

The Impact of Cultural Education on the Social Status of Women in China

HU Changying^{[a],*}

^[a]School of Information, Renmin University of China, China.

* Corresponding author

Received 25 March 2013; accepted 30 May 2013

Abstract

In ancient China (before 1949), most Chinese women were illiterate, inferior and humble. Main works of women were to raise children and took care of their family members. They did not have opportunities to accept education, did not have decision-making powers at home and were underprivileged in the whole society. But now, many women have the highest decision-making powers in their families, and also are active in the workplaces, they already won a half-piece of the sky from men. What changed the status of Chinese women over these years? Many factors, such as politics, economy, science and technologies etc., all play important roles, but education plays the key role in changing the social status of Chinese women. In this paper, we will emphasize on education, especially the higher education, which let more women have confidence to compete with men in the workplaces and families. We will discuss the changing process of the Chinese women's social status and observe the role of education in this process. Then we will point out the problems and challenges that Chinese women are still facing, and give some proposals to further promote the development of women in future.

Key words: Social status of Chinese women; Education of women; Gender equality; Women's roles

HU Changying (2013). The Impact of Cultural Education on the Social Status of Women in China. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 9(3), 1-11. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/j.ccc.1923670020130903.3070>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.ccc.1923670020130903.3070>

INTRODUCTION

When the Chinese female athletes boarded the Olympic podiums; when the Chinese female football players use their feet to win the world cheers, maybe they do not realize how great their performances are. Because just in about one thousand years ago, their grand-grandmother still bounded their feet tightly with a long cloth in order to please men. Women were underprivileged, humble and illiterate at that time; and they were only man's accessories. This meant that their whole lives were spent in being subservient to the men in their families. Some girls of poor families were sold as servants, and their prices were often less than that of a chair or a table. They were treated as inferiors from the moment of their birth; most of them could not have marriage and served for the nobilities in the whole life. Even the women of the nobilities and the imperial families could not escape the oppression, though life was slightly easier for them than those poor women.

But today, even the western feminist theorists think that modern Chinese women seem to have more autonomy than those of other nations. According to the statistics, in China, the number of outstanding women in all walks of life is increasing year by year. Up to 2010, the Chinese women cadres account for 39.8 percent of the total number cadres in the government, with total number is more than 100 thousand, an increase of 6.2 percent points than 10 years ago. The proportion of women in Chinese Communist Party, People Congress, Political Consultative Committee is 20.4% (about 604), which has increased 1.2 percent points than ten years ago. Not only in political arena, in economic, culture, and other social departments, Chinese women are also very excellent. According to the statistics, the female entrepreneurs account for more than 20% of the individual and private economy in the current

total number of Chinese entrepreneurs in 2008 (Wu Zhen, Professor of University of Politics and Science). In some banks, hospitals, travel companies, universities, varieties of schools, most employees are women. Women are playing increasingly important social roles now.

In addition to the workplaces, women seem to have a much higher position in their families. Many women, with their carefulness, patience and strong will, dominate in the home, such as in charge of family finances, arrange the living programs, children education and a variety of family plans etc., the husband only needs to agree or give additional suggestions. More and more husbands have to admit that they cannot do many things without the permission of their wives. On March 8th every year, which is the annual International Women's Day, the Chinese women can clearly feel the pleasure from a variety of celebrations. Of course, even in ordinary days, in public places throughout China, from the women's attitude of swagger and confident smile face, we can see that Chinese women really become the masters of the country and the builders of the society, and they have won a half of the stage of life from the men.

Then how can the women change the situation so greatly from the past to the present day? What changed the social status of Chinese women? In this paper, we will analyze the changing process of Chinese women's social status and point out that the education; especially higher education plays very important role in helping Chinese women to become stronger.

