A Review of the Policies on the Private Colleges of China

SONG Qiurong

1 Introduction

In old China, villages bankrupted, people lived a hard life, the level of social economic development was extremely low and the power of the national capitalism was very weak. However, there was miraculously a huge private higher education group based on the backward economic foundation and there were also private colleges, like Nankai University, which could be compared favorably with the very famous public colleges and be praised by foreign peers. Having probed the reasons, the policy of the government was very important. Because the government adopted the policy of vigorous encouragement and strict management and created soft circumstances good for the sound development of the private colleges, some private colleges with good achievement in running colleges emerged and advanced increasingly. So summarizing the policy on private colleges of the government during that period is significant. Based on brief study and analysis, the policy of the Nanjing Nationalist Government for private colleges is summed up.

2 Strictly rectifying the private colleges

During the administration period of Nanjing Nationalist Government, they took registration and record of private colleges seriously, tried best to put them into the national education administration system, at the same time, suppressed these private colleges with bad record in running colleges resolutely and through those measures, and reorganized the private colleges strictly.

Not long after the establishment of the Nanjing Nationalist Government, they carried out the mandatory policy of forcing
the private colleges to register and record, stipulated that private colleges should have the basic registration prerequisites through legislations, and then ensured the quality of private colleges in running colleges. The basic record prerequisites included the following three aspects:\[1\]:

- the funds: having sufficient funds to run and maintain colleges;
- the facilities: having own relevant place, dormitory, sports ground, library, laboratory and others;
- the teachers and personnel: teachers are capable of teaching and the number of full-time teachers is one third of the total number.

After that, the Nanjing Nationalist Government enhanced the basic registration prerequisites from three to five through legislation and the newly added two were:\[2\]:

- being abided by the current laws and regulations and the rules of the colleges
- the entrance standard of the students is qualified and the scores of the students in colleges are good.

While ensuring the quality of running colleges of the private colleges, the Nanjing Nationalist Government confined the religious education of the missionary colleges strictly and reduced the leadership of the foreigners to the missionary colleges and tried hard to regain sovereignty in education through legislations, stipulating: “if the private college is run by religious group, the religion course should not be included in the required courses, and it is not allowed to do religious propaganda in class time. And if there are religious rites on campus, it is also not allowed to force or induce students to take part in.”\[3\] And “the principals of the private colleges should be held by Chinese”\[4\], “if there are special situations, the foreigners hold the position of college’s trustees and the number cannot exceed one third and the chairman or president of the board of trustees should be held by Chinese.”\[5\]

For ensuring the implementation of the registration policy, the Nanjing Nationalist Government took several measures to punish the private colleges which did not register or record. The measures included not granting public subsidy, not giving the equal treatment as the registered public colleges and closing the private colleges without registering and recording, etc. The last two measures were consolidated through legislation to supervise and urge the private colleges to register and record to the government actively. These measures achieved great results. Till 1937, most of private colleges in China had fulfilled the registration and record and were under the national education administration system.

The policy of forcing the private colleges to register and record adopted by the Nanjing Nationalist Government is of great significance. First of all, this policy had made the general level of private colleges in running colleges progress greatly during the Nanjing Nationalist Government. Before that, quite some private colleges were of rough facilities, few teachers and low level of running colleges and teaching in China. After adopting the registration policy, for the purpose of registration and record, several private colleges tried their best to raise money and improve the conditions of teachers and facilities and the quality of running colleges. Secondly, this policy made the missionary colleges walk up into the track to serve Chinese society. Before that, missionary colleges always enjoyed the privilege of cultural concession-land and become the so-called “another country in the territory of China” in the education field. After the adoption of the policy, the missionary colleges were forced to cancel the religious courses and ask Chinese to hold the principals and change “teaching for the religion” into “teaching for education and China”. Finally, this policy ensured that the private and public colleges had the same status, the Nanjing Nationalist Government treated the registered private colleges as the public colleges basically.

Suppressing the unqualified private colleges stoutly is another policy adopted by the Nanjing Nationalist Government to reorganize the private colleges strictly. There were two kinds of the suppressed private colleges: one is the so-called “teaching shop” of collecting money by dint of education and their deeds were just equal to running business, like the suppressed “Culture College” and “Women Laws and Politics College” in Nanjing
and “Far-east College” in Shanghai in April, 1929, etc. [6] The other was the private colleges not abiding the rules of private colleges and with poor facilities, like Shanghai Arts College, Xinmin College, Construction College, Huaguo College, Bright College and Literature and Laws School in September, 1930, etc. [7] And in August 1930, for the enforcement of standardization and systematization of the suppressing policy, the Nanjing Nationalist Government stipulated “the measure to suppress the private colleges and the colleges for professional training”. The above-mentioned policy undoubtedly to promote the basic quality of private colleges in running colleges.

