo-institutional perspectives. According to the former, organizations are externally controlled and organizational action is to a large extent determined by the dependence on external resources and the exchange relationships an organization is involved in. Organizations respond to demands from the environments not automatically and passively, but actively and volitionally. According to the latter, the cognitive and normative elements in the

environment shape organizational action. When organizations change according to institutionalized expectations, they do so in a contest of taken for granted values, norms and beliefs. This perspective emphasizes the stability of organizations and the barriers to change that exist within organizations, with organizations showing little of the active choice behavior (Gornitzka, 1999, p7, p27).

b. Policy Process

Empirically speaking, adjustments of policies take place continuously and it is difficult to distinguish between formulating policies and carrying them out. But for analytical purposes, we believe it could be useful to separate the two processes, though “radical” position can not be easily appreciated which assumes that policies are not affected by the process of being carried out. It, therefore, does not suffice to take a policy as given, and attention should also be focused on the way in which the process of policy-design and policy-formation has taken place (Gornitzka, 1999, p14). According to Gornitzka, a policy process is composed of five elements: policy problem, policy objective, policy normative basis, policy instruments and policy linkage (Gornitzka, 1999). The following goes deeper into the process of policy by looking at the five elements.

● ***Policy problems***

Policy problem refers to the societal problem that a policy is designed to redress. Policies are solutions that are more or less stable, but the problems they are attached to vary both across time and different national systems (Gornitzka, 1999, p17). For example, increased higher education participation rate can be set out to upgrade the underprivileged groups in one context, while in another it can aim at updating citizens’ skills to meet the need of the labor market. To policy makers, it is important that policy problem be specific, connected to specific context and time.

● ***Policy objectives***

Policy objective refers to the statements of desired outcomes of a policy. Policies can vary according to whether they aim at system level, institutional level or individual level. They can also vary according to whether policies and programs are directed at changing, adjusting or maintaining behavior of target organizations or groups, or according to how many different aspects of higher education activities are intended to be affected.

(Gornitzka, 1999, p 17). Therefore, the moment a policy objective is decided, the incidence of the policy and the degree of difficulty in achieving the objective, to some extent, is already foreseeable.

- ***Policy normative basis***

Policy normative basis refers to the values and beliefs on which policies and programs are based. However, as integral parts of policy subsystems and policy networks to the extent that they are taken for granted, this aspect of policies is hard to identify in many policy areas, though it can be read out of both the types of objectives attached to a policy and the problems it is designed to solve (Gornitzka, 1999, p 19). Values and beliefs, especially those wide spread in the society and deep-rooted in tradition, as the normative basis for a policy are often strongly grounded, self-evident yet not always readily articulated. In contrast, some rhetorical arguments as the basis for a policy, even though eloquently formulated, may turn out to be precariously supported by the reality. Therefore, the normative basis of a policy should be read out of the policy problem and policy objective, rather than found in symbolic propaganda.

- ***Policy instruments***

Policy instruments refer to means by which government pressures to conform to policy and programs. In other words, they are government capabilities, or fundamental mechanisms by which government influences society (Gornitzka, 1999, p 19). Policy instruments can be categorized as: Nodality (information), Treasure (money), Authority (legal official power) and Organization. Nodality refers to the central position of the government in societal communications and its ability to send out information, which it judges to be necessary or relevant. Authority refers to the ability of the governments to issue binding laws, i.e., to formally restrict the behavior of targeted subjects. Treasure refers to government control of money and other resources. Organization refers to the public bureaucracy and its ability to implement programs and to monitor the environment (Hood, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999, p19).

This categorization can be used to identify the dominant policy instruments attached to a given policy and to identify the blend of different policy instruments within each policy/program, yet few real life policy instruments are pure examples of government tools as discussed above. (Gornitzka, 1999, p20). Since policy instruments tend to

combine into compound in reality, different policy instruments need to be coordinated to achieve the policy objective. Policy instruments, to give an illustration, are the machines that turn a blueprint into products, and especially the two elements, treasure and organization, are physical by nature. As the supporting component of a policy, as can be seen from the definition of policy, policy instruments should be clearly specified at the issue of policy.

- ***Policy linkage***

Policy linkage measures the extent to which the content of policy is breaking with or continuing the content of other government policies (Gornitzka, 1999, p21). An organization or a group targeted at by a policy, to illustrate, is suspended in a web woven by old policies. New policy according with the content of other policies strengthens the web, while that diverting from other policies undermines the web. The influence of a policy that aims at the system level will not be limited to the interaction between the policy per se and the targeted organization or group; it radiates out across the whole web. This makes comprehensive government planning a vital prerequisite to policy making and policy implementation.

c. Policy implementation

In national level analysis, which focuses on governmental policy processes, there is little need to make priori a sharp distinction between policy formation and implementation (Gornitzka, 1999, p15). That is, when looking at implementation at system level, we will consider comprehensively the policy processes rather than implementation versus formation processes.

Policy implementation is determined by the nature of policy objective: The more a policy departs from the existing behavior and procedures, the more resistance it will encounter when implemented and the more it will be affected by the tendency to transform a reform back towards the established order (Gornitzka, 1999, p18). The degree of success of implementations is highest in cases of policies aiming at mid-level change both in terms of breadth and depth (Gornitzka, 1999, p18). In other words, in fulfilling the policy objective, we search along the coordinate curve for a point where the maximum interest and the minimum resistance meet.

Policy implementation process should be surrounded by special arrangements with respect to policy instruments (Gornitzka, 1999, p21), which might be important to buffer policy implementation against short-term fluctuations in attention. This can be hypothesized to be especially important in case of comprehensive policies (March and Olsen, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999, p21).

In policy implementation with respect to policy linkage, the biggest barriers are former policies, not institutional characteristics per se (Foss Hansen, 1990; Gornitzka, 1999, p21). This is reasonable because the making of a new policy means negation of the old one.

The policy linkage aspect in policy implementation is relevant from a resource dependence perspective on organizational change, because linkage between policy fields pertains to issues of how different types of policy agencies and other environmental actors are connected (Gornitzka, 1999, p21). This aspect is also relevant as far as the neo-institutional perspective is concerned, because it relates to the issue of whether policies are connected to broader trends in society and public policy (Gornitzka, 1999, p22). As is suggested by Olsen, reforms can only succeed if they try to change institutions in ways consistent with long-term trends in society, i.e. success of comprehensive policies is dependent upon policy not going against the “tide” (Olsen, 1989; Gornitzka, 1999, p22).

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Studies of policy implementation showed convincingly that policy outcomes were hardly ever the same as the policy intentions. There should be more modesty and realism in policy-making efforts, yet often observed is an inclination to cling to the “societal makeability” assumption. “Consequently there is a wide, and in many respects widening, gap between politics and political programs on the one side, and the dynamics of public sectors such as higher education on the other” (Maassen & Cloete, 2002, p21). This accentuates the importance of policy implementation. For this reason, in analyzing the effect of the higher education enrollment expansion policy, Chapter Four, applying the theory outlined above, will go through the whole policy process, from policy making to policy implementation.

2.6.2. Status quo of policy study in China

The development of public policy analysis as a field started in China in the late 1980s. At first, the field mainly covered the systematic introduction of the basic concepts, principles, theories and methodology of public policy study and analysis. The system mainly took the achievements in the USA as reference, some US works and teaching materials having found their Chinese version (Xu Xianglin, 2000). Later, some Chinese literature began to be produced, with Yuan Zhenguo pioneering in the field.

With respect to the definition of policy and policy analysis, Yuan Zhenguo defines policy analysis as an applied discipline to study policy (Yuan Zhenguo, 2002). Liu Fuxing defines education policy as the public policy laid down by the government, its institutions and its bureaucrats in order to adjust the social problems and social relationship in the field of education (Liu Fuxing, 2002). Other scholars also give definitions, which can be roughly summarized as: Education policy is 1) the behavior criteria laid down by organizations and groups legally or administratively in charge of education in order to realize educational objectives or fulfill educational tasks for a specific time; 2) the behavior criteria laid down by a political party or the state in order to fulfill the educational tasks for a specific time; 3) a purposeful and organized developmental process, and the basis and criteria for behavior laid down by a political entity, such as political party or government, in order to realize certain educational objectives for a specific time, through coordinating the internal and external relationship concerning education; 4) the administrative criterion laid down by the state and political party in order to realize education objectives; 5) the political measures and the substantiation of the right and interests concerning education. The five definitions as summarized above highlight the education policy as a coercive behavior criterion and basis, which reflect a plan economy social context in which the relationship between policy maker, policy implementer, education institutions and the educated is that of order-and-obedience, with the features of an administrative relationship. In most cases, the position of the state and political party are defined as policy makers, while there is no explicit description about the position and function of the family, the educated person, which are the interest subject of education policy, nor about the school, which is the basic educational organization (Liu Fuxing, 2002). Another point in the definitions that deserves attention is that education policy should be bound to specific times.

To further define education policy, Yuan Zhenguó distinguishes between education policy, education administration and educational law: Education policy is the administrative decision issued by the state's supreme administrative institutions, which is to involve more than two schools. Decisions only valid within one school should be categorized into education administration, which is beyond the scope of education policy. Education law differs from education policy in its strict institution and amendment process and its stability and coerciveness. But some policies, after verification and modification, can be handed over to legislation institutions and formulated into law (Yuan Zhenguó 2002). The definition of education policy as "administrative decision" reveals the coercive quality of policy in a Chinese context in contrast to a coordinating quality in a European context. Therefore, in spite of the distinguishing line drawn between education policy and education law, Chinese education policy in reality often carries with it the coerciveness characteristic of law, yet it does not have the stability and strictness of the law.

The shift of emphasis from policy making to other phases, that is, to policy implementation and policy evaluation, in the international context, is also reflected in Chinese policy study. Take as an example, Yuan Zhenguó describes policy as a process, which is different from decision-making but rather includes decision-making as one of its parts. The process of policy as identified by Yuan Zhenguó includes four stages: policy topic for discussion, policy decision, policy implementation and policy evaluation (Yuan Zhenguó, 2002).

The cause of a problem should be pinned down before determining whether it deserves to be chosen as policy topic for discussion. The problem's range of influence in time and space, its severity and the price to pay for its solution should also be considered (Yuan Zhenguó, 2002).

In the policy decision stage, two aspects come under consideration. The first aspect concerns decision-making models. Two alternative models are often referred to: the rational model and incremental model. The former emphasizes the full command of policy knowledge and information on the side of the policy maker, chooses the optimum policy project after scientific and rational analysis, but, having overlooked the limit upon human perceptibility and the influence from political factors, tends to be unpractical. The later, proposed by Lindblom, the US scholar, suggests that policy-makers do not have sufficient

time, funds and information to control all policy variables so that a new policy should be based on the former policy. In a context where norms and values conflict, the rational model is less preferred than the incremental model. The second aspect under consideration is the actual decision-making process: with multiple alternative drafts, feasibility analysis is done to decide upon the best project. Especially in important policy decision-making situations, two schemes, a feasible one and an infeasible one, should be devised (Yuan Zhenguo, 2002). That is, list all factors that support the policy, on which the feasible scheme is based; and list all the prices that have to be paid for the policy, on which an infeasible scheme is based.

Policy implementation can never completely get rid of policy distortion, which includes policy curtail, magnification, falsification and “short circuit”, etc. One of the tasks of a policy study is to track down the causes of policy distortion and eliminate them. Factors that influence policy implementation include the policy implementer and the targeted group of policy. The influence from policy implementers varies according to the quality of the implementers; that from the targeted group varies according to the location and character of the group, the magnitude of the group, and the extent that the group needs to be adjusted by the policy (Yuan Zhenguo, 2002).

Regarding policy evaluation, seven perspectives are recommended: explicit articulation of the objective, efficiency, effectiveness, adequacy, fairness, responsiveness and adaptability. To evaluate a policy, sometimes the evaluation can be centered on how much the policy objective is achieved rather than on the merit and fault of the policy (Yuan Zhenguo, 2002) Given the peculiarity in China, this is a practical attitude, but in some cases, for example in the case of the 1999 enrollment expansion policy, it may steer away from the focus of conflict, because policy objective, in the first place, as well as other processes, should stand the test of equity.

As an historical summary, Yuan Zhenguo identifies three stages in Chinese policy study: policy interpretation, preliminary independence, and dual culture exchange. At the stage of policy interpretation, there only existed the propaganda and interpretation of policy while the researchers’ own voice was unheard. At the stage of preliminary independence, researchers engage in pre-implementation study and consultation before major decisions. At the stage of dual culture exchange, both policy researchers and policy makers have

come to realize that they belong to two separate culture systems and that their relationship is one of mutual respect, active coordination and exchange (Yuan Zhenguo, 2002).

Despite the influence from Western studies and the effort from the academia, the institution and development in Chinese policy study is still featured by its own political and cultural traditions. First, public policy is commonly regarded as the instrument of the party and government to control the society. Second, public policy study is categorized into the scope of public administration, with the emphasis on how to improve the efficiency of administration and how to make good policy. Third, public policy analysis mainly centers on providing consultation to the government, neglecting the study on policy effect and evaluation (Xu Xianglin, 2000). With the development in theories, evaluation of present policies is confronted with many problems and difficulties mainly as follows: 1) an incomplete policy information system making it difficult to obtain data; 2) evaluation has symbolic rather than substantial significance; 3) comment on the negative side is avoided while the positive effect of the policy is exaggerated (Chen Zhenming, 1999). This imbalanced position of policy analysis has led to the comment that policy analysis is but a frill to cover up political conflicts (Xie Ming, 1999).

In spite of dissatisfaction with respect to policy analysis in the Chinese context, the issue of including policy study into the scope of scientific research has come under the attention of Chinese scholars. There is such notion as to get rid of the “text character” and “all-for-superior character” that have long dominated education policy, and to construct a new scientific concept of education policy (Zhang Letian, 2002).

Both the evolution in policy study and the dissatisfaction with the status quo reflects the endeavor of Chinese policy scholars to pursue academic independence. To gain due independence, Chinese academia as a whole, without the autonomous tradition like its European counterpart, still has a long way to go. For policy scholars whose work is more directly associated with the government and authority, the way is longer.

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By referring to both European and Chinese theories, it can be seen that in an Europe context, policy is interpreted as a hypothesis (Gornitzka, 1999, p14), while in a Chinese context it is a criterion (Liu Fuxing, 2002) and administrative decision (Yuan Zhenguo,

2002), which reflects planned economy in a centralized country. With less heed given to the feedback from the bottom level, it emphasizes the restriction of the superior upon the subordinate.

After the “Reform and Opening”, Western theories have been widely introduced to China and become localized in the Chinese context. The transmission relationship between Chinese policy theory and its Western counterpart helps to trace the origin and appreciate the evolution of Chinese policy theory. It also helps to see that Chinese policy theory, bearing more similarity to than difference from Western theory, is mainly a comprehensive interpretation of the latest Western theories, without forming its own independent theoretical system yet. A comparison reveals that European theory includes more abstract research, penetrating into the basic elements of policy process, as has been achieved by Gornitzka (1999), while Chinese theory remains at the profile level of policy, as has been achieved by Yuan Zhenguo (2002). It also reveals that Chinese theoretical achievements are still within the frame of Western theories.

2.6.3. State-higher education relationship

Policy can maintain, adjust or change the social context; the social context, in turn, can facilitate, support or hinder a policy. The difference between China and Europe not only lies in the progression in policy study, but is also reflected in the evolution in the state-higher education relationship, with China heavily featured with the traditional style, while Europe has already gone through decades of reform. In order to understand higher education policy, and to see the relevance of European theory to the Chinese context, there is need to briefly look into the state-higher education relationship in Europe and in China.

