

# *Features of Personnel System of Universities in the Late Qing Dynasty:*

## *Analysis of Three Charters of the Imperial University of Peking*

*Xiao xing'an*

Yunnan University of Finance and Economics

466258063@qq.com

**Abstract:** It is concluded, after analyzing and contrasting Charters of three universities in the late Qing Dynasty to current system, that the personnel system of universities in the late Qing Dynasty is featured by:

**I. Intense centralization. Management of Official School Education System in the late Qing Dynasty was applicable to both national governance and school administration;**

**II. Bureaucratic assignment of university personnel;**

**III. Semi-colonial personnel system. At that time, personnel system of university was always intervened by foreign powers due to dependent state sovereignty in the late Qing Dynasty; and**

**IV. Modernity. New personnel management emerged in universities. New personnel managements like Democratic Management and Contract Management are in their infancy.**

**Keywords:** *Charters of the Imperial University; the late Qing Dynasty; university; personnel system*

The three Charters in the late Qing Dynasty include the Memorial on the Charters of the Imperial University of Peking by Liang Qichao in 1898, the Imperial Order on the Charters of the Imperial University of Peking (never implemented) hosted by Zhang Baixi in December 190 and the Royally Approved Memorial on Charters of the Imperial University of Peking by Zhang Zhidong, Zhang Baixi and Rongqing Imperial University of Peking in January 1904. Years of 1898 to 1912 have witnessed establishment of the Imperial University of Peking, the end of the Qing Dynasty, establishment of the Republic of China, as well as nascent forms of universities in China. During the fourteen years, universities in China were nominally considered a seminary where bureaucratic organizations of China were developed,

and there were only three public universities in China - the Imperial University of Peking, the Imperial Tientsin University (now known as Tianjin University) and the Imperial University of Shanxi (now known as Shanxi University).<sup>1</sup> We can see something about personnel systems of universities in the late Qing Dynasty in China by studying general assignments of personnel of the three universities. At that time, the Imperial University of Peking was always taken as a model in China, and its Charters were available in all universities nationwide. In other words, its management of personnel is typical of that of China's universities at that time.

In this paper, we first look into the personnel assignment of China's universities in the perspective of three "Charters" of the Imperial University of Peking, and conclude that the personnel system of China's university then is characterized by:

### I Centralization

In 1898 and 1911, besides a little difference between salutations of administrators and teachers and those in official school education system, personnel system was considered a successor of official school education system in the late Qing Dynasty, such as centralized governance of the country and administration of schools.

#### *A. Highly centralized authority of the country*

It means that all personnel rights of universities were highly centralized with the sovereign. In details, typically, the sovereign empowered the Chancellor of the Imperial University of Peking to concurrently administer education affairs nationwide; and the sovereign approved laws on

university development, such as Royally Approved Order or Memorial on the Charters of the Imperial University of Peking. The imperial power, in the late Qing Dynasty of feudal autocracy, was supreme. As an old saying goes that kings have long arms and can do no wrong, all affairs of universities were also under control of the sovereign. In other words, the sovereign had full jurisdiction over all personnel management of universities. Officials must submit to the throne memorials on all issues, from establishment and cancellation of universities, donations and places, appointment of Chancellors of universities and laws on universities; to employment, promotion and award of Branch Supervisor (Chinese: 分科監督 fēn-kē-jīān-dū, now known as the Dean of a faculty in universities) , General Supervisor (Chinese: 总教习 zǒng-jiào-xí), Controller (Chinese: 提调 tí-diào) and teachers and administering staff.

*1).The Supreme of the Imperial University concurrently administering education nationwide*

The Imperial University of Peking was designed to be a leading institution of the country and the highest educational authority nationwide. The Section I, General Provisions, Chapter I of the Memorial of Zongli Yamen (also known as Tribunal for the Management of Affairs of All Nations, in charge of foreign policies, it is equivalent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qing Dynasty ) on the Charters of the Imperial University of Peking by Liang Qichao clearly points out that, “as a leading and admiring institution for all universities in all provinces and all countries, the Imperial University of Peking shall be built with all our efforts for its leading model”. Furthermore, “all schools or universities in all provinces, shall be governed by the Imperial University due to their imperfect charters, regulations, inadequate discipline settings, unsound structural forms, and inconvenient information exchange. Their charters, regulations, disciplines and curriculum shall be consistent with the Charters, All these works shall be logically and generally laid out, and then properly arranged”.<sup>ii</sup>In the Chapter IV of Royally Approved Memorial on the Charters of the Imperial University of Peking, the Imperial University is reaffirmed as a leading institution nationwide. “The Imperial University is eligible to administer all educational issues