There are six parts in this paper, we will analyze the reasons that changes the social status of Chinese women in the second part; emphasize on the higher education which brings more opportunities for women to work and live better in the third part; In forth part, we will point out the problems and challenges that Chinese women are facing now; we will give some measures and proposals to further promote the development of Chinese women in the fifth part; and conclusions will be given in the final.

1. THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN EFFECTING THE WOMEN'S SOCIAL STATUS IN CHINESE HISTORY

1.1 The Changing Process of Women's Social Status in Chinese History

Matriarchal Society: back to the primitive society-matriarchal society (about 5000 years ago), as the population size was the key for a tribe to be prosperous, while women had the ability to reproduce the next generations, so women's social status was high, that is why we call it "matriarchal society". Women had strong powers in managing the internal affairs of the tribe, and their main tasks were house works, food acquisition and distribution. But men, as the main labor force,

were mainly responsible for hunting. A wife could have multiple husbands, and If not satisfied, a woman could divorce men arbitrarily. The whole society had no classes, people co-produce and live together, and people lived freely and happily.

Patriarchal society: About 4000 years ago, with the development of social productivity and men in a prominent position in the production sector, there were significant changes in men and women in the clan's position, and the man began to dominate in society. At the same time, the pairing marriage began the transition to monogamy- one husband has one wife, and matriarchal society was substituted by patrilineal society gradually. In the patriarchal society, the property and social status of men were all higher than those of women. The children naturally belonged to their father and became the successors of his father's property. By force or exchange marriage, men forced a woman to have long and stable marriage relationship with him to ensure that he had his own children. Then, a woman was forced to belong to one man, and their position became lower. As time went by, women began to be in a subordinate position in the social and economic life gradually, in addition to having children, women only in textiles, cooking and other tedious household chores. Hence, at this time, both the right and social status of women began to become lower and lower.

Slave Society: the slave society was the darkest stage for Chinese women in history. Due to the further development of productive forces, different social divisions, the physical labor became increasingly important and further highlighted the social status of men. With the increasing surplus of social wealth, some people could occupy others' wealth, and took advantage of their wealth to enslave others. Then the gap between the rich and the poor began to expand, and private property began to sprout. At last, in about 21th century BC, patriarchal society was gradually replaced by a male authoritarian society- slave society. In the slave society, female had to become the male accessories, and most poor women were trafficked as slaves or maids of the nobilities and the wealthy families. These maids did the dirtiest and the most tired work without pay, but often suffered arbitrary beatings and insults from their owners. Some noble families even buried the young girls alive with dead persons, for they thought that those dead persons need slaves in another world too. In addition to some women in aristocratic families, most ordinary women were worthless. They looked just like cattle or horses of the master, lived the worst life.

Feudal Society: Feudal society was the longest (more than two thousand years) and also the darkest society in Chinese history. During this period, Chinese men reached their peak position of authority; women had no freedom, no social status. All the property and household

management powers were controlled in male's hands. Women did not have property ownership and inheritance from their parents, and even could not wholly own their dowry after they married. Man could have more than one wife and could divorce any wife by writing a statement at will. Moreover, in order to please men, women had to bind their feet with long cloth into very small shapes from their birth. The custom of foot binding began around AD 969-975 during the Tang Dynasty which was governed by Emperor Li Yu. One of his wives wrapped around her feet into a crescent shape, and danced to please the emperor in the nasturtium. Later, this practice was spread to the whole country. A pair of "three-inch golden lotus" feet was the basic sign of beautiful women in the next one hundred years. But this practice damaged the bones of feet seriously; and many women could not walk steadily when they were old. In 1900, English, French, German, Russian, United States, Japan, Italy and Austria forming an eight-nation joint military opened the door of China with guns and cannons, upset the closed and feudal life way of Chinese people, at the same time, brought the consciousness of gender equality into China gradually. From the year of 1911, the revolution led by Sun Yat-sen overthrew the reactionary rule of the feudal Qing Dynasty, the feudal monarchy system dominating China over two thousand years came to an end, and women gained a bit freedom. Then With the development of the international situation and the wind of Western civilization in the country gradually scraping large, intellectuals first awakening, and began to actively promote a variety of genres of Western ideas, the custom of foot binding was finally banned. But the pace of women's liberation was not big. On the one hand, the two thousand years of feudal society made people have deep feudal thought; people including women themselves, still underestimate the roles of women in the society. Women were still completely powerless in the political position. There were only few women accessing to the upper class attention, most of them could be known due to their outstanding beauty and talent in poetry, music and lyrics. The advancement of women was very limit. On the other hand, many capitalist of western countries including some of China set up some factories, such as flour plants, textile plants etc., and women were the main work forces in these plants. But female workers were only cheap tools of the Capitalists; had not status and freedom, and they were still the most vulnerable groups at that time. With the revolution continued in depth and the spread of western idea of gender inequality, then feminist movements in China began to rise again and again, but these movements had some colors of westernization, were not accepted by Chinese people. Women's economic status had not changed radically, and it is difficult for women to achieve higher social status in this kind of feudal society.