A common theme in the dramatic restructuring of higher education throughout much of the world over the past few decades has been a shift in the relationships between higher education institutions and the state (Reed et al, 2002; Maassen, 2003). Already in the 1960s reference has been made in the USA to “The Management Revolution in Higher Education” (Bourke and Brooks; 1966, Keller; 1983, Maassen, 2003). Throughout the 1980s, higher education in countries in Western Europe and some other areas entered the ‘era’ of management-driven higher education (Maassen, 2003) and theories had been coming forth.

In the late 1980s, steering models, namely, state control and state-supervision, were introduced by Van Vaught, which are conceptually mutually exclusive (Van Vaught, 1989; Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000). Meanwhile, state models were introduced by Olsen, namely, the sovereign state, the institutional state, the segmented state and the market state (Olsen 1988; Maassen, 2003). These steering and state models reflect the changes of the 1980s with respect to higher education, and represent the Janis-head character of state governance during the transition period in which new governance approaches were introduced without the old having been abolished completely (Maassen, 2003).

In the reform of the governance relationship between the state and higher education, two waves are identified, with the first wave, which took place in the 1980s and early 1990s, being ideologically driven, and the second wave, which roughly started in the mid-1990s, being more pragmatic. In the first wave, four alternative approaches to governance, according to Peters, emerged as alternatives to the traditional governance model, namely, governance through applying market mechanism, through increased participation, through more flexibility, or through deregulation. In comparison with Van Vaught's and Olsen's conceptualizations, in which there was not yet the clear recognition that the traditional model was "to be left behind", Peters' governance models, more detailed and empirically better informed, are alternatives to the traditional governance approach. In the second wave, development combines further "repair work" of the traditional model with attempts to deal with some of the flaws of the ideological reforms. And the emphasis seems to have shifted from promoting the use of "markets" in public sector governance to measuring the performance and improving the accountability of public sector institutions (Maassen, 2003).

While in the landscape of Europe and some other places it can be concluded that the transition period has in many ways reached its final stage (Cloete, Maassen & Muller, 2004), Chinese higher education, in spite of the education reform through the 1990s, still bears features of what was described as the traditional model: "control by legislation backed up by hierarchical central government administrative and executive powers with respect to administrative and academic structures, access, student affairs, funding, as well as the appointment of senior members of staff" (Cloete, Maassen & Muller, 2004). Chinese higher education activities have been under the central control of the government.

Different types of higher education institutions are placed under governments at different levels, forming a top-down hierarchical structure. All higher education activities are supposed to follow the guidelines of the state and the concerned departments, whether it be setting up schools, funding, scientific research, enrollment plan, curricula, infrastructure or general affairs. The government manages and influences institutional affairs through both administrative orders and policy, but when it comes to important decisions, the governments at various levels would examine and approve on a case-by-case basis according to the government policy.

In contrast to the conservative higher education system, the Enrollment expansion policy is radical and market-oriented. Within a rigid framework of higher education, which is the remainder of planned economy, the implementation of a policy with the objective of market economy will most probably lead to confusion in thoughts and behavior. As is pointed out, using governance arrangements without having a framework within which to use them, will almost inevitably lead to contradictions, inconsistencies, and incompatibilities of measures, mechanisms, and instruments used (Cloete, Maassen & Muller, 2004).

2.7. Summary

As a grand secular shift, mass higher education prevails in most countries in the world. This transition from elite to mass higher education is all dimensional, changing higher education in function, structure, standard, as well as in size. The issue of mass higher education is comprehensive. And in the Chinese context, it turns out to be exceptionally complex because of historical, political and social reasons. The discussion of the issue in the Chinese context invariably involves multiple aspects within the field of education as well as outside the field. Accordingly, sections in this chapter have been devoted to aspects such as mass higher education, quality and equality in higher education, populace education in rural China, policy analysis, government and higher education relationship.

This chapter started with definition of mass higher education by European and American scholars, after which it turned to the Chinese context. In response to this general trend, Chinese literature has been developed to examine the domestic situation, identifying the

premature feature in Chinese mass higher education and emphasizing the important role of government policy.

Whether by scholars of other countries or of China, mass higher education is interpreted as an activity widely participated by youth of the whole society rather than a privilege accessible only to a certain social group. Because of its great importance to both society and individual, higher education has increasingly become the center of the political issue of equal opportunity. While the social responsibility of higher education institutions is more likely to be expressed in terms of their duty to meet the need of the disadvantaged groups, in China it is justified for higher education to be oriented to equal access to rural youth and adopt preferential policy favoring rural areas. Since equal opportunity involves the whole process of higher education--- at the starting point, in the process and at the end-point--- quality in higher education for rural youth has become another important concern in addition to equality.

The close relationship between rural China and education had been defined as early as over seventy years ago, and already established by scholars is the conclusion that progress in China was determined by the progress in rural areas, and that the solution to rural problems lay in education, and in mass higher education at the present stage. But Chinese education, higher education in particular, instead of acting a savior to rural China, had repeatedly fallen a victim to political powers until it becomes “impoverished, frustrated, dilapidated” (Coombe, 1991, refer to Maassen & Cloete, 2002, p15). The dominant position of the government and the coercive character of government policy in educational affairs consequently highlight policy study. It is for this reason that this study approaches the issue of mass higher education in relation to rural China development and to equal opportunity for rural youth from the perspective of policy analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

3.1. Introduction

In the fall of 2003, the registration season for newly enrolled students, Chinese higher education system was confronted with severe public questioning, which revolved around issues such as who should pay, how much should be paid, how should the tuition be used in the service of the students as customers. This debate was further extended to issues beyond finance: the legitimacy of the existing education structure, the restriction upon the private education sector, the distribution of public wealth, the treatment inflicted upon peasants, etc. Before long, the problem with respect to criteria for student selection was also included into the debate. The public discussion echoed the assumption made thirty years ago by Trow (1973, p4-5): “Everywhere the proportions from the upper and middle classes are significantly higher than from the working classes and farmers...These differences in access to higher education, which are not reduced but rather increased during the early stages of the expansion, become a sharp political issue in the context of democratic and egalitarian values...”

Tuition charge and other problems that came along with higher education growth did provoke in the public a sense of client attitude, demanding to know how the tuition is expended and what is provided to the students in return for the tuition. More important, it did provoke a sense of citizenship, demanding to participate in the distribution and management of public wealth. While this awakening is a blessing for the cultivation of a democratic society, it is necessary to examine whether the progress towards mass higher education had indeed resulted in the inequality in opportunity upon which the public criticism was built. One of the intentions of this chapter is to address this question.

The investigation will be done by presenting a group of comparisons made between two categories of data, with one reflecting the urban community, the other reflecting the rural community. The investigation in this chapter goes in two dimensions. The first dimension, through comparisons, looks into differences 1) in participation in higher education between urban and rural students; 2) in income between urban and rural residents; 3) in student selection criteria between metropolitan areas and the rest of the country; 4) in the

geographical distribution of higher education resources between metropolitan areas and the rest of the country; 5) in basic education between rural and urban areas; 6) in the education level between urban and rural residents. The second dimension aims at tracking down the reasons that bring about the phenomena, more important, to reveal the underlying meaning of the phenomena that might imply the future evolution. But as a prelude to data presentation, there is the need to introduce the political, social and economic background of rural and urban China in order to render more meaningful the figures listed afterwards.

The basic data are in many cases presented in the form of tables. These are included in the thesis as Appendix 1.

3.2. Background Information

The background introduction will cover factors that have influenced the development of Chinese higher education, such as the division of administrative districts and regions, the tax system, the education hierarchy, the urban-rural dual residence register system, the family planning policy, etc. There is also a need to briefly review the history of Chinese higher education prior to the year 1999, which will hopefully facilitate the appreciation of what has happened after the introduction of the enrollment expansion policy.

3.2.1. The socio-economic background of rural and urban China

a. Urban-rural dual residence register system

Of the many indexes of rural and urban separation, residence registration used to be the most important. From the mid 1950s, Chinese government, in order to quickly realize industrialization, had concentrated state investment on industrial expansion and urban construction. With agriculture lagging behind, more peasants migrated to urban areas, which entailed problems in food supply, transportation, housing, etc. The state began to limit the influx, the year 1958 as the divide, separating city and village residents into two social communities that were unequal in right, duty and social welfare. Up till today, most peasants still cannot freely choose their residence place, employment and status. Worse

still, decades of partition between urban and rural areas have led to an imbalance in economy, culture and education (Li Ruojian, 2001). The construction policy that favors urban areas and the fiscal and education policies that rid the central and provincial governments of their responsibility for basic education in rural areas, more than anything else, have retarded economic development and impoverished education resources in rural areas.

b. Administrative division and tax system

The Chinese administration structure consists of five levels: the central government, provincial government, district/municipality government, county government, *zhen* (meaning “small town”) and *xiang* (a collection of several natural villages) government, with the county government and *xiang/zhen* government directly controlling rural areas. Governments at all levels are framed in a way corresponding to the central government. For a long time, different levels of government directly managed enterprises and schools. The central government had its own enterprises and schools directly under it, while provincial governments had theirs at the provincial level. Since the late 1980s, a complete tax system has been gradually established. The central government has its independent tax collection system that goes vertically from the top to the bottom, controlling 60% of the total revenue. In a parallel way, local governments have local tax collection institutions. The control capacity and revenue lessen with the rank of the government nearing the grass roots. Therefore, the government at a lower order has much less financial capacity than the one at a higher order.

c. The structure of Chinese education

With respect to structure, the Chinese education system is subordinate to the administrative system, the schools being accessorial institutions of the government at different levels. To illustrate this, the top-rank universities are directly under the Ministry of Education, with president appointment and fund allocation completely in the hand of the Ministry. Provinces and municipalities also have local higher education institutions, which are in the same way completely controlled by the local governments. It is also true of secondary education. In cities, top-rank high schools are under the Education Bureau of the municipal government and average high schools under the Education Bureau of the

district government, which is administratively lower in rank. In rural areas, secondary and primary schools are managed by *xiang/zhen* governments or villages. In order to keep a competitive edge in some aspects, the higher education system has adopted an imbalanced policy, by which investments are concentrated in a limited number of institutions as a means to counteract fund and resource deficiency. Thus, key institutions are created at different levels, a hierarchization that extends to secondary, even primary education. The negative effects of this policy, which are increasingly serious, are the creation of great differences between institutions with respect to condition and provision. The higher the institution is positioned in the hierarchy, the more attention, investment and funds are given to it. The nearer the government to the bottom, the smaller its economic and administrative capacity and its paying ability. And it is the government at the bottom that is in charge of the funding of basic education.

d. Education level

By the end of the twentieth century, among Chinese laborers engaged in farming, forestry, stock raising, there were over a hundred million illiterate or semiliterate (22.7% of the rural population); and over two hundred million with only primary school education (45.5%). In contrast to developed countries, where the ratio of agriculture technician to farming population is 1:100, the figure in China is 1:1200, meaning less than one technician on every ten thousand *mu* (one *mu* equals to 1/15 of a hectare) of cultivated land. According to the estimation in 1995, in rural industrial enterprises, employees with advanced and middle level technical titles made up only 1.5% of the total staff (Yuan Guilin, 2002). In addition to this, the residence register and salary security system also worsen the situation. 80.8% of the higher education institution graduates seek employment in big or middle-sized cities; 15.2% in counties; only 4% in villages (Ye Chunsheng, 2001).

As a result of high input, low output, scarce land and limited demand for farm products, agriculture alone can hardly solve rural problems. When as many as 120 million peasants influx into the city aimlessly to seek employment, most of them can only be engaged in hard, manual work. *Southern Weekend* carried out an investigation in the area around Guangzhou City where urban economy thrives, revealing that most female migrant workers are positioned on the assembly line in labor compact industries. Most of those

between age 15 to 30 have an education level of junior high, amounting to 68.3%; those with primary education, 20.4%; illiterate, 1.1%; senior high level, 10.2% (Nan Xianghong, 2003).

e. Family planning policy

China began to adopt family planning policy in the 1970s, and the implementation of the policy became so strict in the city since the 1980s that violation of the policy may lead to disemployment. In rural areas, on the other hand, because of the backward production mode and a void of social welfare system, peasants have to fall back on more children to satisfy the need of farming work and old-age provision. Especially, the concerned institutions in rural areas often amerce rather than control violators of the policy, which has actually encouraged population production. As a result, rural families tend to have more than two children, a tendency increasingly obvious in backward areas. Consequently, rural youths tend to take a much larger proportion in rural population than do urban youth in urban population.

3.2.2. Evolution in higher education before the enrollment expansion

In 1952, the Chinese higher education system underwent an academic adjustment. In order to reinforce development in industry, a great number of colleges specialized in manufacturing were established. Meanwhile many comprehensive universities and human arts subjects were closed down, and all church-run and private universities were either taken over or terminated for ideological reasons. With politics given priority, party affair leaders, who handle important affairs in higher education institutions, were appointed and installed at every level of the institutions. Education had gradually become subordinated to politics, with education activities completely under the influence of political movement. In 1956, the national enrollment was 185 thousand, an 88.8% increase from 1955; in 1957, “the Anti-right Movement” witnessed a decrease to 106 thousand. In 1958, the whole of China was indulged into a “Great Leap Forward” in industrial and agricultural production as well as in other fields, which soon turned out to be a man-made calamity. As a response to the political call, the education sector pronounced its plan to realize universal higher education in 15 years. The number of regular higher education institutions rose from 229 in 1957 to 1289 in 1960. For a couple of years, students enrolled to higher education institutions exceeded graduates from regular senior high schools. In 1960, the enrollment

scale was 323 thousand. The 15-year plan soon had to be modified, when in 1961 the enrollment decreased to 169 thousand, and in 1962 to 107 thousand. 68% of the higher education sector had to be closed down and great number of students discontinued their study. Even after the destruction of this rash expansion-shrink process, Chinese education still had several fluctuations to undergo, bearing an undulating feature (*Chinese Stat. Yearbook* (1991-1999); *Chinese Education Stat. Yearbook* (1990-1999); Xie Zuoxu, 1999; Yang Dongping, 2003; Huang Zhongjing, 2000; Huang Zhongjing, 2001). This randomness reflects the politicization of higher education. When the gravest disaster for Chinese higher education came with “the Great Cultural Revolution”, the academia was the first to be attacked and enrollment came to a halt. According to the statistics of 1970, the whole student body on campus was 48 thousand, of which 42 thousand were newly admitted that very year (*Chinese Education Yearbook*, 1949-1981). After 1978, Chinese higher education gradually returned to its normal path. As a result of continual adjustments in education policy, the system slowly increased in scale. In 1989, the system suffered another setback. New enrollments, especially in the humanities and basic social sciences, were drastically cut, with employment difficulties for graduates in these fields providing a useful excuse, until the year 1992 witnessed the surge of enrollment growth, as an increasing number of self-paying students were enrolled (Hayhoe, 1996, p126, p251). By 1997, the system had an overall scale of 6.08 million students on campus. The enrollment to all types of tertiary education institutions resulted in a participation rate of 8.4% (Xie Zuoxu, 1999). With respect to funding, the system had been gradually transferred from free education, low tuition to high tuition, until the tuition finally exceeds the average annual income of Chinese citizens.