nationwide, as it represents our national spirits..... All charters and regulations shall be immediately delivered to all education authorities in all provinces.” The Charters also specify that, the Imperial University shall collect all overviews of all schools and submit them to the Emperor. In details, the Charters require that, “the Imperial University shall determine formatted book which includes all items that the survey needs, and disseminate it to all schools in all provinces. When each term goes end, all schools in all provinces shall fill with the book as required based on their actual situation, and submit it to the Imperial University who will annually submit to the Emperor after collection and compilation.”<sup>iii</sup> All regulations hereinabove indicate that, the Charters of the Imperial University are necessarily taken as a model to standardize all management system of all universities nationwide due to lack of orders, imperfect and non-standard regulations of all universities in all provinces at initial stage. The Charters, in other words, empowered the Imperial University to administer all schools or universities nationwide.

Such setting bears analogy to that of the Imperial University of France (Université Impériale). Some scholars argue that China is imitating France. The author, however, believes that, such setting succeeds the old system of China, rather than imitating the French model. It has been being tradition that leaders of the highest seat of learning concurrently administer national education in China since the Han Dynasty. In the Han Dynasty, The government set Tai Xue (an imperial college, also the highest seat of learning in the feudal China) in the Capital. Leader of the Tai Xue, in Chinese we call Tai Xue Ji Jiu, administers concurrently the national education. The Guo Zi Jian (known as the Beijing imperial Academy) (the Tai Xue was included in the Guo Zi Jian, but sometimes, the Guo Zi Jian didn't include the Tai Xue) was designated the highest seat of learning starting from the Sui Dynasty. Since then, the Guo Zi Jian has been serving as the highest seat of learning run by the Central Government and the supreme administrative headquarter for organizations of education in the feudal China. The Imperial University of Peking is as authentic as the Guo Zi Jian or Tai Xue is. That means, the supreme leader of the Imperial University of Peking, serves as the Minister of Education (now known as

the Minister of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China), as well as the Superintendent (now known as the President of the University). Later, frequent changes took place in the Chinese name of Guan Xue Da Chen, For example, the Guan Xue Da Chen was named Xue Wu Da Chen (Chinese: 学务大臣, literally: the Minister of Academic Affairs) in 1903, Shang Shu (the leader of the Department of Education) when the Xue Bu (Chinese: 学部 literally the Department of Education) (In ancient China, the government was structured as Three Departments and Six Ministries. The Department controlled the six ministries.) was established in 1906; and Xue Wu Da Chen in 1911. The Xue Wu Da Chen, or Guan Xue Da Chen, or Shang Shu, however, remained the chief executive of national education and the high Chancellor of the Imperial University of Peking.

#### *2). Normalize personnel management of universities of China*

The Qing Government managed to develop universities nationwide by laws and regulations like the Imperial Order on the Charters of the Imperial University of Peking and the Royally Approved Memorial on Charters of the Imperial University of Peking. These Charters specify universities in terms of “what to do” and “how to do”, including (I) School Mission, disciplines settings and curriculum; (II) general affairs of students like leave of absence, living conditions, graduation examinations and awards and overseas study; and (III) organizational structure, and award, promotion and salary of teaching and administering staff. All of these charters make rule-based operations of universities, and facilitate their development.

#### **B. Centralized power of personnel management within the university**

The Imperial University is a highly centralized organization, its top leaders hold decision power. Though modeled on the Tokyo University concerning disciplines, curriculum and even buildings of the University, the Imperial University remains official school education system in feudal dynasty in its personnel management, - “top leaders hold centralized power”, unlike its Japanese counterparts who have taken into consideration organizational characteristics of

university - bottom-heavy and loose coupling structure.

Centralization within university is shown as follows:

*1). Powers are centralized with the Minister of Education (Chinese: 管学大臣 guǎn-xué-dà-chén), or Superintendent (Chinese: 总监督 zǒng-jīān-dū) and Zong ban (it is an official position equivalent to the president of a university).* The Charters of the Imperial University of Peking specify that, the Minister of Education or the Superintendent shall be in charge of the whole university and administer all staff. Zhang Baixi required that the Superintendent or Zong Ban shall be entitled to all personnel rights excluding employment of the Branch Supervisor and Controllers. That means, The Zong Ban or the Superintendent is authorized to employ all staff, from the General Supervisor to ordinary teaching and administering staff. The General Supervisor, typical of academic authority, can only hold suggestion right of employment of teaching staff. In some other Imperial Universities, the Zong Ban was empowered to a larger extent. The Newly-revised Regulations of the Imperial Tientsin University, for example, specify that the Zong Ban shall be responsible for employing and examining all staff of the university, and oust the one who is found to be unqualified. In other words, the Zong Ban was empowered to employ and dismiss all staff of the university.

