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Effects of the Change in the Social and Economical Conditions in China on the School Education during the First Half of the 20th Century

By *Kohsuke Sasajima**

Toward the end of the 19th century, a movement occurred in China to promulgate a school education law. This paper studies as positively as possible how the laws were promulgated, what revisions were effected on such laws according to the social and economical changes, and what reasons existed for such changes, covering about 50 years in the first half of the 20th century. Inquiries are made on things which were not touched by the people who studied the Chinese history of education, or touched just a little, and on the reasons why revisions were effected. Especially, description is made of the matters of which Chinese researchers could not describe due to the political circumstances at the time which they described matters concerning education, and as to whether the laws were actually abided by or not.

Mr. Masunori Hiratsuka published in detail the results of his studies made on missionary schools which influenced greatly the educational circles in China during the first half of the 20th century, therefore, in this paper, making description is made only where doing so is needed in order to proceed with my statement.

A movement started in China to establish new style schools, and Dobunkan was established in Peking in 1862 for the study of foreign languages in order to modernize the nation by introducing European civilization as a result of the defeat in the successive wars with European countries after the Opium War was lost, which started in 1840.

The movement to establish new style schools thus began, however, to reform the old educational system, the classical examination system for the government service in old time China, was not easy because most of the high ranking government officials were those who had passed such examinations. Therefore, those who advocated

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new style education started to reform the private schools which were on a collateral line as seen from the old educational system, and the private schools accepted such reformation.

In June 1898, a new educational system seemed to get under way, however, the hope disappeared in the political change which took place on 21 September.

After the North China Affair, which started in 1900, the progressive faction came to the fore, and establishment of a new educational system was pushed forward and an imperial decree was issued on the establishment of new style schools in various places in the country. And on 15 August 1902, a school regulation, the first regulation in China, was enacted in line with the new educational system. However, before this regulation was barely enforced, another regulation was enacted on 15 January 1904 as a result of a change occurred in men of political power.

Both of these regulations had no provisions on the education of women, and an opinion prevailed generally asserting that no education was necessary for women, and a regulation on the education of female school was promulgated on 8 March 1904 under the necessity to abolish the unequal treaty.

During the time of the latter regulation, the percentage of school attendance was low, and the facilities were not sufficient, and competent teachers could not be obtained in enough number. Especially, these things were prominent in the aspect of education of women.

The Republic of China was born through the revolution which took place on 10 October 1911, and a new educational system was put into effect on 9 January 1912, however, due to the unstabilized political condition generated under the strife for leadership, a revision was made on the system each time of the change in political leadership.

Affected by the World War I, a thought to educate the people into a people able to confront foreign aggression had risen, however, the thought waned after the termination of the war. In 1919, a movement, called May 4th Movement, began, opposing the Paris Peace Conference, and an anti-Japanese sentiment ran high. This sentiment caused the Japanese style educational system to be abolished. As a result of May 4th Movement, a coeducation system was put into effect.

When a movement to revise the educational system was put into force in 1912, it was impossible to adopt the Japanese educational system as the anti-Japanese sentiment prevailed across China, opinions of the people who studied in the US and had

a considerably big power in the educational circles at that time were taken up, and an American style 6-3-3 system was established on 1 November 1922.

The increase in the number of people who studied in the US was the result of the use of part of the reparations paid by the US in July 1907 for North Chinese Incident, as fund for studies in the US. The US, that delayed in advancing into China toward the end of the 19th century due to its domestic state of things, employed a policy to place the Chinese educational circles under its influence, and to make China a friendly nation; and it made a positive advancement into the educational circles of China, providing monetary assistances and dispatching teachers.

During the period of the 6-3-3 educational system, the political situation was in much more confusion than the period of the educational system of 1912, moreover, expenses were not disbursed—in some provinces, disbursement of educational expenses was not made for as long as one year during 1925. Thus, the educational circles were in a chaotic state. The schools in the areas where battles were fought were closed, and even in other areas, many schools were also closed due to the deterioration of public peace.

With the rise of a movement to restore the right of education, which started around 1925, a movement occurred for the restoration of the right for the educational institutes operated by foreign nationals for the Chinese people, and it became stronger.

The Nationalist Government that completed North subjugation in 1928 and nearly succeeded in the control of China promulgated a new educational system on 28 May 1928, and established a school system firmly by enacting laws for schools of all kinds in and after 1929, and standard curriculums were unacted, too.

The Nationalist Government, during the years from 1927 to 1929, adopted a postgraduate course in place of the Education Department, and also adopted a university area system in one or two provinces. However, the postgraduate course was abolished faced by the opposition raised by the bureaucratic circles, and the university area system was discontinued in the face of the opposition raised by bureaucrats and students.

During the period when the 1928 educational system was adopted, the movement to recover the right of education came to an end with a success, and as Japan made her advancement into the continent positively, anti-Japanese education was taken up, placing importance on military education.

During the time from the end of the Sino-Japanese Incident to the first stage

of the Pacific War, an education law suitable to such situation was issued, and after the termination of the war, laws were issued concerning the treatment of the students who had been mobilized in the war, and the teachers and students who were in the areas which had been under the occupation of the Japanese Army.

The Chinese Communist Party, which cancelled the 1st Kuomintang-Communist collaboration in July 1927, organized an army and established Sovietist administrative power in many provinces, and in October 1931, established Temporarily China-Soviet Republic Government at Juichin in Changhsi Province. Attacked successively by the Nationalist Party, the Government abandoned Juichin and began to move, finally establishing a new capital in the northern part of Chianghsi Province in October 1935.

With the occurrence of the Cino-Japanese Incident, Kuomintang-Communist collaboration was realized for the 2nd time. After the termination of the Pacific War, a rivalry between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party became violent over the seizure of the areas which had been under the control of the old Japanese Army, thus a civil war breaking out. The Communist Party won the war, and established the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949. The school attendance rate in the areas which were under the control of the Communist Party was low. The Party poured efforts into education; the Temporary China-Soviet Republic Government established an educational system, however, the government was under the siege of the Nationalist Party and compelled to move from one place to another, therefore, it was unable to operate its educational system satisfactorily. There was shortage in teachers, as well as facilities and teaching equipment could not be secured sufficiently.

While, the Communist Party had first established an educational system, however, it effected revisions in the system in and after 1943 so as to make it suitable to the actual conditions in the communist area. In the case of the education in the communist area, too, it was not favored by educational facilities and equipment.

The strife between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party developed into an all-out war. During such period, the Chinese Communist Party could not afford to spare time for education.