3. 3. The General Situation after the Enrollment Expansion

3. 3. 1. An overview of the status quo

From the end of the 1970s to the late 1990s, Chinese higher education, except for the period immediately after 1989, had been expanding at more or less the same pace as the development in economy, with an average yearly increase rate of 8.5% (*Chinese Stat. Yearbook* (1991-1999); *Chinese Women Stat. Materials* (1949-1989)). In 1978 the overall student body in both regular higher education institutions and adult higher education

institutions made up 1.9% of the total youth population aging from year 18 to 21, while in 1997 this figure had risen to 8.4%. Since the 1999 system expansion, with a successive yearly expansion rate of 47%, 38% and 13.3%, the system has increased nearly ten million places to accommodate youth eager for tertiary education (*Beijing Youth*, 2002). In 2003, higher education student body exceeded 19 million, ranking the first in the world. The enrollment rate to both regular and adult institutions reached 17%. In the past six years from 1998 to 2003, the number of students has increased to nearly as much as three times that before the expansion. In Hebei Province where the author resides, to take as an example, the student number is nearly four times that before the expansion.

Nearly six years have elapsed since the enrollment expansion policy was initiated. How much has the expansion stirred rural China, where the biggest disadvantaged group inhabits in great employment pressure and survival crisis? To what extent does the rural youth participate in the mass higher education process? In order to examine this, this section of data presentation is arranged in three steps: general national statistics concerning higher education system as a whole; statistics concerning the top of the higher education hierarchy; statistics concerning the provincial and municipal level. With this, it is hoped that a from-general-to-detailed picture could be formed.

3.3.2 Rural-urban comparison

In the data presentation, official statistics and those published by experts are cited. In addition, the author did some small-scale sampling, which intends to attain more details and reflect local differences.

a. National statistics on higher education applicants and enrollment

Table 3.1 shows China's demographic structure from 1999 to 2001, and Table 3.2 shows the higher education applicant structure from 1997 to 2002. From the tables three trends can be seen:

- Increased urbanization of the rural population.
- The enrollment figure in 1998 tends to suggest that urban applicants are more likely to be enrolled than rural students; of the rural applicants who have finally found their way into the higher education system, a considerable proportion were high

school graduates of past years.

- At the very beginning of the expansion, urban students, rather than rural students were more motivated in their application for higher education enrollment.

But as is shown in Table 3.2, in 2002, the rural applicant proportion manifested a pickup. In concert to this, according to a recent report, the rural-urban registered student proportion stroke a balance for the first time in 2003, and in 2004, rural higher education applicants amounted to 55% of the total number of applicants (*Xinhua News*, 2004). This suggests that there are positive effects of the enrollment expansion policy with respect to rural participation in higher education.

But neither the 50 to 50 percent rural-urban enrollment rate nor the 55% rural applicant proportion is yet in accordance with the great proportion of the rural population in China. In order that the proportion of rural youth admitted to higher education can ultimately match the proportion of the rural population, to be exact, the proportion of the rural school-age youth, more follow-up efforts are needed. In fact, because of the complexity of the management system and differences in statistical standards, there often exist conflicts in figures and statistics, such as the ratio of the rural-urban population or the balance between rural-urban student bodies. In order to further interpret the situation, some notes are needed with respect to the rural-urban boundary.

The division of Chinese rural and urban areas is based on the jurisdiction of city and *zhen*, more than on the profession of the residents. The administrative sphere of cities and *zhens* (meaning “small towns”) are invariably larger than their visual landscape, including considerable rural areas and farming population. In small towns, especially, most residents are peasants, but in demographic statistics, they are defined as townspeople (Xu Xueqiang et al., 2000). Therefore, the actually peasant population should be greater than is reflected by the demographic statistics. When it comes to the school age group, the body of the rural youth tends to make up a larger proportion of the total rural population than the body of urban youth in the total urban population, as a result of the family planning policy, as has been explained above. In this case, it lacks integration and objectivity to observe the rural-urban student ratio with the national rural-urban resident ratio as the only frame of reference.

This inaccuracy not only exists in the demographical statistics, but also in enrollment statistics. According to the director of the Department of Development and Planning of the Ministry of Education, in the year 2003, 4.28 million students were admitted to the higher education system, while 460 thousand, or 10.75% of the students did not register (Zheng Caho, 2004). There is no further indication as to the source of the students who failed to register. Given the uncertain factors in the statistics on the overall status quo of Chinese higher education, it is necessary to explore this in details from the top to the bottom, in order to find out the distribution of rural students in this academic pyramid.

b. Statistics on the top institutions in metropolitans

Chinese Youth Daily of November 26, 1999 published part of a questionnaire on Chinese higher education, which revealed that at the time the expansion was started, there was an obvious low rural student proportion in the top universities. The questionnaire was distributed in 11 universities that head Chinese higher education system, all of which are located in Beijing. The result of the investigation showed that 27.7% of the students were from Beijing; 30.3% from other big or medium sized cities; 24.1% from small cities or *zhens* (small towns); 17.7% from villages. If students from counties and *zhens* are combined with those from villages to form into one group that is defined as “rural students”, then the proportion of rural students was 41.8%.

If the focus of investigation moves further upward to the top of the pyramid, a more striking rural-urban difference will be revealed. Table 3.3 shows the proportional change of rural-urban student numbers in Quinghua University, the elite of the elites of all Chinese science universities, and in Beijing University, the elite of the elites of all Chinese liberal arts universities. In the two academies, in spite of some fluctuations, there is a clear and definite trend: the proportion of rural students is decreasing. After the expansion the decrease is even more obvious.

When the difference in opportunity for rural and urban youth to gain access to Qinghua and Beijing University, the two “ivory towers”, is quantified, inequality in higher education is more highlighted: Of the 5080 students enrolled to the two universities in 1999, only 902 students came from rural areas, implying a 17.8% proportion of the total enrollment. If the numbers of senior high school graduates in rural and urban areas are

taken respectively as a basis of reference, the difference in opportunity to enter the two institutions is 7.7 times; if rural and urban populations are taken respectively as a basis of reference, the difference is 10.3 times (Zhang Yulin, 2003).

A class advisor who works in a famous university in Beijing published an article on the Internet discussing the effects of the “high tuition charge” policy, which also confirms the trend of the decreasing rural student proportion in top universities. Based on practical observation and investigation, the advisor concluded that urban students are taking an increasingly greater proportion. In some places urban students constitute a proportion of 70 to 80 percent, just inversely proportionate to the demographic structure (Turenymensheng, 2004).

As another confirmation, the author obtained figures from the Science and Technology University of Tianjin, located in Tianjin City, one of China’s major metropolitan areas adjacent to Beijing. The 135 students are from the Department of Biological Engineering and the Department of Food Engineering, Grade 2001 and 2002. 91 students come from the city, 15 from county or *zhen*, and 29 from the village. Students from the village take a proportion of 21.48%. If students from county and *zhen* are also categorized as rural students, then the proportion of rural students is 32.6%.

c. Statistics at the provincial and municipal level

A survey carried out in Wuhan District on the eve of the expansion can be cited to illustrate the already existing imbalance between Beijing and the rest of the country by 1999. The questionnaire distribution basically covered all categories of students by sampling 20 classes. The result of the investigation showed that of the 559 students, 35.9% came from provincial capitals, open coastal cities or medium sized cities; 24.9% from small towns (including counties and *zhens*); 39.2% from the countryside (Cheng Sencheng, 1999). If county, *xiang* and *zhen* are categorized as rural areas, rural students made a 64.1 percentage (Li Junfu, 2003).

With the purpose of exploring at the provincial level, the author’s personal effort is mainly within Hebei Province, because it is where the author resides and detailed data about its higher education system is more accessible.

Hebei Province is where Beijing and Tianjin, the two above-mentioned metropolitans, are located. Geographically, Hebei is adjacent to the two big cities, but administratively, lower in order. With the decrease in administrative rank, the provincial higher education system accommodates a greater proportion of rural students than the famous institutions do at the metropolitan level. When there is no category in the types of schools to which the students are admitted, the province enrolled 66% of its students from rural areas, forming a contrast to the 41.8% proportion in the famous universities in Beijing. The enrollment of rural students, as is shown in Table 3.4, demonstrates a decrease at the beginning of the expansion, but later began to rise.

Hebei Province has a population of nearly 80 million, a relatively underdeveloped economy and a high rural population proportion. It is natural that the proportion of rural students admitted to higher education is comparatively high. If further effort is followed up to examine the provincial pyramid of higher education, for example, if the institutions within the province are categorized, or if specialties within the same institution are closely looked at, it is possible to obtain more detailed information as to the whereabouts of the rural student majority. With this purpose, the following samples are presented and discussed.

Sample 1. Hebei Science and Engineering University

In Table 3.5 it can be seen that 1) within the Chemical Engineering and Techniques Major in the Department of Chemical Engineering, the rural student proportion shows a yearly increase. 2) in traditional majors such as Metallurgy or Chemistry, rural students rather than urban students form a high proportion, which is consistent with the demographic structure of the province. But in the program of International Finance and Trade, which has an optimistic prospect of employment and development, rural students only take a proportion of 38.46%. The situation in this university basically reflects the overall condition of rural students in higher education institutions. That is, the number of rural students, in general, is proportionately reversed to the popularity, investment return and prospect for future development of the university and program.

Sample 2. The Medical University of Hebei Province

Table 3.6 yields information as follows: 1) the number of rural students in Hebei Medical

University, which is a relatively old, rather popular institution, is largely lower than in the Metallurgy and Chemical Engineering University; 2) the Major of Advanced Nurse, whose graduates will be located at the bottom of the medical hierarchy, enrolls a proportion of rural students as high as 84.6%. A similar case is the program of Radiography, a newly established Major, which not only has a gradually declining market demand, but also has potential radioactive danger. The number of rural students in the Major has greatly increased within three years, from 33.3 to 85.7%.

Sample 3. The University of Hebei Province

The University of Hebei Province is a comprehensive university, dominant in scale in the provincial higher education system, with a student body of above 10 thousand. Table 3.7 reflects the enrollment in the Department of Chemistry in the year 2002 and 2003. The rural student proportion has increased from 57.85% in 2002 to 65.92% in 2003. And also, for the 2003 enrollment, 46.63% of the rural students are middle school graduates of the past years, greater than its equivalent from urban areas, which figures at 42.39%. As a control group, a class from the Department of Law in the same university is chosen. The law class, which was enrolled in the year 1999 (graduated in 2003), consists of altogether 50 students, 8 of which are from rural areas, making a proportion of 16%.

The distribution of rural students in the Department of Chemistry and the class of the Law Department tends to suggest the following: 1) more rural students are entering higher education; 2) rural students tend to spend longer time at the stage of secondary education, which means higher costs for their families; 3) specialties more directly associated to power and high return tend to accommodate less rural students than specialties less directly associated to power and high return.

Sample 5. The College of Shijiazhuang City

The College of Shijiazhuang City is a 3-year junior college under the Municipal Bureau of Education, whose graduates mainly engage in primary and junior middle school teaching. From 2000 to 2003, its student body has increased from 2618 to 3523, and its rural student proportion is slightly over 70%.

Sample 6. Hua-an Professional College of Shijiazhuang City

In order for the sampling to gain integration, Hua-an Professional College of Shijiazhuang

City, a non-governmental collage, is included. The school is oriented to the training of medical and nursing workers for rural areas. The student body on campus is 3140, including 2878 tertiary level students, with the rest at the level of technical secondary school. Rural students make up 87% of the total.

According to the statistics published in *Non-governmental Education Research*, of the total student body on the campus of non-governmental tertiary education institutions, 60-80% is from rural areas. Of those from urban areas, a considerable proportion is from low-income families (Liu Lili, 2002). Non-governmental colleges, such as the above-mentioned, are just a complement of the public sector. They mainly recruit among those who cannot make into the universities or colleges at state or provincial level. Their main revenue comes from student tuition and bank loan. Their tuition fees are on the whole in accordance with the local level of resident income and economy, and their enrollment requirements are more consistent with the basic education level in rural areas.

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From the overview provided by the above reports and samples, the following conclusion can be drawn: At the very beginning of the expansion, urban students, rather than rural students, were more motivated in their application for higher education entrance and more advantageous in enrollment, but later there was a pickup in both rural applicants and enrollment, which indicates more hope for rural youth. Within the higher education hierarchy, however, the rural student proportion tends to decline yearly at the top and enroll at the bottom, most of all in junior colleges. Geographically, rural student enrollment tends to occur in institutions located in non-metropolitan areas. With respect to the popularity and investment return of an institution or a specialization, the rural student proportion tends to manifest regression, while with respect to finance, rural students tend to consume more family capital before they enter higher education.

The data presented above confirm Trow's statement that the proportions of students from the upper and middle classes entering higher education are significantly higher than from the working classes and farmers, and these differences in access to higher education are not reduced but rather increased during the early stages of the expansion (Trow, 1973, p 4-5). What Trow had summarized is the general pattern of higher education access differences. The particulars in the differences vary from country to country. In the case of

China as a whole, the proportion of rural students on higher education campus is beginning to pickup, yet it still cannot match with the component of the whole population. What is more, rural students tend to be pushed to the bottom of the higher education hierarchy. The inequality in higher education opportunity between rural and urban students invariably leads the researchers to track down the underlying reasons and the consequences if these differences persist.

3.4. Analysis

The reason that rural students have not obtained due benefit from the enrollment expansion policy may be found among the following factors: 1) Imbalanced geographic resource distribution and unfair recruitment criteria; 2) Deficient higher education funding and exorbitant tuition; 3) Weak basic education. These factors will be discussed in the following sections.

3.4.1. Imbalanced geographic resource distribution unfair recruitment criteria

Because of historical reasons, most famous key institutions are concentrated in the big cities that accommodate less than 10% of the whole population. Municipalities directly under the Central Government and provincial capitals, which make up only 5% of all the cities in the country, host 55% of the 1051 regular higher education institutions of the country, with 95% of the cities and counties to share the remaining 45%. Of the 72 higher education institutions directly under the Ministry of Education, 50 are located in the five major metropolitans: Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Xiaan and Nanjing (Huang Honghong, 2003) The teaching and research in famous universities are guaranteed by large amount of funds directly allocated by the Central Government. Take as an example the annually allocated funds, Qinghua and Beijing University each gets from the Ministry of Education: 1.8 billion *yuan* (approximately US\$ 216 million).

In contrast to the immense state fund granted to these famous universities, a large enrollment quota has been allocated to the cities that host these famous universities. Applicants in other districts have to share a small enrollment quota, making the admission requirements much higher for students outside these big cities. As a result, while the

national age group enrollment rate has just reached 15%, the rate in Beijing is already 52%. The figure in other big cities is also around 50%. As a contrast, in the national unified enrollment for regular institutions in 2003, the actually enrolled number of students in Beijing District amounted to 60359, while Hebei Province enrolled 203.8 thousand (*Beijing Youth Daily*, 2003) (Beijing Population: 11.488 million; Hebei Population: nearly 70 million). As another contrast, in the year 2000, Beijing University recruited 513 students from Beijing where 1% of the national population resides, while from Sichuan Province, whose population is nearing 100 million with around 60 million peasants, it recruited 97. In 2003, the Ministry of Education decided to give more autonomy to higher education and permitted 22 key institutions to enroll students independently. These institutions strictly confined their student selection in order to guarantee quality. The Chinese University of Politics and Law limited its recruitment to key middle schools of above provincial level; Qinghua University and Beijing University further limited their recruitment to just a few middle schools (*Chinese Youth Daily*, 2003). These key middle schools almost invariably are located in metropolitan areas. This initial step to higher education autonomy hardly benefits rural students at all. Other famous universities in the Southeast, the most developed area in China, bear the same tendency: Dongnan University planned to recruit 4000 students from across the country, with 2000 positions open to students from Jiangsu Province, its host province. The plan also allocated 350 positions in the junior college programs, all of them popular, to students from Jiangsu Province. Table 3.8 shows the biased recruitment by some famous universities. All the universities listed in the table are directly under the Ministry of Education, almost completely funded by the Central Government. Their host places not only get one third or half of their enrollment quota, but also take advantage with respect to programs and subjects choice.