*2). The personnel management in the university was vertically and hierarchically structured.*

As shown by the three Charters of the Imperial University, the Line Management was adopted to the chain from the Superintendent, Branch Supervisors to all teaching staff. The Superintendent directly delegated authority to all Branch Supervisors, the Director of Library, and other Directors in charge of places of students' internship, like the Observatory, the Botanical Garden, the Zoo, the Excise Field and the Hospital. The Branch Supervisor directly and vertically transmitted his order or ideas down his lower-level officers like the Provost, the Controller of General Affairs (Chinese: 庶务 shù-wù), the Inspector of Dormitories (Chinese: 斋务 zhāi-wù) and teaching staff. Such organizational structure intensely centralized power with the Superintendent, and made university in the late Qing Dynasty hierarchical. The personnel system of university in the late Qing Dynasty with distinct Chinese characteristics, therefore, combines that

of modern university with traditional one of official school education system in China.

## II Bureaucracy

Bureaucratic teaching staff management was essential for personnel management in the late Qing Dynasty. At that time, Imperial Universities remained Official School Education. Instead of emphasizing on university as an academic organization, they stoke to the principle that students are inculcated with traditional ethnics and morals of China - "Inspiring spirit of faithfulness and love, correcting attitudes". Class origin of their graduates is the same as the one in "Imperial Examination System" (also known as *kē-jǐǎ*). Postgraduates from the Imperial University or from Tong Ru Yuan (Chinese: 通儒院, the first postgraduate institute in China where postgraduates are required to do experiment and research their studies.) will be awarded Jinshi (or the Presented Scholar, refers to a successful candidate in the Imperial Examination) or Hanlin (member of the Imperial Academy in the Qing Dynasty) respectively. Teaching and administering staff of university remained educational officers. Management of officers was accordingly applicable to teaching and administering staff of university concerning division, salutations, employment requirements, employment methods, evaluation, promotion and awards. As above-mentioned, the Imperial University, naturally, was an official school education system, and its personnel was managed according to the slightly improved official school education system in the late Qing Dynasty.

## III. Semi-colony

There was semi-colony concerning personnel system of China's universities at initial stage mainly in terms of (i) incompletely independent educational sovereignty of China, and (ii) interference by foreign powers to basic personnel rights of university such as Rights of Teacher Appointment.

In the late Qing Dynasty, declining national strength of China and War of Aggression of Foreign Powers against China led to incompletely independent educational sovereignty of the State. For instant, missionary universities established by Missionaries in China neither were filed by China's government, nor set the same school mission or

specialized courses as public universities of China did. The Qing Government also never had a single voice in them. For the Government, the only choice was to disclaim the missionary universities. Cowardice of the Government was also a typical in semi-colonized China.

At that time, besides dependent educational sovereignty of the State, basic autonomy of universities, teacher appointment, was intervened by the foreign powers. This mainly means that foreign powers always intervened the Imperial University in selecting and appointing foreign teachers, such as appointing foreign General Supervisors or foreign instructors. Personnel system of China's universities, therefore, was semi-colonized, as the country was. For example, diplomats of Italy, Germany and other countries did question and intervene in appointment by Sun Jianai (孙家鼐) of William Alexander Parsons Martin (also known as Ding Weiliang 丁韪良) as General Supervisor of Western Science. Semi-colonization of China is typically represented by interference of Italians or Germans in minor details such as personnel system of Imperial Universities and by cowardice of Tribunal for the Management of Affairs of All Nations.