New People's Republic of China: after the new

People's Republic of China (PRC) was established, the chairman Mao Zedong proposed that women should have equal rights as men, and women should have half of the sky. In 1949, the PRC adopted *The Chinese People Consultative Conference Common Program*, which stipulated that women had equal rights with men in political, economic and cultural education etc. In the next few years, the state implemented a series of laws to protect women's rights, such as *Marriage Law* (1950), *Electoral Law* (1953), *the Constitution* (1954) and *Compulsory Education Law* (1986), especially the *Women's Rights and Interests Protection Law of the People's Republic of China*, which was implemented in 1992 gave women more comprehensive protections in marriage, education, election right, job, and even pregnancy leave and so on. In the support of the government, Chinese women also launched some liberation movements and began to stand up to become the masters of the country. Girl schools were established and many rich families sent their girls to accept education. Even in some coeducational schools, the number of girls began to increase. Education became the first right for women to fight for gender equality.

The Contemporary Era: it is obvious that Chinese women's social status has been improved steadily in the 21th century. Women become the true masters of the nation and society. **First**, the status of women in the family is improved. In most families, women are in charge of the financial powers, daily decision-making powers etc. According to the statistics in 2005, in the family investment or loan and buy a house or build a house, wife's participation in decision-making ratio is 60.7% and 70.7% separately. 88.7% of women themselves can buy personal luxury goods freely, and the proportion of women who can independently decide to finance their own parents was 91.3%. In addition, 68.8% girls escape the arranged marriage; and can choose their marriage partners by themselves. **Second**, women are willing to achieve their goals with their own hands and wisdoms. In workplaces, women are playing more and more important roles in China. According to the questionnaire made by Female Research Institutions of China in 2006, 82.4% of women said they "have confidence in their abilities, and 80% of women want to have their own jobs and careers. Now, many women are going into professions, such as medicine, law, bank, education, tourism and government departments. They comprise a large part of the workers in businesses and factories. In addition, they are working up to some special business which used to be held mainly by men, such as building, computer and engineering. There are even some businesses which are run almost completely by women, such as teachers, accountings, tourist guides and nurse. Clearly, women are making outstanding contributions to the progress of modern society. **Third**, in the right to education, women have same opportunities as men to accept education. Apart from some remote

mountain villages, most girls have the same opportunities as boys to go to schools, and the number of girls with higher GPA often has surpassed the number of boys. In some years, the proportion of girls with Master or PHD degrees has been bigger than that of boys.

In sum, in the present period, the Chinese women are becoming more and more excellent, more and more confident. In fact, the Chinese women's performance is very good not only in China, but also in the whole world. For example, according to the Nielsen's gender evaluation system which was given in 1997, the index GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) of China is No. 28 in the world which indicates that Chinese women are walking in front of the world.