Consequently, while the enrollment is allegedly unified nationally, there are the great differences in the recruitment standards. Take Beijing University as an example, in 2000 the minimum required score for science students from Beijing was 590, while for students from Sichuan it was 640. As another example, Table 3.9 lists the different minimum requirements (in 1999) laid down respectively for students from Beijing and for students from Hubei, Hunan, and Guizhou Province (whose average GDP in 1998 was 2323 *yuan*; that of Beijing was 18 thousand *yuan*, 7.75 times of Guizhou) (Li Wensheng, 2002).

In this unbalanced picture, in which big cities enjoy developed higher education, some districts in the Mid and West part of China, where hundreds of millions of people live, boast no key university with direct Central Government funding. The average regular higher education institutions at a lower level, in more or less the same way, concentrates on the regional central municipalities, with enrollment quota distributed in a way biased toward the local urban center. It thus can be deduced that the enrollment rate in rural areas has contributed trivially to the national enrollment rate. On the whole, the larger the rural population and the less developed the economy, the higher the requirements for higher education entrance. The gap in requirements for students from different districts promotes corruption. Many students in other districts who should have flunked can breeze into key universities once they are registered as permanent Beijing residents. The basis for obtaining Beijing permanent residence for the above mentioned purpose is either money or power.

Students in rural areas, where basic education conditions are poor and information is lacking, have to take more effort or be more talented in order to perform as academically excellent as urban students. This means with the same examination scores rural students promise more potential to develop and to repay the society in the future. But even with better examination scores, rural students tend to be hindered in higher education entrance.

3.4.2. Deficient higher education funding and exorbitant tuition

In 2002, Shanghai Education and Science Institution published an article in which it was reported that there were three synchronous increases: 1998 to 2002, student size on campus had increased 2.1 times; total input 2.14 times; expense per student 1.14 times. But of the total input, only slightly over half was from the governments at different levels, with the rest coming from other sources. From Table 3.10 it can be seen that in 2001, tuition and fees collected from students had increased to 29.87 billion *yuan* from 7.31 billion *yuan* in 1998, making an increase of 4.1 times. The great contribution that student parents have made to the expansion is clearly evidenced. From 1993 to 2002, the percentage of the GDP invested in the state financial education budget had increased from 2.76% to 3.41%, but when this increase is contrasted with currency inflation and student body expansion, the great funding difficulty in the process of the expansion becomes explicit.

a. Deficiency of government expense on education

According to *World Bank Development Report*, education expense made up 2.5% of the government budget in 1992. In 1993 and 1994, the figure fell to under 2%, far below 6%, the standard recommended by the UN. And the public education fund per capita is US\$ 14.26, far below US\$ 1000, the public education fund per capita in most developed countries. According to the estimate of an official from the UN, the Chinese government covers only 53% of the school expense, transferring the rest to students (Xu Xiao, 2004). As is shown in Table 3.11, recent years have witnessed a yearly increase in investment in education by governments at various levels. But by and large, the increase of public financial investment in higher education much lags behind the increase of GDP. For example, in 2001, the increase in economy was 7.3%, while the increased investment in education was much lower. So far, the investment in education still has not reached 4% of GDP, as had been promised by the government ten years ago (Zhou Ji, 2004).

According to the director-general of a provincial education department, the student body in 2002 had doubled as compared with that in 1999. The three-year expansion, from 1999 to 2001, should have entailed an investment of 166 billion *yuan* in regular higher education institutes, but the actual investment is 80 billion, of which only 20 billion is fiscal input (Zhang Dexiang, 2002).

b. Incapability of peasants to pay high tuition

So far, the yearly fee for each student has increased from 2000 *yuan* before the expansion to nearly 5000 *yuan*. To cite as examples: in 2001, the yearly fee for newly admitted students in Qinghua University was 4800 *yuan*; in Shanghai, 5000 for regular universities and 5000 to 7500 for vocational colleges; non-governmental institutions are relatively flexible, depending on the market value; institutions jointly run by Chinese and foreign parties charge the highest tuition, ranging from 9800 to 15000 *yuan* (Li Wensheng, 2002). If other countries are taken as reference of comparison, it is not difficult to see how relatively high the tuition is. The comparison in average yearly income is a brief and simple illustration. The US average yearly income is 20 thousand dollars while the yearly average governable fund for Chinese peasants is in fact less than 2 thousand *yuan*

(because a considerable part of peasants' income is income in kind, which is not marketable). That is, a US citizen works half a year to support a student, while a Chinese peasant works about 13 year to do the same (Zhen Duo, 2003). Table 3.12 lists Chinese citizens' income and higher education tuition fees for comparison.

A very important basis of the cost sharing is Chinese citizens' bank deposit that amounted to several thousand of billions of *yuan*. But the following data can give a more sober picture. By the end of February 2003, Chinese citizen bank deposits had reached 10 thousand billion *yuan*. This means that the average bank deposit is 7 thousand *yuan*, which equals to the yearly income of a townsman. Given that the average yearly income for rural people is lower than town people (2400 *yuan*), and given that 80% of the population occupies only 20% of the wealth in the society, according to the general distribution rule, the average occupation of social wealth by peasants will be much lower (Chi Zhiguang, 2003)

Concerning the problem of the income gap in China, World Bank Report pointed out in 1997 that at the early stage of the 1980s, the gini coefficient was 0.28, in 1995, 0.38, and at the end of the 1990s, 0.458 (Chinese Sociological Academy, 2004). According to a report by the Economic Research Institute of Chinese Social Science Academy, the income difference between rural and urban areas is continuously increasing, with the rural-urban income rate having been increased from 2.8 in 1995 to 3.1 in 2002. But this figure still cannot accurately reflect the rural-urban difference. Town citizens are entitled to various subsidies such as free medical care, primary and secondary education financial subsidies, old-age pension, relief to secure minimum life standards, etc. These non-monetary subsidies are not accessible to peasants, who, on the contrary, for example, have to raise funds for the basic education of their children. If these non-monetary factors are taken into consideration, the rural-urban income difference in China may be as high as 4 to 6 times, ranking among the highest in the world (Zhao Xiaohui & Wei Wu, 2004). According to reports, in 2000, in the rural areas of Anhui Province, a major agriculture province, 18 thousand families found it difficult to support their children to rise to higher education, and about 3 thousand poor students gave up higher education after they were admitted (*People's Daily*, 2000). And in 2003, in Neixiang County of Henan Province, over 800 students were admitted to regular higher education institutions, among which 150 students, over 15% of the total, could not afford the high tuition fees (Zhang Guowei,

2003). According to *Beijing Youth Daily*, 11% of the enrolled students give up the opportunity to enter higher education each year because of poverty (Peng Chunsheng, 2004).

3.4.3. Weak basic education

It is impossible to have a comprehensive consideration of higher education without looking at basic education, which prepares students for higher education and in turn is the employer of many higher education graduates; which can be prospered by the boom in higher education or frustrated by the depression in higher education.

a. Status quo of basic education in rural areas

The opportunity for senior high graduates to enter higher education increases with years, especially after the expansion. The entrance to senior high school in fact grants one the identity of semi university student. However, it is a different story for junior high graduates to rise to senior high schools. An illustration can be found in Qinghai Province. In 2002, the higher education entrance rate for graduates of senior high schools was 85.9%, while the rate for junior high graduates to enter senior high school was 53%. Many rural children have been barred off long before they approach higher education entrance. For example, the proportion of urban students rising from junior high to senior high rose from 40% in 1985 to 55.4% in 1999, while the figure for rural students at the same time dropped from 22.3% to 18.6%. As is illustrated by Table 3.13, the proportion of primary pupils in rural areas greatly outnumbers that in urban areas. But with the elevation in educational level, the student body in rural areas drastically shrinks.

Each year, over 5 million children leave school before they finish compulsory education, (Shen Baifu & Wang Hong, 2003). According to the officially publicized figures, the primary school entrance rate is 99.1%, which means around 1.1 million children will become new illiterates, most of which scatter in rural areas.

b. Low qualification rate of teaching staff

There are statistics showing that in 2000 the teacher qualification rate of primary, junior

high and senior high are respectively 96%, 87% and 68% (*Xinhua News*, 2004). Most of the unqualified teachers tend to be located in the countryside. As has been pointed out by a state councilor, teaching staff in rural areas, as compared with that in urban areas, is lagging behind in quality, income, and welfare. As a result of poor quality of the staff, in combination with deficiency in funds, many children who graduated from rural primary schools can barely do simple arithmetic calculations, and little do they know about new technological innovations and the world outside their closed community. An investigation concerning rural junior high school students revealed that 48% of the students surveyed thought that “the teaching staff is not capable enough, and instruction from good teachers is needed”. The information should, of course, be taken with a grain of salt, and the phenomenon might be local, but it is worth noticing that more and more students have come to the conclusion that the low quality of the teaching staff increasingly affects their study negatively (*Education Exploration*, 2000).

Rural students at the stage of senior high as a whole manifest a great difference from urban students. According to a report, in a certain county in Hebei Province most students are admitted to junior colleges. Even in Zhejiang Province, a coast district where there is the most developed rural economy and education and the least rural-urban gap, students from rural and urban areas perform differently in their higher education entrance examination. Considering the enrollment rate as a whole, rural and urban students manifest little difference. But an analysis from the perspective of examination performance reveals greater rural-urban differences. In 2003, urban students achieved an average score of 426.49 in liberal arts subjects and a passing rate of 43.9%, while rural students achieved 416.79 and 38.16% respectively. In four subjects, Chinese Language, Mathematics, English and Comprehensive Test, urban graduates excelled their rural counterpart in all the eight measuring indexes. The greatest difference lay in English, with a difference of 4.44 points in average score and 8.85% in passing rate (*Qianjiang Evening*, 2004). There is no reason to doubt the intelligence and diligence of the rural students who have finally risen to senior high school. They are the elite of their peers. Apart from disadvantaged family background, poor teaching condition should be an important factor that affects them negatively.

c. Deficient fund and excessive tuition for compulsory education

UNESCO and OECD have statistics regarding the appropriate proportion that the average expense on compulsory education takes in GDP, and the Shanghai Education and Science Institution also proposes standards for the Chinese average expense on compulsory education and for public funds. With these statistics as reference, Chinese investments in compulsory education need to fill a budget gap of 75 billion *yuan* (Shen Baifu & Wang Hong, 2003).

Basic education in rural areas almost entirely depends on how much the local economy is developed and how much education is emphasized. Especially since the 1990s, basic education has been completely funded by the county or *xiang/zhen*. The expenses on compulsory education make up 60% of the overall fiscal expenditure in counties and *xiangs*. However two thirds of the counties and *xiangs* across the country suffer from financial deficits (Zhang Shuguang, 2002). Presently, under the system of tax division, the main revenues are controlled by the central government. Local governments, with limited revenues, find it difficult to sustain the development of basic education (Chen Guili & Chuntao, 2003). The great deficiency in funds to a great extent has been made up by the peasants themselves. As a result, education funds are often used for some other purposes. The schools are compelled to delay salary payment to the teachers, or raise funds from the students (Zhang Shuguang, 2002).

In Table 3.15 the funding condition within the few years before the enrollment expansion is presented. Of the limited funds that the central government allocated to education, the major part was used to support higher education, to be exact, to support a limited number of universities; basic education was not in the central government's scope of attention. Table 3.16 shows the source of education funds in rural China. It can be seen that after 1993, peasants bear over one third of the educational expenditure. Most of the remaining expenditures are also from peasants in the form of various kinds of taxes and fees. Inequality in the stage of compulsory education will invariably extend into the stage of non-compulsory education. This makes the disadvantaged groups congenitally weak in competing for opportunities at the stage of non-compulsory education (Yao Benxian & Liu Shiqing, 1999).

3.5 Consequence of the Urban-Rural Differences

The phenomenon that rural students have a low participation rate and that they tend to enroll in institutions at the lower strata of the higher education hierarchy has impacted upon the society from the aspects of politics, economy, intelligence, and education.

Given that education opportunity is not equally distributed between different social strata in China, the positive effect of the enrollment expansion policy can be questioned. It is pointed out that the present expansion policy, rather than to increase education opportunities for all social members, has in fact distributed the increased part of opportunities mostly among the children of the rich. It in fact further elevates the already elevated and further degrades the already degraded, which does not reduce but strengthen the differences between social strata (Xu Xiaojun, 2003). Presently it is not yet possible to describe in details the result of the inequality in higher education, but there is no doubt that the low participation rate of rural students will further deteriorate the existing imbalanced relationship between rural and urban China, making it increasingly imbalanced in the twenty-first century. It can be imagined, as Zhang Yulin has depicted, that in the coming decades, a greater gap will emerge between the rural society, which is made up of disadvantaged groups in both economy and education, and the urban society, which is made up of advantageous groups in both economy and education and which dominates political power and access to economy resources (Zhang Yulin, 2003).

Liang Shuming used to describe traditional China, with some other places in the world as reference, from the perspective of there being only differences between professions and trades rather than opposite classes (Liang Shuming, 1936, refer to Zheng Hangsheng & Li Yingsheng, 2000). This is because, for the most part of the history, the emperor selected bureaucrats from the lower level of the society with the intention to check the growth of hereditary aristocrats. This bias toward the lower level of the society, as a guarantee for long time social stability, had been a mechanism to stimulate social mobility and prevent entrenched social stratification. Vice versa, if the education policy in an age of knowledge economy is continuously biased toward the urban areas, the differences between the rural and the urban will become rooted through heritage, and two opposite hereditary classes, the city and the village, will emerge.

The negative effect of the rural-urban difference in higher education also manifests itself in the economy as it does in politics. With the deepening of the economic reform, new factors have emerged that incur poverty in rural areas. Wang Chengxin of the Chinese Science Institution summarized these factors into six types: environment destruction; education consumption; talent drain; disease; information lack and policy bias (Zhang Guowei, 2003). It is not exaggerated that higher education for a child can bankrupt a peasant family of medium level income. According to the vice-governor of the Gansu Province, expenditure on education is the second gravest factor that incurs poverty upon peasant families (Di Duohua, 2004).

Tuition fees not only directly affects the economy of rural families; it also indirectly affects rural economy as a whole. Large amounts of funds, in the form of tuition fees, are transferred to the city from the village, which is already sunk in poverty, distressing peasants even more and restraining normal consumption. In recent years, when the Three Problems for the Farmers have become the focus of the society and theoretical research, many scholars noticed that land, capital and labor are being rapidly transferred from rural areas to urban areas. Few, nevertheless, have noticed that education is a big channel by which rural resources are being drained. Given that rural and urban students are distributed in a fifty to fifty proportion, with the total student scale being 17 million, there would be about 8 million rural students on campus in 2003. Each year, these rural students bring with them over 80 billion *yuan* to higher education institutions, which mainly concentrate in metropolitan areas. Twice as much as the total sum of the annual agricultural tax that peasants pay, the 80 billion *yuan* investment in higher education will invariably decrease peasants' investments in other areas of productivity (Li Junfu, 2003).

Further, it can be observed that brain drain from rural China to urban China, like that from the underdeveloped countries to the developed countries, exists. Agriculture development and urbanization of rural areas benefit little from the enrollment expansion because of the low level of diversity, especially because of the unprosperous situation in professional higher education institutions and in schools and programs aimed at rural area development. With agricultural production low in profitability, rural China can no longer afford adequate environment and employment opportunities to attract scientific and education workers.