## IV. Modernity

There were transformations of personnel system in infancy of China's university from the old Official School Education to modern university in terms of:

### *A. salutations of teaching and administration staff*

First of all, title of teacher was transformed from Instructor (title of education officer) (Chinese 教习 *jiào-xí*) to teacher (today's title) (Chinese: 教员 *jiào-yuán*). In two Charters of Imperial University, teachers were named Instructor in Chinese - "General Supervisor, Deputy General Supervisor (Chinese: 副总教习 *fù-zǒng-jiào-xí*), Branch Instructor (Chinese: 分教习 *fēn-jiào-xí*) and Instructor". In Qing Dynasty, the Instructor (教习 *jiào-xí*), served by two ministers (one is Han and another is the Manchu), was a title of education officer who taught lessons to Shujishi (those jinshi or presented scholars who were candidate students of the Imperial Academy (Chinese: 翰林院 *hàn-lín-yuàn*) at Shu Chang Guan (the Shu Chang Guan of the Imperial Academy was an official school for teaching those excellent

scholars who have passed the Final Imperial Examination) . Assistant Instructor (Chinese: 小教习 xiǎo-jiào-xí) was served by officers lower than Shi Du or Shi Jiang (the position was set for teaching lessons or giving lectures to the Crown Prince, or for accompanying the emperor to study or to discuss knowledge). Instructors were also appointed in the Official School Education System. Teachers were also named Instructors (Chinese: 教习) at schools run in the late Qing Dynasty. Teachers were named in Chinese, however in the Royally Approved Memorial on Charters of the Imperial University of Peking, Jiao Yuan (teacher), Zheng Jiao Yuan (professional teacher) and Fu Jiao Yuan (assistant teacher). It is specified in the Regulations on Management of Teaching Staff that, the professional teacher, in charge of special lecture set for the specialties of universities, shall be responsible for delivering knowledge, teaching skills and instructing researches. The assistant teacher shall assist the professional in teaching students and instructing experiments.

Secondly, names of staff were increasingly modernized. For example, Zong Ban (in charge of all issues of the school), was transformed to “Da Xue Tang Jian Du” (Supervisor of the Imperial University) (now known as President of a university), the Controller of School Library (Chinese: 藏书楼 cáng-shū-lóu) to Director of Library, and Zhi Ying Ti Diao (This position was responsible for all financial issues of the school) to Accounting Officer (Chinese: 会计官 kuài-jì-guān).

#### *B. Divisions of administrative staff catching up with those of modern universities*

First of all, Superintendent, equivalent to president in modern university, emerged. The two previous Charters specify that the Minister of Education supervises teaching staff led by the General Supervisor and administering staff led by Zongban. The Royally Approved Memorial on the Imperial University of Peking, however, specifies that the Minister directly supervises the Superintendent who has sole administration over all staff and all Directors of the university. Secondly, staff was subdivided. Universities began to set modern academic managing staff, Supervisor of Branch University, Controller of General Affairs, Inspector of Dormitories and Provost (Chinese: 教务 jiào-wù), when Controllers of Copy-writing, Accounting and Miscellaneous

Business were transformed to Copy-writing Officer (Chinese: 文案官 wén-àn-guān), Accounting Officer and Officer of Miscellaneous Business (Chinese: 杂务官 zá-wù-guān), and were under administration of the Controller of General Affairs and by the Inspector of Dormitories. These names exemplified character of university and division of staff. Controller, Inspector and Provost almost parallel to the Dean of General Affairs, Logistics Officer, Provost in modern universities. Such structure took forms of division of labor in modern universities. The Provost, who is special officer in charge of administering teaching staff, gets closer to division of labor in modern universities, in comparison with the General Supervisor who is under control of the Minister of Education as the Memorial on Charters of the Imperial University of Peking specifies.

#### *C. Nascent idea of teaching staff involved in democratic management of the Imperial University*

The idea of democratic management began to appear within the Imperial University. The teaching staff was involved in managing the University in two manners:

First, teaching staff concurrently serves as all managers. The Chapter for Teachers and Administrators of the Royally Approved Memorial on the Imperial University of Peking<sup>iv</sup> specifies that the Professional teacher and Assistant Teacher shall, with exception of General Inspector (Chinese: 检查官 jiǎn-chá-guān), concurrently serve as Students’ Supervisor (Chinese: 监学官 jiān-xué-guān), Medical Officer (Chinese: 卫生官 wèi-shēng-guān), Director of the Observatory (Chinese: 天文台经理官 tiān-wén-tái-jīng-lǐ-guān), Director of Botanical Garden (Chinese: 植物园经理官 zhí-wù-yuán-jīng-lǐ-guān), Director of Zoo (Chinese: 动物园经理官 dòng-wù-yuán-jīng-lǐ-guān), Director of Exercise (演习经理官 yǎn-xí-jīng-lǐ-guān), Director of Hospital (医院经理官 yī-yuàn-jīng-lǐ-guān) and Director of Library.