1.2 THE EDUCATIONAL HISTORY OF CHINESE WOMEN

1.2.1 Female Education in 19th Century

The ancient society was an agricultural economy society; men with strong body became the main factor promoting the productivity. But women, with as relatively weak body, had to withdraw from the field of social production and into the family, engaging in the domestic works that were regarded as worthless. This is the basis of the view of "man is the owner of women" and "honorable men and humble women". Based on the gender hierarchy, women's education, compared with male education, had a big difference. Learning is the key factor for men to seek career paths, and excellent education was the premise of a good official position. If men could succeed in the emperor's imperial examination, then their entire family would get the glory, and since then would live a prosperous life. Hence, most families tried their best to send their boys to read and to take the imperial examination. But the girls only could learn how to become a good mother or wife at home, "Three Compliances and Four Virtues" was the real description of women at that time. Here "Three Compliances" means: compliance with father at home, compliance with her husband when married and compliance with her son if husband died. "Four virtues" means good character, good words, good manners and good abilities. Some books such as *Female Analects*, *women's four books*, *women's commandments*, were all about the specification of women's words, deeds and thoughts. The value of women is mainly reflected in the selfless devotion to family and unconditional obey on their husbands.

It is worth noting that, despite the women's education was not taken seriously, there was a group of distinguished poetess, such as Li Qing-zhao, Cai Wen-ji, Zhuang Jiang, Tang Wan and so on at that time. They proved their talents by using their good poetries and proses to the men, and silently against with the feudal society of "Ignorant is the virtue of women". Even though they cannot escape the yokes of feudal society, they still use their talents to win their own positions in that society. And under their

influence, more and more nobles sent their daughters to private schools or to study abroad, women's education began to develop locally. These girls, with advanced ideas and knowledge, affected the social idea of gender gradually.

1.2.2 Female Education in the 20th Century

With the transition from agricultural society to industrial society, the west countries entered the period of industrial revolution. At the same time, the feminist consciousness in west countries began to awake, and ultimately led to the first feminist movement climax in the late 19th and early 20th century. The idea of gender equality gradually flourished in the west, and women began to fight for their own rights in life, education, job and political activities. Because of the impact of western feminist movement, the Chinese women began to awake and advocate their rights too, and the right of education for women during this period was the main subject of women's liberation movement. In the early 20th century, a boom of setting up women's school was setting off in Chinese land. In order to regulate the civil women's schools, the late Qing government had to issue the charters to recognize the legal status of girls' schools in 1907.

The establishment of Public Government in 1917 brought more opportunities for the development of women's schools. Sun Yat-sen, as the provisional president, endorsed the gender equality and advocated the revitalization of women's education. Every province responded to the call and began to set up a number of female primary and second schools, normal schools and law schools of women. The boom of women's education flourished once again across the country. At that time, the movement for gender equality in education, both in breadth and depth, or the practical effects are all far better than those educational activities before the Xin Hai Revolution. The education system of women, including the primary education, secondary education, normal education, vocational education and general education etc., has taken shape. The rise of the "New Culture Movement" in 1915 provided the impetus for the further pursuit of gender equality. Requirements of coeducation and higher education had become the further demand for education equality. After the extensive propaganda of progressive people and debating with opponents lively, the right of women to accept higher education and the requirements of coeducation eventually were implemented.

The establishment of People's Republic of China (in 1949) let China walk out of the semi-colonial & semi-feudal social form, and started to enter a new historical stage. In new China, the Chinese government enacted series of laws to protect the women's interests, these laws and regulations let women have equal rights in political, economy, cultural, education, social and family aspects of life; women truly become the masters of the country. Before 1949, the literacy level of Chinese women was

very low. In 1931-1945, there were only more than 7.8 million women receiving primary education, the illiteracy rate of women is over 90%, and the women with higher education only accounted for 0.46% in the total population (Yan, 2006). After 1949, the women's education develops rapidly, especially the basic education, comparing to the period before the establishment of PRC, has greatly improved. In 1985, the illiterate rate of women has decreased to 64.3%. From 1986, nine-year compulsory education began to be implemented across the whole country, which ensure that more girls could receive at least 9 years of education. After 1990, the rapid development of high education increases the proportion of female students enrolled. The establishment of new education system plays invaluable roles in improving the cultural level and social status of women, and encouraging women to have self-esteem, self-reliance and self-improvement. Table 1 shows the changes of the ratio of female students in schools after 1949 (From 1950 to 1999). The data are all from Chinese Ministry of Education. (ME).