It has been indicated already that the negative effect of the expansion influences the rural areas in education. Increased enrollment has resulted in increased confidence in most students for higher education entrance, but reform in higher education enrollment and the job assignment system has exerted negative influence upon students. According to an investigation in rural junior high schools, 26% of the students give up the hope for higher education because they think their family cannot afford the high expenditure; 52% of the students feel that the prospect of higher education is problematic because higher education entrance no longer leads to employment. As a result, many students feel uncertain, and gradually lose motivation and interest in their study (*Education Exploration*, 2000).

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter is inspired by Trow's statement that during the early stages of higher education expansion, inequality in access to higher education is not reduced but rather increased. It is one of the purposes of this chapter to examine if Trow's statement can be verified in a Chinese context. But in order to render more meaningful the education data, also a background introduction was given to review higher education history before the expansion, and to inform on the socio-economic situation in rural and urban China that had influenced the evolution of Chinese higher education.

Through the data presentation, a trend can be identified, which confirms Trow's statement: During the early stages of higher education expansion, urban students, rather than rural students were more motivated in their application for higher education entrance and more advantageous in enrollment, but later there was a pickup in both rural applicants and enrollment, which omens more hope for rural youth. However, this good expectation is precariously grounded because of the grave situation in rural economy and basic education. What is more, rural student proportion tends to decline yearly from the top and concentrate at the bottom of the higher education hierarchy, most of all in junior colleges. Geographically, rural student enrollment tends to occur in institutions located in non-metropolitan areas while famous universities tend to concentrate in metropolitan areas. With respect to the popularity and investment return of an institution or a program, rural student proportion tends to manifest regression, while with respect to finance, rural students tend to consume more family capital before they enter higher education.

Further data have been presented in order to search for the factors that lead to the access inequality in higher education. High tuition, of course, already a target of public criticism, is identified. And it is accompanied by unfair recruitment criteria, deficient funding and imbalanced geographical distribution of higher education institutions. There are also factors that go beyond higher education, such as insufficient economic resources and a weak basic education in rural areas. But all these reasons are but manifestations of underlying factors: the dual social structure that had for decades discriminated peasants and the fiscal system that allows the state to shift its responsibility for education on to the society.

As to how the urban-rural difference in higher education will influence China at present and in the future, it is difficult to predict with certainty and in details, except for the consensus that the consequence will be very serious. But its negative influence upon the rural areas is already explicitly exhibited in many aspects such as politics, economy, education and intelligence. And it is self-evident that the future of the country as a whole will greatly depend on how much and how soon this imbalance in higher education can be corrected. For this reason, the public is alert to this inequality; researchers endeavor to track down its causes; sociologists repeatedly warn of its harm to society. But so far not enough effort has been put in the examination of the enrollment expansion policy itself. It is indeed necessary to look into multiple aspects in order to understand and eventually solve the problems in Chinese higher education, but the expansion policy, as a trigger of all the debates in the first place, deserves more attention than is given at the moment. Hence there is the theoretical analysis of the enrollment expansion policy in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: POLICY ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

By the early 1970s when Martin Trow proposed the theory of mass higher education, many developed countries had already reached or were approaching the phase of mass higher education (Trow, 1973, p 4-6). This was the result of a natural evolution of the higher education system. In other words, government policy in these countries went with the major trends in economic growth and demographic changes. In contrast, in China, where higher education has remained within the framework of the traditional model, the advent of mass higher education is the immediate consequence of government policy. In addition, as the higher education system grows, it becomes an increasingly substantial competitor for public expenditures. Consequently, the relation of higher education to the state becomes increasingly critical the bigger the system of higher education is (Trow, 1973, p 4). Considering the increasing dependence of higher education on the government, an analysis on the process of the government policy will lead to more insight into the expansion.

From its gestation and initiation until today, the enrollment expansion policy has been accompanied with intense dispute. After five years of expansion and dispute, problems in the expansion are obvious; critical remarks are common. But systematic negative opinions are scarce and an all-around analysis is not available. In order to get knowledge about the government's original intention in policy-making, this chapter introduces the background around the issue of the policy in the second section. In the third section, the policy will be measured against the theoretical framework, going through the whole policy process as defined by Gornitzka (1999), in combination with some Chinese policy analysis theories. This attempts to answer questions such as: What is the rationality of the enrollment expansion policy? What are the incentives for the drastic system expansion? What are the factors that can at least partly leads to the inequality in access from the perspective of the policy?

4.2. Background of the Policy Making

The Chinese higher education system had long been under pressure from social demand. As a result of a long time governmental control over higher education expansion, the participation rate had been low. The demand from the society was on the rise and the appeals for system expansion were persisting, which prompted the suggestion that, with government financial capacity insufficient to satisfy the social demand for higher education, education should be run as an industry, and as an attractive target for citizen investment (Tang Min, 1999)

Coincided with the notion of higher education as an industry, was the difficult condition in the economy. Prior to the expansion, China was under the influence of the Asian financial crisis, with the economy in a general downslide and all price indexes falling. Unemployment was at its height and citizen income suffered a continuous decline. In deciding upon active financial strategies to counteract the depression, the maintenance of a stable, healthy and continuous development in the national economy was emphasized as an important political task (Kang Ning, 2000). Confronted with deflation, the government took economic growth as the key solution to all problems. One of the major measures was to stimulate consumption and increase domestic demand with the intention to promote short-term economic growth. For this purpose, several measures had been taken such as the real estate project and the automobile project, but without the intended effect (Tang Min, 1999).

In November 1998, Chinese top leaders received the recommendation to expand higher education enrollment (Li Junfu, 2003). This recommendation came from the economist Tang Min, who said, “Higher education enrollment expansion will turn out to be a measure that entails less state investment, stimulates domestic consumption greatly and satisfies the urgent demand from the mass” (Tang Min, 1999). Another economist, Wei Jie, supported this by arguing that, with the increased money gathered from the students, the Chinese market would be activated (Li Junfu, 2003). Two scholars in the Chinese Social & Scientific Academy and the Chinese Scientific Academy, Li Peilin and Hu Angang, predicted that, according to the condition of city family bank deposit, citizens across the whole country had a potential yearly education expenditure capacity of 250 billion *yuan*, which roughly equaled the total education input in the whole country. One of the above views emphasized that higher education expansion could, within a short term, stimulate

domestic consumption and economic growth; the other predicted that Chinese citizens had the potential to support higher education expansion. As such, the decision to expand higher education enrollment at a supernormal scale was made by the supreme authority, rather than by the Education Ministry that routinely submits the plan to the superior for approval. On June 25th, 1999, all the major media carried the news that the higher education system would have a scale expansion of 47.1% on the basis of the previous year (Kang Ning, 2000), which is the greatest system expansion after 1949.

It turned out that for a long time the Chinese higher education participation rate had been lower than that in many other developing countries. In 1986, the World Bank urged China to consider a rapid expansion of the higher education system toward the threshold of mass higher education. The bank suggested three scenarios to China in setting forth expansion goals for the year 2000: a low scenario with a goal of 10 percent of the age cohort; a medium scenario, 12.5 percent; and a high scenario, 15 percent. Chinese policy makers resisted moving toward even the lowest scenario up to 1991, when the eighth five-year plan and a ten-year development plan put forward a policy of stabilizing the level of enrollment and focusing on the improvement of quality (Hayhoe, 1996, p251, Jiang Kai, 2002). In January 1998, one year before the start of the expansion, *Chinese Education Daily*, the official newspaper under the Chinese Education Committee (the Ministry of Education), commented on mass higher education as not suitable for the Chinese situation. It said that Chinese national power could not support the mode of mass higher education in the West. Besides, there was the need to further adjust the supply-demand relation for higher education graduates, the heavy task to reform the higher education system and the urgency to restructure higher education. The article recalled the violent ups and downs in higher education development during the “Great Leap Forward” in 1958 as a warning to heed the historical lesson. This article reflected a consistent mainstream attitude of Chinese education policy makers. In December of the same year, an official document, *21st Century Education Development Action Plan*, pointed out that by 2010 the higher education participation rate should approach 15% (Hu Jianhua, 2002). According to this government plan, the average yearly expansion would be 5%, while in reality ever since the Reform and Opening the yearly average growth had been 8.5% (*Chinese Education Stat. Yearbook; Chinese Education Stat. Analysis*, 2001), higher than 5%. Therefore, this official plan, which has so far been repeatedly cited by the media as the prelude to Chinese mass higher education, looked more like a contraction than an expansion plan.

In June 1999, at the Third National Education Work Conference, the above-mentioned “by-2010-15% approach” was reaffirmed, but meanwhile, the expansion decision was made. The actual effect of the decision was that in the very year the enrollment for regular higher education institutions had an increase of 47%, and for adult institutions, 16% (Hu Jianhua, 2002). This obviously did not accord with the 5% increase rate necessarily entailed by the “by-2010-15% approach”.

The decision-making process being very brief, the expansion policy appeared to be issued in haste. But at that special time, with limited alternatives, the government “carried out an active financial policy” through higher education expansion, which was “part of an overall political and economic strategic deployment” (Kang Ning, 2000). Since politics has always been given first priority, the issue of the expansion policy seems inevitable. Expansion in the higher education system had been a long time wish of students’ parents and educationists. It had been the hope for rural students, too. UNESCO had also suggested the system expansion before 2000. As such, the government, from every aspect, had taken a favorable decision for the people and the society. What is unusual about it, however, is that it was mainly intended to solve short-term financial problems.

What is more, the proposal of the economist Tang Min was composed of three parts: First, high tuitions to increase investment in higher education and to spur consumption. Second, a large-scale national loan system to help the needy students. That is, through the mechanism of the bank, the financially better-off people lent their money to the financially worse-off people. The debt return limit ranged from 15 to 10 years. Third, increased scale of scholarship. That is, part of the government fund goes to higher education through student financial aids rather than through direct institutional allocation. In so doing, 70 to 80% of the students could be covered by financial aids of various kinds (Tang Min, 1999). But the second and the third component of his proposal, which are indispensable to the normal realization of the first component, were much curtailed in the policy.

4.3. Policy Analysis

In this section, Gornitzka’s policy analysis theory (Gornitzka, 1999), which has been

reviewed in Chapter Two, is applied to the Chinese context to evaluate the higher education expansion policy. Yuan Zhenguo's (2002) theory will also be used. According to Gornitzka, a policy can be interpreted as a hypothesis (Gornitzka, 1999, p14). This means that policy is a plan for the future based on existing information and status quo in order to obtain an intended result. Subjectivity will invariably exist in a policy and in its analysis. Different policy makers and analysts, based on the same data and situation, may arrive at different judgment, because they have different perspectives. This study, considering the peasant problems to deserve the highest priority in the Chinese context, analyses the higher education expansion policy with the focus on the rural students.

4.3.1. Policy problems in the Chinese higher education context

According to Gornitzka (Gornitzka, 1999, p17), the problems that policies address vary both across time and different national systems. According to Yuan Zhenguo (Yuan Zhenguo, 2002), before determining whether a problem deserves to be chosen as policy topic for discussion, it is necessary to pin down its cause. That is, before deciding upon certain problems as the policy target, questions should be asked such as, what has caused the problems, if the choice of the problems is well-timed, if it is relevant to the specific context, in this case, if it benefits Chinese peasants, the majority of the population. Therefore, this study, instead of readily accepting some broad, symbolic policy problems as they are generally proposed, will pin down the causes of the problems or identify their specificities in the Chinese context, and analyze how relevant they are to the rural students.

a. Policy problem:

Many articles and government documents had talked about problems that the enrollment policy intended to address (Kang Ning, 2000; Li Shouxin, 2001). The most authentic source should be the memoirs of Li Lanqing, the ex-deputy premier then in charge of education (Li Lanqing, 2004). From the various sources it can be summarized that the policy was made to address the following problems:

- Deficiency of quality personnel.
- An increasing demand for higher education in the macro social context.
- Difficulties in the economy affected by the Asian financial crisis.

- Employment pressure.
- The vicious circle of “examination-oriented education”.

b. Discussion on the choice of policy problems

Public demand for higher education does not seem to be a demand that can ever be satisfied. In the future, as expected by Clark, national systems of higher education can neither count on returning to any earlier steady state nor of achieving a new stage of equilibrium. It is simply because demands on universities outrun their capacity to respond (Clark, 1998, p129). This is especially the case in Chinese universities where there had been long time governmental control over the system expansion. It can be expected that the tackling of the problem will trigger series of demands rather than put an end to them, “pushing the universities to an age of turmoil for which there is no end in sight” (Clark, 1998, p129). As part of a feasible policy in the Chinese context, the problem should include in its consideration the great imbalance between the city and the village. Everywhere in the world there is growing demand for higher education, but the situation for Chinese rural youth is peculiar, as has been discussed in the previous chapter. When young people elsewhere enter university in order to rise high in the society, to enter a profession, to gain experience, Chinese rural youth, in addition to all this, seek for a higher education qualification to get rid of discrimination inflicted upon them by the urban-rural dual register system. To others, higher education brings improvement in life. While to Chinese rural youth, it is of life necessity. In this sense, rural youth, especially those who have marginalized experience in urban areas and consequently have the most urgent demand, deserve most attention in policy problem choice. At least the policy problem should be more clearly articulated. Rather than the ambiguous “demand for higher education”, for example, it could go further to specify “whose demand”.

Deficiency in quality personnel, in the same way, seems to be a problem that can never be solved in a time of rapid science and technological development. For example, in OECD countries, the proportion of adults with tertiary education qualifications amounts to 41 percent in 2000, but even this has proved inadequate to meet the rising demand (World Bank, 2002, p26). The USA has the most sophisticated higher education system, but still takes great efforts to import talented students and personnel. In China, the problem of personnel deficiency has two major manifestations, both of which are associated with

peasants: First, China has a gigantic industrial system but its products on the whole are low in scientific and technological level. Scattered in the city in various fields are more than one hundred million peasants, including many secondary school graduates, who for various reasons have failed to enter higher education. Most of them lack specialized technology and skills, leading to unstable product quality. Second, in the vast areas of rural China, there is a serious lack of qualified teachers, medical workers, agriculture technicians, lawyers and management personnel, etc. Yan Yangchu called his Rural Construction Program “exploiting the mine of brains” (Wu Xiangxiang, 2001). From his analogy, it can be inferred that the rural population is the largest human capital deposit, and that the cause of personnel deficiency lies in the lack of education opportunity for peasants. Therefore, before deciding upon the policy problem, such questions as “who are to be trained into quality personnel” and “for whom the personnel are to be trained” should be asked.

Employment pressure, in the Chinese context, is paradoxically a symbiotic with the problem of quality personnel deficiency. On the one hand, there is a great demand for high quality personnel, so that some schools and enterprises recruit teachers, scientists and mechanics from abroad; on the other hand, large number of laid off urban workers and rural surplus laborers press upon the employment market. According to sociologist Wen Tiejun (2003), Chinese problem is peasant problem, which in the 21st century is the problem of labor surplus, i.e., the problem of employment for peasants. It is especially imperative to have in mind the peasants because employment pressure comes more from the quality than from the quantity of the laborers.

Examination-oriented education, again, is an international problem, which not only plagues the entire Chinese education system, but is also found in some other Eastern Asian countries where higher education entrance rate is very high. But again, the problem in China has its unique pathogeny. Deficiency in funds leads to investment concentration on key schools at various levels. In order to get out of disadvantaged education environments and compete for more education resource, both students and teachers orient their school activities to examination. To bureaus in charge of education, the most important index to evaluate schools is the proportion of students entering key schools of a higher grade from a lower grade. Schools at various levels thus indulge into the combat of examination-oriented education in order to be favorably evaluated by the superiors.