Second, A discussion body was set within the Imperial University for teachers’ involvement. The Chapter V of Royally Approved Memorial on Charters of the Imperial University specifies that a chamber is set where the Superintendent, the Supervisor of Branch University, Provost, Professional Teachers, Assistant Teachers and Students’ Supervisors are gathered for consensus. What’s more, it also

specifies that chambers should be set within all branch universities for teachers and Students' Supervisors, where the Supervisor of Branch University calls together Provost, professional teachers, assistant teachers and Students' Supervisor for consensus. That means, ordinary teachers are entitled to management of general affairs of the University, particularly in Peiyang University which is greatly influenced by American-style school-running model. The Newly-revised Regulations of the Imperial Tientsin University (now Tianjin University) specify that 'where study affairs need improvement, the General Supervisor and the Supervising Teacher are gathered at the chamber for discussion and questioning. Comprise shall prevail. All participants, in case of conflicts, are encouraged to state their own views, but not to prejudice or to be stubborn.'<sup>v</sup> These regulations on democratic discussion have mirrored school-running model of university in the late Qing Dynasty.

*D. Employment of teachers was standardized. The standard shifted from ambiguous requirements to degree-oriented ones.*

At initial stage of universities in China, the standard of teacher employment of university was ambiguous, like "be excellent both in character and scholarship, have thorough knowledge of both traditional Chinese and western culture" (Chinese: 品学兼优通晓中外)<sup>vi</sup>, or "be proficient in academy and be an eligible teacher for a certain subject or branch"<sup>vii</sup>, even or "Chinese teacher who knows something about a certain subject"<sup>viii</sup>. At that time, universities aimed to get someone employed. "Anyone, high or low official, junior or senior, or recommended by Minister of the Zongli Yamen (the Tribunal for the Management of Affairs of All Nations), will be reported to the Emperor for employment if he is full-hearted about his work, unlike those who teach Shujishi or Guozijian Jijiu who makes a muddle of his work (it is an official position in the Qing Dynasty, and it is equivalent to the Chancellor or the President of the Beijing Imperial Academy)"<sup>x</sup>. "Anyone, officer or non-officer, who comes to Beijing at public expense or his cost, will serve as Instructor if he passed examinations of the Xue Bu (Ministry of Education in the Qing Dynasty).<sup>x</sup>" Later, the Royally Approved Memorial on Charters of Teachers Employment (November, 1903) specifies academic background of both Professional

Teachers and Assistant Teachers. "The Professional Teacher shall be certified postgraduate from overseas universities and from Tong Ru Yuan"<sup>xi</sup>"The Assistant Teacher shall be top graduate at the University and graduate from overseas universities"<sup>xi</sup>.

*E. Perfection of contracts of foreign instructors heralds engagement system of universities*

Contractual management was employed to the foreign instructors in the late Qing Dynasty. Xue Bu (the Ministry of Education in Qing Dynasty) determined contract with standard form for nationwide use due to different requirements to foreign instructors among provinces. The contract of foreign instructors with nineteen clauses that the Xue Bu determined specifies the foreign instructors in terms of service life, class time, salary, sick leave, personal leave, resignation, round-trip cost, dismissal, tenure extension, and compensation caused by disablement or death due to injury on duty. It also stipulates that the instructor must be full-time, he is not allowed to engage in other businesses or to teach students from other universities. What is more, it requires that, any instructor is not allowed to missionize even he is a missionary.<sup>xii</sup> These clauses, signed with foreign instructors, are deemed to be original form of teacher employment of universities in China.

Universities in the Late Qing Dynasty, however, did strongly control minds of teachers and students in universities, rather than accept the principle of University Autonomy and Academic Freedom when they were imitating and learning from overseas counterparts. As the Imperial Order on the Charters of the Imperial University of Peking requires, "all people, including but not limited to Instructors, Zong Ban, Controllers and Students, shall be subject to dismissal or accountability for violation if they are proved that their ideas or words go against the national constitution or obviously break the Three Cardinal Guides (Ruler guides subject, father guides son and husband guides wife), the Five Constant Virtues (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge and sincerity) and the Feudal Ethical Code."<sup>xiii</sup> Essentially, such university model is considered an improved official school education system in the feudal dynasty. It is rigidly

modeled on overseas universities, such as setting Chamber for democratic discussion, but naturally remains highly centralized, bureaucratic and semi-colonial. Nonetheless, university, as an institution of higher learning in the late Qing Dynasty, has its personnel management characterized by western style. For example, the General Supervisor and Instructors are determined by intelligence and self-cultivation, rather than by power or wealthy. Besides, it also has the General Supervisor responsible for teaching, and the Provost responsible for administering teachers.

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