In the table 1, we delete the period from 1966-1976, which was the "Culture Revolution of China". During this period, the education of both boys and girls was destroyed greatly; many primary and middle schools, colleges and universities were all closed. The proportion of children with education decreased sharply, this ten-year was a serious damage to the education of China.

Table 1
The Proportion of Girls in Various Schools in 20th Century

Year/ Schools	1950	1965	1980	1995	1999
Primary School	27.3%	30.4%	36%	46.6%	47.64%
Junior Middle School	26.5%	28.2%	32.7%	46.1%	46.78%
High Middle School	23.6%	25.1%	29.4%	40.4%	41.2%
Higher Education	20.1%	26.9%	31.4%	37.11 %	39.3%

1.2.3 The Current Female Education in China

From 2000 to now, the Chinese government attaches great attention to the education of women. Because the educational level of women not only affects the development of women themselves, but also affects the quality of next generation, and the development of the entire nation and society. **First**, the educational level of women affects their own development greatly. Generally, an educated lady is more capable to use what they have

learned to deal with various conflicts in work and family. She knows how to improve herself, and how to lead a work team or her family confidently. Some researches show that the higher degree of education which women have, the higher economic status, women's consciousness, political achievement, willpower, participation and capacity that they will have. Therefore, education can help women to live and work better. **Second**, women's educational level can influence the quality of next generation; as a result, influence the development of the whole nation. In general, mother's quality directly influences the moral standard of children. An educated mother will create good environment for her children to study, and as the first teacher and role model, she affects her children on their mental health, the view of life values, personality and other non-intellectual factors greatly. Now, more and more educated mothers pay much attention to the education of their children, especially in China, one family one child, mother has more energy and time on her child's upbringing and education. Many mothers do not satisfy the basic education which just can help their children survive in the future any more, but more care about whether the education can give children a better future. Hence, mothers try their best to help their children to accept the best education, while these children will become the masters of the nation in the future, their qualities will affect the pace of development of the nation directly. Hence, women's education level is an important factor to the whole development of China.

Now Chinese government has begun to take various measures to encourage the female students to continue learning when they finish colleges, and create more vocational schools, network schools and technique schools for those women who cannot go to colleges, to learn knowledge and skills again. In 2001, Chinese government enacted *Outline of the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010)*, which includes: (1) To ensure all girls have the right of at least 9 years of compulsory education; (2) Improve the gross enrollment rate of girls in high middle schools, colleges and universities. (3) Improve adult literacy rate of women; (4) Make sure the average educational years of women reach the advanced level in developing countries. This outline helps China to improve the overall literacy level of women. Table 2 describes the progress of women's education from 2000 to 2010 (data from ME).

Table 2
The Number and Proportion of Girls in Schools After 2000 (Unit: 10 Thousand)

Year/ Schools	2000		2005		2010	
Primary School	6194.5602	46.6%	5086.3735	46.82%	4660.4874	46.88%
Junior Middle School	2898.5775	46.99%	2920.8123	47.3%	2571.1744	47.32%
High Middle School	503.8057	41.93%	1118.44	46.4%	1173.4128	48.2%
Higher Education	227.8905	40.98%	735.3202	47.1%	1148.6374	50.3%
Master& PHD	1.8655	31.7%	56.8166	44.34%	66.0873	47.04%