As the result of the policy that supports the advantaged and ignores the disadvantaged, the competition is most intense for rural students because, as has been shown in Chapter Three, basic education in rural areas has the most serious fund deficiency. In addition, the discriminative enrollment quota allocation takes the heaviest toll from the rural students. And tuition increase has correlated money to examination scores, adding more “gold content” to score and having strengthened the examination orientation. As such, the problem for rural students is less caused by defects in the technical aspect such as outdated pedagogy, rigid examination system and limited enrollment capacity than by education resource scarcity and the urban-biased and rich-biased enrollment standard.

Economic difficulties are, so to speak, the direct starting point of the enrollment expansion. In other words, it are the presently encountered economic difficulties that constitute the core of the set of policy problems, and it is the stimulation of consumption that is chosen from the repertoire to cope with the economic difficulties. But the fact is that it is in rural China that exists the largest potential consumer market. This market is not activated because of income poverty of the peasants, which in turn, as has been analyzed in Chapter Three, is associated with knowledge poverty.

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So far, all the five problems are invariably associated with the fact that peasants are disadvantaged, especially in education. But ever since the Reform and Opening, the government has taken economic development as an important measure to administer the country and win public support. Economic growth is more likely to be emphasized when confronted with not only economic difficulties, but also political difficulties, for it is self-evident that economic crisis may lead to political crisis. It is also the case in deciding on problems for the expansion policy. In higher education activities, the center was to solve economic problem, which in turn was part of a political task (Kang Ning, 2000). As a result, all the problems are broad, symbolic, vaguely articulated except for the one concerning the economy. While the problem of the peasants, which is the most important of current China, is little dipped into in the policy problems.

4.3.2. Policy objectives

Policy objectives are specified by the level at which the policy aims, by the extent of change that the policy is directed at and by the aspects that will be affected by the policy. It is also connected to policy instruments through which it is realized. Therefore, policy objective, like policy problems, should be very relevant and fitting within the specific context.

a. Policy objectives

According to Tang Min's (1999) proposal of enrollment expansion, the policy objectives are as follows:

- To quickly expand the higher education enrollment scale, so as to double the scale within three years and eventually realize mass higher education.
- To spur domestic consumption. If each new student contributes 10 thousand *yuan* each year, there will be direct consumption of tens of billion *yuan* and indirect consumption of hundreds of billion *yuan*.
- To release the pressure in the labor market by postponement of the new labor force influx, annually one or two million, into the labor market, which, in the following four years, would make space for five to six million laid off employees. In other words, the unemployed population would undergo a one third decrease.
- To reform the examination mode to attain open admission.

b. The possibility of realizing the objectives

- ***The possibility of large-scale enrollment expansion:***

As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the quantity specified by the objective has not only been reached, but also been overrun. But the greatest expansion has occurred in the regular universities and colleges at the middle and bottom level of the tiers, not in the better-equipped institutions at the top and upper middle level, as had been proposed by Tang Min (1999); or in professional technology colleges, as had been desired by the policy makers. On the eve of the expansion, experts from Beijing University had warned the inadequate condition. By sampling investigation in 616 regular undergraduate institutions, it was concluded that it was not realistic to expect a large-scale enrollment expansion (e.g., double the enrollment scale) within a short period of time (e.g., 2-3 years) without sacrificing quality. Of course, given large-scale investment and adequate time, it would be

a different story (Wei Xin et al. 1999). The fact is that in the famous, better-equipped universities the enrollment expansion has been only symbolic (Wang Qi, 2004), while the expansion mainly took place in the local institutions of mediocrity, or in newly established institutions without proper material and staff preparation. In this way, the decrease in quality has exerted basically no harm upon the famous universities, where traditionally rural students take a low proportion. While the institutions at the lower tier of the system, where the rural students concentrate, have been exposed to the decrease in quality.

- ***The possibility of spurring domestic consumption***

The position of some scholars and policy makers was mainly based on the fact that Chinese citizens had a collective bank deposit of over 5.3 thousand billion *yuan* and that each year a large number of Chinese students went abroad to study at a total expense of billions of US dollars per year. But the other side of the story is different. For example, in 1999 the average controllable income was 5854 *yuan* for urban residents and 2210 *yuan* for rural residents (Wang Liushuan, 2003). The average expense per student, including tuition and life expenditure, was evidently beyond the capacity of most Chinese, especially rural residents. More important is the fact that China is at a transitional stage when there is often void of efficient supervision, resulting in the greatest disparity between the rich and the poor in the world.

According to a study at the beginning of 1999 by experts from Beijing University, even if 52.28% of the students were given financial aid of various amounts, the tolerable tuition should amount to less than 3000 *yuan* (Wei Xin et al, 1999). Given that higher education has a far-ranging influence, high tuition charge from one family will impact upon a dozen of families so that they will for a long time reduce their expenditure in order to prepare for their children's future education. This constraint on current consumption in fact has counteracted the effect of the policy to spur domestic consumption.

The large amount of personal bank deposit and the efflux of students abroad imply very profound social problems. For most peasants, the limited bank deposit was a humble guarantee against the unsound social security system. When peasants lack consumption capacity, access to education is offered to them in the form of consumer goods in order to absorb their limited funds. To peasants who are reluctant to give up their children's education opportunity, this constitutes compulsory consumption.

● *The possibility to release pressure on the labor market*

The problem of employment is probably the most important that the Chinese government is confronted with. In 1998, China had an unemployed population of over 20 million in urban areas. In contrast, new high school graduates who failed to enter higher education and began to seek employment amounted to less than one million each year, exerting only a minor pressure upon the labor market. Therefore, the enrollment expansion has only a very limited function in lessening the pressure. In this sense, the policy objective is of little significance. On the other side, there were 150 million surplus rural labors that needed to be transferred away from traditional farming, and every year, rural youth who fail to enter senior high school amount to about a 10 million. In this case, what seemed to have posed most threat to the employment market, was deterioration in rural basic education more than limited higher education capacity. But this policy objective only considers the employment problem of urban residents.

● *The possibility to reform the examination-oriented education*

In the metropolitan areas and for children from affluent families, the increased opportunity will decrease the intensity of competition for higher education entrance, leaving the students more time to improve quality. But in rural areas, as has been analyzed previously, the out-dated education system, education resource scarcity, the discriminative enrollment quota allocation and the residence register system, combine together to suppress the rural students, so that enrollment expansion will not change their mode of education.

Rural students suffer most from “examination-oriented education”, which is featured by “score as the only standard”. Yet rural students stick to scores. The unequal enrollment quota allocation pushes them aside to make space for students in the metropolitan areas; the high tuition policy pushes them further aside to make space for rich students. They have to depend on the score as their only capital, to counteract money and the privileged city. No wonder that “quality education” as opposed to “examination-oriented education” gets less response from the rural areas than from big cities, and that advocates for “open admission” meet resistance from the perspective of the rural students. Score is the last defense that rural students can build up through their personal effort. If open access were realized in the unequal society, the rural students will be deprived even more.

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Given the great imbalance between rural and urban China, important policies that involve the whole country should invariably take into consideration the great disparity. As a major public policy, the expansion policy, if it is supposed to be concerned with the long-range stability and development of the country, should first of all aim at long-range benefits for China by bridging the gap between the city and the village. However, the consideration of the gap is not evidently reflected by the policy objectives. The objectives are clearly city centered and consumption oriented, and once actualized, tend to detriment rather than benefit the interest of the rural students.

4.3.3. Policy normative basis

a. Official argument in support of the policy

The argument of the National Statistic Bureau is representative among all the arguments in support of the enrollment expansion policy (Li Shouxin, 2001):

- ***Cost sharing***

There is no need to evade the fact that an important purpose of the expansion was to increase consumption by decreasing state input and increasing student tuition. The basis is education cost sharing, according to which a considerable part of the expenditure previously borne completely or mainly by the state is transferred to students. The rationale is that the individual who receives higher education will receive a higher return. In other words, the individual student profits more from higher education than the society as a whole (Li Shouxin, 2001).

- ***Higher education as industry***

The functions of higher education can be categorized by its external function to drive domestic demand and stimulate economy from a social demand-supply perspective, and internal function to influence the society and economy through training personnel and scientific achievements. It is common to make use of the internality of education as a propeller to economic development in the long and medium range. While “focusing only on its externality by emphasizing its function to drive short-term economic growth is a novelty in thoughts” (Kang Ning, 2000). And it is this novelty that not only met with

temporary applause in the media, but also was quickly chosen as the basis for the expansion policy.

- ***University as labor reservoir***

Viewing from international education and economic development, many countries had taken education as an idle labor reservoir. Whenever the economy declines, there seem to come up opportunities for higher education development. People need to upgrade themselves, and meanwhile to shun employment competition of low quality at low levels. When it is time of economy prosperity, people charged with updated knowledge return to the labor market to staff positions (Li Shouxin, 2001).

b. Social consensus in support of the policy

By examining a public policy in reference to social consensus, it is possible to predict how popular the policy will be with the majority of the society. For the enrollment expansion, which has a wide scale influence, it is not difficult to find support in the public consensus. As had been confirmed by Trow's observation, everywhere the pressure for expansion that followed WW II met with surprisingly little resistance among the academics (Trow, 1973, p30).

- ***Industrialization of the society and urbanization of the rural areas: the economic aspect***

As early as the 1930s, sociologist Wu Jingchao proposed urban construction and industrialization as a remedy to rural problems (Wu Jingchao, 1936, refer to Zheng Hangsheng & Li Yingsheng, 2000). This foresight was not much noticed at that time because of the inadequate political and economic condition. But by now, urbanization and industrialization has already attracted much attention in the society, and this issue is gaining in importance with the great influx of rural population into the urban areas (Li Qiang, 1998). For peasants, agriculture development alone is incapable of solving all their problems because of the large amount of rural population that must be transferred to the field of industry. Whether it is urbanization or modernization, the main obstacle lies in the large, low-quality population in the rural areas. In an age of knowledge economy, the key to the question invariably lies in higher education imparted to peasants.

● ***Tradition: the cultural aspect***

Education in a traditional Chinese society had a strong utilitarian function: the life in small, isolated farming communities was very unsecured so that average peasants sought for political and financial guarantee by taking the imperial examination. Education also had a social function: with traditional textbooks oriented to moral and literature education, the book, rather than the blood, had been associated with nobility. Gradually, education had become more or less a secular religion. Yan Yangchu declared that his mass education program for Chinese peasants in the 1930s was in fact first inspired by the poor laborers' strong aspiration for literacy and civilization (*Readers' Guide*, 2002).

● ***Enhancement of democracy and equality: the political aspect***

It is unimaginable that a nation with a high level of illiteracy or semi-illiteracy can be one that is rich in thoughts and aspires for social progress. A precedent that can be cited to illustrate higher education as a great propeller to social change is the 1960s system expansion in US, when the baby boomers overloaded the system, which partly gave rise to the New Left Movement (Boyer, 1999, p263). To China, more important than economic development is the gradual perfection of a democratic system. Chinese society cannot get very far if the progress is unbalanced. By now, sociologists have become alert to the different social position of the city and the village, but Chinese peasants have already for decades been striving to break this difference, mainly through education. In this sense, the expansion of the higher education system is most welcome to peasants.

c. Comment on the official arguments in support of the policy

Cost sharing, if not accompanied by financial aid of larger scale, is evidently mismatched with rural China, simply because Chinese peasants are not financially capable of sharing the cost, as has been shown in data presentation. Even in the international context, cost-sharing theory is not unanimously embraced. Scott has identified a tendency in the international context that the expansion of higher education has been intimately linked with the explosive extension of the power and influence of the state since 1945. Modern systems of higher education could not exist without the patronage of the national state (Scott, 1998, P 110). World Bank negates the indiscriminate use of cost sharing theory and recommends state funding because social benefits from higher education transcends private benefits (World Bank, 2002, p 76, p82).

The perception of higher education as an industry primarily views public colleges and universities as quasi-corporate entities producing a wide range of goods and services in a competitive marketplace (Gumport, 2000, p71). However, even in the US, where the application of market strategies is already standardized, the market is heavily regulated by state and federal government, first of all through several types of public subsidies (Gumport, 2000, p73). The reason is self-evident: the costs of insufficient investment in tertiary education can be very high for the society. These costs can include a reduced ability of a country to compete effectively in the global and regional economies; growth in economic and social disparities; declines in the quality of life, in health status, and in life expectancy; rising public expenditures on social welfare programs; and a deterioration of social cohesion (World Bank, 2002, p 76, p82). This is why, when the conception of higher education as an industry is increasingly dominating as the legitimating idea, there is the concern about what is at stake in short-sighted adaptation to market forces and public good that may exceed the market's reach (Gumport, 2000, p73). The provision of higher education to peasants as a disadvantaged group should be public good, not business that can be readily adapted to market force and instantly yield profits.

The argument that the university can serve as idle labor reservoir agrees with students from financially adequate families, most of which belong to the city. But these students amount to an insignificant number. For most of the unemployed, the problem lies in that Chinese economy is not advanced enough to absorb adequate laborers, more important, large amounts of laborers are not competent enough to fit into the presently vacant positions. To the peasants, who have a low education level, the latter problem is more urgent. As has been discussed in the policy objective analysis, given the large population, the notion of university as a reservoir is of little relevance to China. Given the city-centered nature of the policy, it is of no relevance to Chinese peasants.

d. Perspective from policy problems and policy objectives

The normative basis of the policy is hard to identify, but this aspect of the policy can be pinned down by looking at the policy problems and objectives (Gornitzka, 1999, p 19).

As has been analyzed in the previous sections, the policy problems and objectives include

two important parts: First, social demand for higher education and the expansion of the higher education system to satisfy the demand; Second, economic difficulty and the increase of domestic demand to overcome the difficulty. As a result, higher education opportunity is increased and so is tuition. The increase in higher education opportunity agrees with Chinese society, especially with peasants, who have a low educational level; the high tuition mismatches with Chinese society, especially with peasants, who have a low-income level. This partly explains the contradictory phenomenon that the policy has met with applause from the public on one hand, and triggered public criticism on the other.

4.3.4. Policy instruments

Policy instruments include Nodality, Authority, Organization and Treasure. Nodality refers to the central position of government in societal communications and its ability to “send out” information that it judges to be necessary or relevant. Authority refers to the ability of governments to issue binding laws, i.e. to formally restrict the behavior of the targeted subjects. Treasure refers to government control of money and other resources. Organization refers to the public bureaucracy and its ability to implement programs, and to monitor environments (Hood, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999, p19).

a. Funding (Treasure)

As a result of the difficult economic situation, the starting-point of the policy was that the expansion should not lead to great increase in public investments. The increase in institutional funding should be realized through tuition fees, which at the same time is intended to stimulate the consumption market. But the prescribed level of enrollment overran the existing capacity of most regular institutions, and further investments in teaching and residence facilities were needed. The government provided some funds for infrastructural construction and a limited amount of national debt was issued on behalf of higher education. As to the fund shortage, specific policies gave permission to institutions to find their own solution. With some exceptions, most institutions got additional funds through tuition increase and bank loans. Of the various sources of higher education revenue, tuition was the part that underwent the greatest increase. Bank loans can only be used in capital construction. Considering the inability of poor families to share the costs of higher education, a student loan program was initiated with the expansion (Li Lanqing,

2003).

b. Administration (Authority)

The introduction of the expansion policy was sudden and its implementation was coercive. As a result, many higher education institutions were poorly prepared, among other things, in their administrative structures. At first, being deficient in funding, some districts and institutions were not quick in response. In order to reach the targeted enrollment quota, the state administrative system, in the form of an administrative order, directly assigned the quota to various provinces, municipalities and institutions (Kang Ning, 2000).

c. Regulation (Authority)

The tuition fee levels are set by local bureaus and local Office Price Stabilizations. Students and their parents passively accept the price.