3 Strengthening supervision and conduction to the private colleges

When probing the policy to the private colleges of the Nanjing Nationalist Government, it could be concluded that its management to the private colleges was relatively rigorous. Besides carrying out the policy of reorganizing the private colleges strictly, the Nanjing Nationalist Government adopted the policy of strengthening supervision and conduction to the private colleges, which was implemented through extending the power of supervision and conduction and carrying out the system of inspection and superintendence.

From the relevant legislations, the Nanjing Nationalist Government possessed a very large competence of supervision and conduction to the private colleges, and this competence was consolidated constantly through incessant amendment to the relevant laws and regulations. In the “the Provisions to the Private Colleges” promulgated in August 1929, the Nanjing Nationalist Government stipulated clearly “to the independent private colleges and the colleges for professional training, their legitimate governing body is the Ministry of Education.” [8] According to this provision and the following amended provisions, besides having the rights to approve the set up, registration, alteration and close down of the private colleges, to conduct and supervise the private colleges, to reorganize, disband and suppress the private colleges which managed illy and breached decrees, to approbate the principals of the private colleges, to examine the conditions of financial affairs and general affairs of the board of trustees of the private colleges, to liquidate the properties of the board of trustees after disbandment, to handle the unclaimed properties of the board of trustees after disbandment and to approve the disband of the board of trustees, the Ministry of Education had other two kinds of rights. One was to enjoy the right of finding principals for the private colleges without principals temporarily. The relevant provisions stipulated that “if the administrative department in charge of education considered that the principal or the rector chose by the board of trustees is not capable, the administrative department could order the board of trustees to choose another one. And if another one was still not capable or there was dissension in the board of trustees and that led to standstill, the administrative department should take the right of the principals of the private colleges.” [9] The other right was to enjoy the right to restructure the boards of trustees of the private colleges. And the relevant provisions stipulated that “if there were dissensions in the boards of trustees and that led to standstill, the administrative department in charge of education should order the private colleges to restructure in a certain time and if that was necessary, the administrative department in charge of education should restructure the boards of trustees directly.” [10] From that, the Nanjing Nationalist Government’s management to the private colleges had overstepped the scope of supervision and conduction and approached the direct leadership and control.

The system of inspection and superintendence was that the central administrative department in charge of education could appoint education-inspecting officials or inspectors to inspect and superintend the situations of the performance of the educational laws and regulations and running schools by the local administrative departments in charge of education and the colleges. Since the ending of the Qing Dynasty in China, the positions of education-inspecting officials had been created.
After the establishment of the Republic of China, the Northern Warlords’ Government set up the department of education-inspecting and full-time education-inspecting officials; during the period of the Nanjing Nationalist Government, the system of inspection and superintendence tended to be complete. Appointing inspectors to inspect the private colleges was the important way for the Nanjing Nationalist Government to manage the private colleges, and the decisions of registration, suppression, encouragement and improvement to the private colleges done by the government were all based on the report of the inspectors. For example, the mandate to improve the private Fudan University issued by the Ministry of Education of the Nanjing Nationalist Government was based on the report of the inspector in December 1932. According to the report, the mandate pointed out that Fudan University had the problems of “too many departments”, “too many part-time teachers”, “shortage of experimental equipments”, “lack of books and reference materials”, “particular emphasis laid on the system of credit hour” and “luxurious lives led by the students”, etc., and ordered Fudan University to ameliorate and also requested Fudan University that “it should closely examine the qualification of the applicant students and the entrance test should be held seriously”, etc. One year later, the Ministry of Education appointed inspector to inspect Fudan University and examine the performance of the mandate, after giving the affirmation to “the improvement according to the former mandate and serious attentive management done by Fudan University”, put forward the still-existing problems again and urged the university to ameliorate them.

The inspection work of the Nanjing Nationalist Government could be concluded as the following two characteristics: one was unremitting concern in conduction and the other was thoroughgoing and painstaking inspection. That was really worth reference and consultation.

The policy of strengthening supervision and conduction was likely to reduce independence of the private colleges, but that was good for ensuring the quality of the private colleges. Especially in the situations of distemperedness of interior management and restrain mechanism in the period of the Nanjing Nationalist Government, the aspiring significance of this policy should be affirmative.

4 Rewarding and subsidizing the private colleges

Compared with strict reorganization and strengthening of supervision and conduction, the policy of rewarding and subsidizing the private colleges by the Nanjing Nationalist Government was more constructive. The former two measures was ensuring the quality in running colleges in pessimism, and the latter was improving the quality in running colleges in positivist.

From the beginning, the Nanjing Nationalist Government began to subsidize the private colleges, but the amount and scope was limited. In the early days of the 1930s, the government stipulated the policy to reward and subsidize the private colleges formally and put forward the measure of reward and subsidization. The measure stipulated that:

1) the central, provincial or municipal government should appropriate money considering the circumstances or boxer indemnity foundation should appropriate money through the Ministry of Education to subsidize the registered private colleges, schools and the colleges for professional training with excellent achievements.