Before the expansion, the setup of new institutions had to be ratified by the Ministry of Education. As part of the expansion policy, as a means to stimulate the provinces and municipalities into action, the power to ratify the establishment of higher professional technology colleges and the power to recruit students were handed down to the provinces and municipalities. With this deregulation came the clear order: there was no residence register transfer for students enrolled in the professional colleges (therefore rural students could not become urban residents); there were no job assignment certificates to graduates from this type of colleges (no work position provided to them); there were no unified graduate certificates to the graduates (to distinguish them from graduates of regular higher education institutions); high tuition fee level was introduced (because training in profession technology was more expensive) (Kang Ning, 2000).

d. Propaganda (Nodality)

Since the Chinese media are basically monopolized by the authority, information on the policy reached the public through the propaganda instruments. The necessity of the expansion and cost sharing, which were the key points of the policy, spread among the public, while negative voices were hardly heard in the mainstream media.

e. Comment on policy instruments

As defined by Gornitzka (1999, p14) a policy is “a public statement of an objective and the kind of instruments that will be used to achieve it”. This means that policy instruments, as the fundamental mechanisms to influence society, need to be clearly specified within the framework of the policy in question. In the use of policy instruments, there should be alert to the obstacles to the achievement of the policy objectives. With respect to funding, the expansion policy has specified the obligation of the public to share the costs of higher education, while it does not specify the responsibility of the government in case the level of cost sharing is mismatched with the bearing capacity of the targeted group. In addition, there was an upper limit on the level of tuition fees the institutions could charge in order to prevent unduly high tuition and illegal fee charge, but there was no specification on how to deal with fund deficiency that necessarily came with low tuition. The government applied its authority to specify the behavior of the consumers and institutions, but it did not apply the means of treasure to make up for fund deficiency and the disadvantaged group.

In order to achieve the objectives, the policy relied on the public bureaucracy to implement programs and to monitor the environment (Hood, 1983; Gornitzka, 1999, p19). When entering the stage of mass higher education, the pattern of institutional administration and governance that were fitting the elite stage need to undergo change (Trow, 1973, p6). The expansion policy did not touch upon the necessary reform of the organization and structure of the institutional administration and governance, leaving the implementation of the expansion policy to the manipulation of an old organization and structure- a new policy carried out with old instruments. The old organization and structure, featured by low efficiency and high cost, has been already under the pressure of reform. With the expansion come high tuition fees as new sources of revenue, which on the one hand makes up for fund deficiency, but on the other hand relieves the urgency for system reform. With a great part of the burden transferred to the students, the old organization and structure can continue to waste the public resources. In this sense, the new policy helps out the old instrument.

4.3.5. Policy linkage

a. The expansion policy and the residence register policy

Not only is the residence register policy still in function, but also the rural-urban separation is being maintained in order to guarantee the minimum living standard for city residents and to prevent further urban employment pressure. The expansion policy, which is allegedly aimed at mass higher education, in reality is a continuation of the urban-oriented policy: the city is favored in both recruitment standards and enrollment quota, and the level of tuition fees has obviously taken urban citizen income as reference.

b. The expansion policy and the economic development policy

With the economic construction centered on industry and the urban areas, large governmental expenditure has been on projects in capital construction (e.g. traffic network, power plant, dam, etc.). The expansion of the higher education system, competing with the economic construction for state funds, invariably comes into conflict with the economic construction. At this point, the enrollment expansion policy accords with the economic policy. When faced with the fund deficiency, it turned to the students, regardless of their financial background, rather than to the industry that has been consuming state funds.

c. The expansion policy and the employment policy

China so far has not formed its employment market in a real sense. One of the main reasons for this lies in the district separation and the urban-rural separation so that free mobility from the village to the city is not possible. Although some cities adopt an open policy to graduates with high academic degrees in order to increase competency, mobility is still restricted and the gap between the city and the village is maintained and even entrenched owing to the prevailing unemployment. With the previous work-position-assignment policy terminated, an important precondition for enrollment expansion is that higher education graduates should be introduced into the employment market. However, there is not adequate reform of the closed, incomplete employment market to fit the increasingly open education market. In this imperfect employment market, rural students,

without sophisticated relations and adequate information, will again fall into the disadvantaged group.

d. The unitary high tuition policy and the urban-rural dual system

The expansion policy imposes increased tuition fees indiscriminatingly, ignoring that the Chinese economy has been fractured by the urban-rural dual system. In a financially disadvantaged position, rural students will mostly feel the heavy burden of the tuition fees. When nearly half of the students are from rural areas, the expansion has invariably come into conflict with a considerable part of the student body.

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Policy linkage measures the extent to which the content of policy is breaking with or continuing the content of other government policies (Gornitzka, 1999, p21). Awareness of this measurement of extent helps to understand why a policy is readily accepted or resisted by the established order. In policy implementation, the biggest barriers are former policies, not institutional characteristics per se (Foss Hansen, 1990; Gornitzka, 1999, p21). The more a policy departs from the existing behavior and procedures, the more resistance it will encounter when implemented and the more it will be affected by the tendency to transform a reform back towards the established order (Gornitzka, 1999, p18), and vice versa. In the many previously existing policies that are linked with the expansion policy, the two most important and far-reaching aspects are 1) industry and urban area construction; and 2) urban-rural separation. When mass higher education came into conflict with the two aspects, the expansion policy did not come up with measures as to how to break through these hindrances. Rather, it evaded from the conflict, favoring the old policies. This may be one of the reasons why quantitatively the expansion policy seems to have achieved its main objectives. But in so doing, the policy has ignored two most important missions underlying mass higher education: 1) to develop education as the foundation of the country; 2) to provide equal opportunities to people from all social strata. Consequently, there are the two most obvious problems in the expansion: 1) heavy economic pressure upon the peasants; and 2) increased urban-rural inequality in education.

4.3.6. Policy Implementation

China is now undergoing an unprecedented reform. The old order gradually concedes while the new order is yet to be established and perfected. The expansion policy was issued at a time of “order vacancy”, which will invariably affect the implementation of the policy and result in many problems, of which policy distortion against the will of the policy makers is common.

a. Policy distortion

● ***Disorder in fee charge***

Considering the level of average income, the concerned authority set upper limits upon tuition increase. Some institutions, pressed by fund deficiency, have created various excuses to charge extra fees. And often there is not efficient supervision over institutional financial affairs to check the illegitimate increase in fees. As a result, there exists multiplicity in fee levels and items. While the extra fees may impose little difficulty upon students from affluent families, it may create insurmountable obstacles for rural students in their pursuit for education.

● ***Multi-standards in admission***

Owing to the system structure, many public institutions make use of the space and teaching facilities of some existing private colleges, which face great recruitment difficulties, and enroll large numbers of students in the name of “secondary colleges”. Supported by the state-run universities in resources while adopting the flexible tuition levels and low admission standards of the private sector, secondary colleges openly set double standards for tuition fees and admission. Students with different academic performance records sit in the same classroom after having paid different tuition fees. Money has gradually taken the place of score as the prerequisite and guarantee of education opportunity. With enrollment capacity limited, the greater the expansion in secondary colleges, the more erosion on the enrollment capacity of state-run universities. Through education resource monopoly, secondary colleges compete for students with non-governmental colleges, the most market-oriented and independent sector in the system, which accommodate the greatest rural student proportion. More corrupt, some higher education institutions take advantage of the popularity of some specialties to make money. A student with incompetent scores may first be admitted to an unpopular specialty that requires lower examination scores, then transferred to a popular but competitive specialty

after paying “program transfer fee” (Yang Buyue, 2001).

- ***Void of school-aid program***

The purpose of the state loan programs is to aid the most needy students. But when the bank system found no interest in the programs, and the state did not offer compensation to the bank in case of default, the bank is reluctant to grant loans to those who were most in want of money but were least able to return debt within the required period of time. Even though only one third of the applicants had got the loan, the programs had come to a halt three or four years after the initiation (He Yong, 2003). Having no access to loans, some students delayed their tuition payments, which even hindered the normal operation of some institutions. Under the pressure of morality and finance, some institutions asked the students to stop education and gather tuition through work (Shang Ruoyun, 2004). But in a time of employment difficulty, this is not a practical arrangement. As a result, while the system continued to expand, some poor students, mostly rural students, had to quit higher education.

b. Factors that Lead to the Distort

All in all, the above distortion of policy revolves around mainly two factors: deficient investment in education, and out-dated education system void of supervision. The above-mentioned distortion has serious social consequence, because it affects the life of most rural students. It happened at the institutional level, but their ultimate elimination lies in the whole policy process, from policy problem choice to policy implementation.

4.3.7. Conclusion

The expansion policy came at a time of transition when the old order is falling but still desperately persists with the new order not yet established. In this special period, some groups are freed from the restrictions of the old order but still enjoy the privileges it has granted to them; other groups are already put into the frame of the new order but are not yet duly protected by it. At this special time when the old and the new clash, Chinese peasants frequently find themselves in dilemma, the inequality in higher education access being one of the manifestations of their plight.

For a long time, equity and efficiency have been a focus of dispute. “Efficiency first and equity second” has been the principle upheld by the government. It was acceptable at the beginning of the Reform and Opening to get rid of the alleged equalitarianism. But by now, the problem of inequity is so salient that it has captured the attention not only from the Chinese society, but also internationally. Given the existing difference in education between the village and the city, even the unitary recruitment standard is obviously not fair. The initiation of the enrollment expansion policy is a preliminary step to lift the barrier to mass higher education, but in its pursuit for efficiency, it has built a new barrier against the rural students.

The expansion policy continues with the old order bias toward the city, mostly featured by the rural-urban dual system. Student admission to higher education is greatly influenced by family status imposed upon by the residence register system, and by economic conditions entailed from the family status. The difference based on family origin, which renders rural student disadvantaged by birth, is against the progressive trend in the world. How to educate would raise educational problems; education to whom would raise a profound social problem. Inequality in education is more vicious than inequality in other fields. For an individual, it may hinder one for the whole life; for the society, it may frustrate normal circulation between different strata, which is the seedbed for social instability.

The targeted 15% participation rate of the ten-year plan was achieved eight years ahead of schedule. In this aspect, the expansion policy has broken through the framework of the previous education policies that had checked the growth of higher education. With respect to rural China, the rural student component increase in the student body is a good sign. But from the above policy analysis, it is likely to arrive at the conclusion that if the existing higher education policy does not undergo a profound reform, the rural students will not have a favorable future prospect. So far, the expansion policy does not promise a stable and healthy increase in rural student number in the student body. Nor does it promise a fundamental quality improvement in the colleges at the bottom of the higher education hierarchy where rural students concentrate. This is because the policy seeks to peacefully coexist with the old system. In this sense, it is an extension of the old education policies, which continues to make higher education an instrument for politics and economy, and continues to put the peasants in a disadvantaged position.

Nevertheless, the contributions that this supernormal expansion made to China are not to be overlooked. Within five years, the amount of citizens with higher education has increased with several millions, involving not only more students but also more families, directing the public attention more than ever to higher education and to government policies. This has laid a wide social foundation for future improvement. The increased intellectual community not only means improved education level of the population and productivity of the work force, but may also mean an increase in the force for social progress.

The expansion policy was not intended at changing the old education system by nature, but it has undermined it by triggering public questioning of its rationale. It is true that the policy does not “level the socioeconomic playing field” (Studley, 2003), but it in any way has brought “up to the starting line of a race” many rural students who, although “hobbled by chain” (Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965; Savage, 2004, p297), would otherwise have forever faded away into obscurity. And once they emerge at the starting line, they have captured the attention of the whole society, more than ever before. For many rural students, the experience of higher education is hard; for some, who fail to reap the result of their hard endeavor, even tragic. But for the endeavor they have made, for the challenge they have put to the old order, the rural students as a whole will reap. So will the whole society--- in the future.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROSPECT

5.1. The Past of the USA vs. the Future of China

The pattern at the initial stage of mass higher education identified by Trow applies internationally. But how mass higher education further develops in different contexts will vary from country to country. Review of the higher education history of the USA provides one possible prospect of mass higher education for other countries.

The US higher education system, which is by now the most sophisticated in the world, was initially created under conditions of weakness, both academically and financially (Trow, 2003, p1). The solution to these problems lay in the fact that in the USA the market preceded the society (Hartz, 1955; Trow, 2003). In the creation of the market, the public policy strengthened the competitive market in higher education by weakening the central authority that could have affected the level of competition by regulations and standards. In this process, three landmarks are noteworthy: 1) the Morrill or Land Grant Act of 1862 and the similar Hatch Act of 1887; 2) the GI Bill, which provided government funds for education for all veterans returning from WW II; and 3) the Higher Education Amendments of 1972, which created the broad spectrum programs of federal student aid still in place. In the first case, the states were strengthened in relation to the federal government and the institutions were strengthened in relation to state governments. In the second and third case, the students were strengthened in relation to institutions by broad federal support to higher education through student aid rather than through institutional support (Trow, 2003, p15-17). As a result, while the European universities are still trying to adapt to the growth in mass enrollments of the past three decades, the USA has its framework for mass higher education already for a long time in position (Trow, 2000, p1, p13-16).

The USA experience can be a very good reference in the prediction of Chinese higher education. It is true that the rural student participation rate is increasing, but such questions invariably follow: whether the increase will continue or regress, whether the low quality colleges at the bottom of the higher education hierarchy where rural students concentrate will improve or deteriorate. In comparison with the US society on the eve of

mass higher education, which was heading for material affluence with the social strata involving a wide spectrum of middle class (Boyer, 1999), the economy in rural China on the whole lacks vitality, as has been demonstrated in data presentation. More important, in comparison with the USA public policies, which have been driving decisions downward and outward and have given more resources and discretion to the consumers of education and the institutions most responsive to them (Trow, 2003, p15-17), the Chinese policy framework still remains traditional, as has been demonstrated in policy analysis. As such, the increase in higher education participation by the rural students is precariously grounded, whether quantitatively or qualitatively. And without a profound reform in the existing overall policy framework, rural students are not likely to become the major force of Chinese higher education in the near future.

5.2 Proposals Based on the Status Quo of China

As has been discussed earlier, the problem of rural China is comprehensive and complex. The ultimate solution of the rural student problem cannot be expected to come before the transition of the social structure, the eradication of the urban-rural dual system and the ultimate solution of the Three Problems for the Farmers--- in other words, until many, very tough tasks have been undertaken. However, education policy makers, though inextricable from the overall public policy system, have the possibility of developing strategies within the existing framework that give substantial and immediate support to the rural students. Thus, proposals are presented that, through government intervention with policy instruments, aim at enhancing mass higher education with respect to rural students: 1) the abolishment of discriminative admission standards; 2) the increase in the scale of student financial aids; 3) the reform of adult education.

5.2.1. The abolishment of discriminative admission standards and preference of rural students

One of the most illogical parts in the enrollment policy is the quota allocation based on administrative districts, as is shown in the data presentation. In this unfair competition, rural students are indisputably the disadvantaged group. The reform of the enrollment system, therefore, is a necessary measure for equality in education opportunity. First, a

unitary enrollment standard should be established. Second, preferential policy, which is not uncommon internationally to address the problem of inequality, should be adopted by attracting a certain percentage of rural students on the campus which is in accordance to the demographic structure of the country.

5.2.2. The feasibility of an increase in student financial aids

Research findings indicate that many affirmative action interventions at the tertiary level come too late to assist the vast majority of the disadvantaged students, who have already suffered institutionalized discrimination in access to primary and secondary education. At the tertiary level, therefore, focusing on financial aid in the form of scholarships, grants, and student loans, seems to be a much more effective form of equity intervention for capable aspirants from minority or underprivileged populations. In the general trend of market orientation, the intervention of the government is emphasized because capital markets are characterized by imperfections and information asymmetries that constrain the ability of individuals to borrow adequately for education. These imperfections have adverse equity and efficiency consequences, undermining the participation of academically qualified, but economically disadvantaged groups in tertiary education (World Bank, 2002 p58, p76).

In the international context, the Chinese higher education system ranks first in size; its overall economic scale ranks sixth; while its public education expenditure takes only 1.5% of the total world education expenditure (Zhang Dexiang, 2002). For a long time large amounts of state revenues have been put in economic construction, while expenditure on education, which is considered to be a consumption expenditure, has long been low. Take as an example the year 2002, the total fiscal expenditure for the central government was 1374.4 billion *yuan*, while the expenditure for education was 25.1 billion *yuan*, taking a proportion of 1.82% in the total expenditure (Chinese Government Financial Budget, 2002).

Given the economic growth speed of over 8%, if education expenditure could reach 4% of GDP, which is an average level for developing countries and which has been a government promise, the yearly fund for Chinese education would approach hundred billion *yuan*. This sum surpasses the total tuition gathered from the students in the past five years.

According to the Vice Minister of Education, by the end of 2003, with 11.0856 million students on the campus of regular higher education institutions, poor students amounted to 2.4 million (Zhang Baoqing, 2004). If the state could give the poor students a yearly subsidy of 10 thousand *yuan*, the total sum would be 24 billion *yuan*. It is an increase of 8% upon the present education expenditure, while the economic growth is more than 8%.

In the above discussion, two facts deserve attention: 1) Chinese investment in economic construction is huge in relation to education expenditure; 2) if 4% of GDP could be used in education, as has been promised by the government, the increase part would approach hundred billion *yuan*, which approximately equals the tuition collected from students in the past five years. Based on this, it can be concluded that China has the capacity of increasing the scale of student financial aids.

5. 2.3. Reform of the credit and qualification system

Less fortunate are those students who have been barred outside higher education by the unfair admission standards and the high tuition fees. For those who suffer the most from inequality in education opportunity, the education system should make special efforts to increase the opportunity for them, which would most likely lead to a form of adult education.

Along with other sectors in the system, Chinese adult higher education now has a considerable scale of over 8 million students. But it is heavily dominated by the city-centered notion. First, adult higher education is basically a reserved channel to qualification for those who have proved to be incompetent in higher education examinations. In the system, which is on the whole still dominated by plan economy, the adult sector tends to be commercial: its admission level is lower and its tuition higher than at regular institutions. Second, academically, adult education is juxtaposed to junior college, with its teaching plan, training mode, teaching material, etc., being basically a simplified version of those in a regular undergraduate university. It adopts a unitary enrollment and student registration system, a unitary length of schooling. This renders adult education unattractive on two aspects: its rigid course arrangement gives adult students little possibility to make a feasible work-study plan; its low value in the labor

market is fatal to rural youth, who already lack clear channels to employment. In addition, adult education, unlike regular higher education, does not bring about change of status, which turns out to be especially unattractive to rural students.

The blue print for rural higher education by contemporary Chinese educationists--- a network with established higher education institutions as the center, rural community colleges as the main body, integrating education of various levels and open to students of various types (Liu Yao, 2003; Hong Jun, 2001)--- bears quite some resemblance to the early stage of the US land-grant universities' development. But there is something else in this picture, because China today is greatly different from what it was over 70 years ago when Yan Yangchu and Ling Shuming endeavored for rural construction: large numbers of rural youth are already in the city. To some extent they represent the most energetic force in the village and aspire strongly for a change in life. Regular higher education institutions could adopt a credit accumulation system and modular programs, which are already introduced in European and US institutions (Trow, 2000) and also found their way to other countries, e.g. South Africa (Ensor, 2002). This will allow rural youth a longer term of schooling, more freedom to arrange their work and study, and divided payment of tuition. In this way, institutions will not only find a channel to transfer education from the urban to the rural areas. It is also possible to pave the way to universal access, which, as is conceptualized by Trow, includes the participation of students of non-traditional ages for lifelong learning in their homes and workplaces (Trow, 2000, p7).

5.3. Epilogue

In this study, the discussion, whether revolving around financial aid or around access equality, goes along the theme of fairness. When Chinese peasants, the majority of the population, are put in a disadvantaged position in higher education participation, it is obviously unfair. But from the perspective of Guinier (Guinier, 1995), the unfair part about it is not that the minority has got the upper hand. Tyranny arises when the privileged group, even if it is the majority, is fixed and permanent, and there are no checks on its ability to be overbearing. The remedy, Guinier suggests, is to disaggregate the privileged group to ensure checks and balances of fluid, rotating interests. And the work of government was not to transcend different interests but to reconcile them (Guinier, 1995,

p1, p4, p5). In China, there is also the need to disaggregate the privileged group, by the abolishment of the urban-rural dual system and remedy its consequent fault.

Guinier defines 'fair play' as the rules that encourage everyone to play, and she advocates the "principle of taking turns" patterned after a family decision-making, in which the parents will propose that all the children take turns regardless of the majority or minority (Guinier, 1995, p5). If so, fairness is an ideal. Fairness is rarely conceptualized, and is therefore difficult to measure (Lewis & Dunder, 2000, p2-3). But it does not irrationalize the effort to seek for ultimate fairness. In fact, the pursuit for fairness, in the same way as the higher education system seeks to satisfy the endless social demand, is endless.

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Appendix 1: The Basic Data in Chapter Three

Year	Total Town Population (million)		Total Rural Population (million)	
	Population size	Proportion (%)	Population size	Proportion (%)
1999	388.92	30.89	870.17	69.11
2000	458.44	36.22	807.39	63.78
2001	480.64	37.66	795.63	62.34

Source: www.china.com.cn

Categories	Examinees in 1997	Enrollment in 1998	Examinees in 1999	Examinees in 2000	Examinees in 2001	Examinees in 2002
Town students, same year	33%	38%	34.9%	39.6 %	40.8%	37.8%
Rural students, same year	35%	29%	33.7%	34.8 %	36.8%	40%
Town students, past years	10%	14%	12.4%	10.3 %	9.4%	9.1%
Rural students, past years	21%	19%	18.9%	15.3 %	13.0%	13.2%
Rural students as a whole	56%	48%	52.6%	50.1%	49.8%	53.2%

Source: 1. Enrollment Stat Data by Student Department of the Education Ministry;
2. Li Wensheng (2002)

Year	Qianghua Univ			Beijing Univ		
	Total enrolled	Rural students	Proportion (%)	Total enrollment	Rural students	Proportion (%)
90	1994	433	21.7			
91	2031	385	19.0			
92	2080	381	18.3	1810	403	22.3
93	2210	352	15.9	910	168	18.5
94	2203	407	18.5			
95	2241	451	20.1	2089	436	20.9
96	2298	431	18.8	2164	425	19.6
97	2320	452	19.5	2211	420	19.0
98	2462	510	20.7	2240	415	18.5
99	2663	506	19.0	2425	396	16.3
2000			11			

Source: Zhang Yulin, (2003)

Year	1992	1993	1998	1999	2003
Total	39943	48680			
Town graduates of the same year	7019	9094			
Town graduates of past years	7527	7056			
Rural graduates of the same year	9093	12883			
Rural graduates of past years	16066	19012			
Rural students newly admitted	25159	31895	34849	51243	154832
Proportion of rural students newly admitted	63%	65.5%	62%	61%	66%

Note: 1. There is no category as to the types of schools to which the students are admitted.
2. The table only covers students enrolled. The number of students eventually on campus should be lower, because some students fail to register for reasons of tuition, school quality, choice of program, etc

Source: *Chinese Edu Comprehensive Stat Yearbook*, published by HE Publishing House, edited by National Education Committee.

Grade	Department	Major	Rural	Non-rural	Total	Rural proportion
Grade 99	Chemical Engin.	Chemical Engin. & Technology	97	55	152	63.82%
Grade 00	Chemical Engin.	Chemical Engin. & Technology	96	36	132	72.72%
Grade 01	Chemical Engin.	Chemical Engin. & Technology	85	29	114	74.56%
Grade 02	Chemical Engin.	Chemical Engin. & Technology	45	15	60	75.00%
Grade 02	Chemical Engin.	Applied Chemistry	46	14	60	76.67%
Grade 02	Chemical Engin.	Biological Engin.	38	18	56	67.86%
Grade 01	Metallurgy	Metallurgy Engin.	59	19	78	75.64%
Grade 01	Metallurgy	Metal Material Engin	43	10	53	81.13%
Grade 01	Economic Management	International Finance & Trade	45	72	117	38.46%
Grade 01	Resource & Environment	Mapping Engin.	59	17	76	77.63%
Grade 01	Civil Engin.	Water Supply & Drainage Engin.	20	9	29	68.97%
Total			633	294	927	68.28%

Dept.	Grade	Total	Rural students	Rural student proportion (%)
Clinic	2 0 0 3	374	217	58.02
Clinic	2 0 0 2	558	288	51.61
Clinic	2001	186	97	52.1
Pharmacology	2 0 0 3	124	91	73 . 3
pharmacology	2 0 0 2	112	67	59 . 8
Pharmacology	2 0 0 1	129	85	65 . 9
Preventive Medicine	2 0 0 2	47	28	59. 6
Dentistry	2 0 0 3	30	18	60. 0
Dentistry	2 0 0 2	31	22	70. 9
Dentistry	2 0 0 1	30	23	76. 7
Radiography	2 0 0 3	28	24	85. 7
Radiography	2 0 0 2	27	22	81. 5
Radiography	2 0 0 1	60	20	33. 3
Advanced nurse	2 0 0 3	26	22	84 . 6
Total		1762	1024	58 . 1

Grade	Urban students		Rural students		Total	Rural proportion
2002	110		151		261	57.85%
2003	Urban graduates, past year	Urban graduates, same year	Rural graduates, past year	Rural graduates, same year	270	65.92%
	39	53	83	95		

Table 3.8. The Student Proportion that Some Universities Enroll from Their Host Places				
University	Total enrollment	Enrollment in host place	Proportion in total enrollment	Enrollment in other places as reference
Beijing U		513		97 (in Sichuan)
People's U		200		60
Wuhan U	3000	1340	45%	
Zhejiang U	6400	4000	62.5%	
Nanjing U	3000 (undergraduate & junior college program)	1000 (only undergraduate)		
Dongnan U	4000	2350		
Source: 1. Li Wensheng (2002); Wang Qi (2004)				

Student source	Arts programs in key universities	Science programs in key universities	Arts programs in average universities	Science programs in average universities	Arts programs in junior colleges	Science programs in junior colleges
Beijing	466	460	447	421	420	382
Hubei	544	566	523	495	--	--
Hunan	556	537	524	535	514	483
Guizhou	514	480	---	---	---	---
Gap between top and bottom score	90	106	77	114	94	101

Source: www.chedu.com

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2001/1998
1. Total (billion yuan)	54.48	70.42	90.44	116.66	2.1 times
Proportion (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
2. Financial allocation	34.26	42.95	51.27	61.33	1.8 times
Proportion (%)	62.9	61.0	56.7	52.6	10% decrease
Capital construction included	65.0	74.7	71.4	70.9	1.1 times
3. School self-financing revenue	202.2	274.7	391.7	553.3	2.7 times
Proportion (%)	37.1	39.0	43.3	47.4	10% increase
Various Fees included	73.1	120.8	192.6	298.7	4.1 time
Proportion (%)	13.4	17.2	21.3	25.6	12% increase

Source: The Education and Science Development Institution of Shanghai City
<http://www.edu.cn/20021106/3071663.shtml>,

Year	State Fiscal Edu Funds (billion <i>yuan</i>)	B. GDP (billion <i>yuan</i>)	A/B ratio
1993	86.776	3138	2.76%
1994	117.474	4380	2.68%
1995	141.152	5727.7	2.46%
1996	167.170	6859.4	2.44%
1997	186.254	7477.2	2.49%
1998	203.245	7955.3	2.55%
1999	228.718	8191.1	2.79%
2000	256.261	8940.4	2.87%
2001	305.701	9593.3	3.19%
2002	349.140	10239.8	3.41%

Source: *National Education Budget Implementation Statistics Report; National Economy and Social Development Statistics Bulletin.*

year	Tuition per student (<i>yuan</i>)	Town resident yearly average income (<i>yuan</i>)	Rural resident yearly average income for (<i>yuan</i>)
1991	205.09	1713	709
1992	396.56	2031	784
1993	592.99		921
1994	871.13	3502	1220
1995	1064.08	4282	1577
1996	1816.25	4844	1926
1997	2312.5	5160	2090
1998	2755.48	5425	2161
1999	3548.36	5854	2210
2000	4620.82	6280	2253

Source: *National Regular HE Ins Tuition Charge Data Collection in 2000; Chinese Edu Funds Stat Yearbook in 1989~1994 and 1995~2000; Chinese Stat Yearbook in 1995~2001.*

	Town	Rural	Town	Rural	Town	Rural
1990	40.30	59.70			21.60	78.40
1992	Senior High School	14.55	Junior High School	56.85	Primary School	

1995	84.13	15.87	42.90	57.10	29.50	70.50
1998	86.03	13.97	42.16	57.84	32.35	67.65
<p>Note: graduates of past years who continue to stay on campus and repeat their education to prepare for higher education entrance are not included in the contemporary senior high student body</p> <p>Source: Liu Yao (2003)</p>						

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001
Students admitted to higher education ins (million)	2.085	2.755	3.768	4.642
Graduates of senior high (million)	5.210	5.467	6.021	7.091
Graduates of senior high admitted to higher education (%)	40.0	50.4	62.6	65.5
<p>Source: Figures for 1998-2000 from <i>Chinese Education Cause Stat. Yearbook</i>; Figures for 2001 from <i>Analysis on Chinese Education Cause Stat. in 2001</i> edited by Plan and Development Dept. of Education Ministry</p>				

Year	Total	Tertiary Edu	Technical Secondary School	Primary and Secondary Edu
1992	7.011	6.376 / 90.9%	0.174 / 2.5%	0.024 / 0.3%
1993	9.024	7.650 / 84.8%	0.873 / 9.7%	0.064 / 0.7%
1994	11.944	10.410 / 87.2%	0.881 / 7.4%	0.080 / 0.7%
1995	13.890	12.131 / 87.3%	1.050 / 7.6%	0.052 / 0.4%
1998	19.714	18.050 / 91.6%	1.088 / 5.5%	0.041 / 0.2%
1999	20.866	19.737 / 94.6%	0.909 / 4.4%	0.079 / 0.4%

Source: *Chinese Edu Funds Stat. Data 1992~1994, Chinese Edu Funds Stat Yearbooks.*

Year	Total sum	Funds within Budget	Edu extra fees	Edu collection funds	School fees	Sum directly borne by peasants and the proportion in total sum
1993		20.78	6.33	4.07	2.97	13.39/—
1994	48.55	28.68	7.96	5.26	4.16	17.39/35.8%
1995	61.13	32.51	11.29	9.92	5.49	26.69/43.7%
1996	73.39	38.58	14.66	13.29	8.78	36.74/50.1%
1997	78.49	43.00	15.88	9.29	7.94	33.12/42.2%
1998	81.20	46.10	16.50	6.40	8.86	31.77/39.1%
1999	84.51	51.13	16.25	3.42	9.38	29.05/34.4%

Source: *Chinese Edu Funds Stat Yearbooks 1993~1996, Chinese Stat Yearbooks 1993~2001.*