2) the Ministry of Education or provincial or municipal administrative organizations in charge of education should praise and honor or grant subsidy to the schools or departments with specific academic contribution.

3) The Ministry of Education should praise and honor or grant subsidy to the tentative colleges or those with fine tentative achievements.

Subsequently, the measure of reward and subsidization was listed in the Constitution of the Republic of China. The measure of reward and subsidization could be summed up into two kinds, the routine measure and the unconventional measure. The routine reward and subsidy started from 1934. The government started to reward and subsidizes the private colleges in large-scale and appropriated
money regularly every year, never intermitted even in the War of Resistance Against Japan. The unconventional reward and subsidy started from the War of Resistance Against Japan and according to existing reference materials, the reward and subsidy in this period was including:

1) the allowance to the teachers and students of the private colleges during the war. To teachers, there was relief fund, storage fee of the colleges’ property, teachers’ welfare fund, and supplementary benefit to academic research, bonus and money of reward and subsidy, etc. Part of students of the private colleges could enjoy loan and public expense as the students in public colleges.

2) the allowance to movement and continuation of the private colleges after the war.

3) the subsidy to books and reference materials and facilities of the private colleges after the war.

Although the amount of subsidy to the private colleges by the Nanjing Nationalist Government was greatly less than that to the public colleges, it was of great significance and not only alleviated the shortage of funds of the private colleges and helped the private colleges to improve the standard of running colleges, but also made known the government’s attitude and position in encouraging the private colleges to develop. And it would be helpful to raise the degree of importance-attaching to the private colleges by the whole society and increase the supportive dynamics to the private colleges by the whole society and propel the private colleges’ incessant progress.

To grant great honor to the person who donated money to education-promotion or who excellently run schools was another policy held by the Nanjing Nationalist Government to actively reward the private colleges. The Nanjing Nationalist Government paid great attention to the construction of educational laws and regulations and was adept in standardizing the private colleges through legislations and brought the management to the private colleges into the orbit of constitutionality and the relative policies on reorganization, supervision and conduction, and reward and subsidy to the private colleges were based on the relevant laws and regulations. These laws and regulations for policy consideration had the following characteristics:
1) Being comparatively complete. The laws and regulations relating to the private colleges included the Constitution, High Education Law, the Basic Law for the Private Colleges and specific regulations for the private colleges, hereinto there were many kinds in the specific regulations for the private colleges and dealt with a wide range of management and so that was comparatively complete.

2) Being comparatively detailed. Not only every policy was furnished with relevant laws and regulations, but also relevant provisions of laws and regulations standardized every stage during the carrying out of the policies. For example, only to the policy about the routine reward and subsidy to the private colleges, the Nanjing Nationalist Government promulgated three regulations one after another: the synopsis for the allocation measures of the supplementary benefit to the schools above the colleges for special training”, “the allocation measures of the supplementary benefit to the schools above the colleges for special training” and “the detailed regulations to the allocation of the supplementary benefit to the schools above the colleges for special training”. Among them, “the synopsis for the allocation measures” was provided with more concrete “the allocation measures”; soon after the enforcement of “the allocation measures”, the Nanjing Nationalist Government issued “the detailed regulations to the allocation” further and stipulated provisions to standardize every small link during the subsidizing to the private colleges.

3) Being comparatively thorough. After the promulgation of one important law or regulation for policy consideration, it would be always accompanied with other correlative laws or regulations to avoid the possible negative influence by the policy. For example, soon after the Nanjing Nationalist Government promulgated the laws or regulations for the registration of the private colleges; to the private colleges which had been closed down and the private colleges before registration, the government also stipulated relative laws or regulations to handle them appropriately, like “before registration, the testing regulations to distinguish graduates or dropout students in the schools above colleges for special training, which failed to register or had been closed down” and “before registration, the handling standards to recognize the graduates of the schools above colleges for special training retroactively”, etc. Complete, detailed and thorough laws and regulations would be helpful to overcome the maladies of “implementing policy in one’s position, while setting aside the policy after leaving the position” and “making unpredictable changes in policy”, and guaranteed decisions-making, management and supervision of the administrative organization in charge of education and safeguarded the healthy and stable development of high education.

6 Conclusion

The history of private high education at all times and in all over the world indicted that during the development process of the private colleges, the government played a very important role all the time and the policies of the government could propel or block the development of the private colleges. Especially, China has the political tradition of czarism and the government’s policies have strong commanding power and so are of great significance. Hence summarizing and drawing lessons from the valuable policies to the private colleges adopted by the Nanjing Nationalist Government will be good to propel the further development of the civil high education of China.

Reference

1 Song E R (1990) Selected collection of the educational laws and regulations of the Republic of China (1912-1949). Nanjing: Jiangsu Educational Press, 192-193