From Table 2 we can see that from 2000 to 2010, there is a sharp reduction in the number of primary school girls, but there is no significant change in the proportion of girls (always about 46%). The reason for the reduction of the number of girls may be due to the following two: One is the Chinese planning fertility policy, according to the fertility policy, a city family is only allowed to have one child and rural family could have at most two children. This policy has greatly reduced the birth rate of China, and the total number of people growth decreases year by year. Another reason is that a considerable proportion

of modern young women do not want to have children, they believe that children will affect their quality of life. These two reasons make the number of school-age children decrease year by year, of course the number of girls' decreases year by year. In addition to the elementary school level, the number and proportion of girls of secondary schools, universities and graduate level are all almost increasing year by year. The next curve figures compare the number of male students and female students in 2000 and 2010.

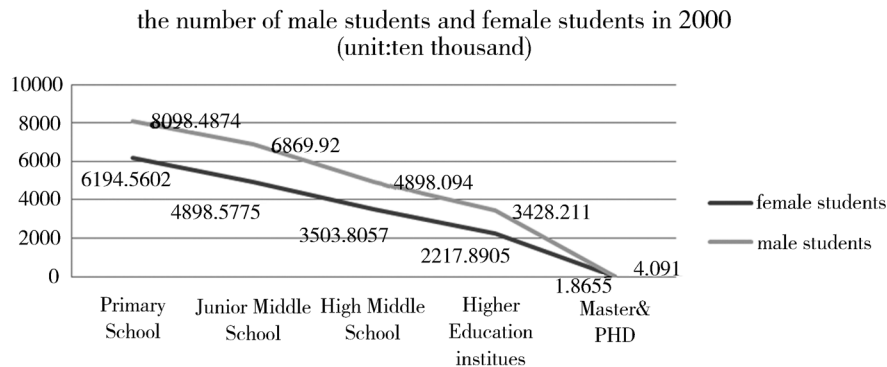


Figure 1
The Number of Male Students and Female Students in 2000

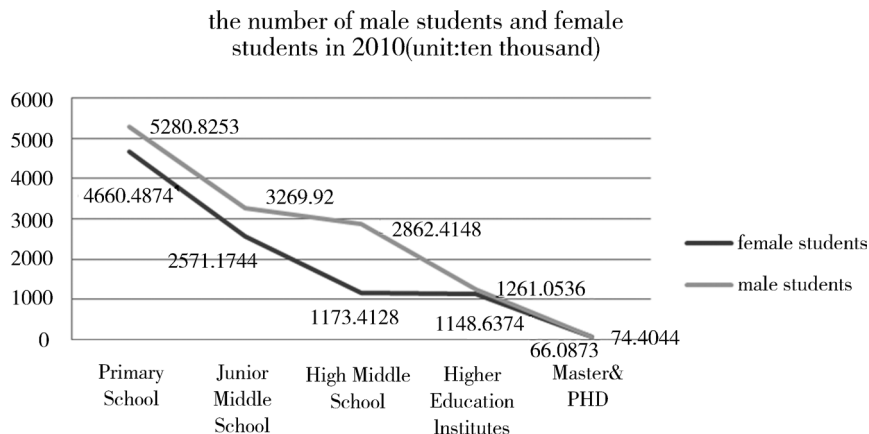


Figure 2
The Number of Male Students and Female Students in 2010

From Figure 1 and Figure 2, we can see that both numbers of male students and female students are decreasing from primary school to universities in these two years, and the number of female students is always less than that of male students. However, the difference between male students and female students in 2010 is smaller than that of 2000, especially the higher education in 2010, the numbers of both genders are close. In addition, we can see that both numbers of male postgraduates and female postgraduates (Master & PHD) are increasing significantly: there are 18.655 thousand female postgraduates and 40.91 thousand male postgraduates in 2000, but in 2010, these two numbers are 660.873

thousand and 744.044 thousand separately, which means that the female educational level has been nearly as high as male educational level now.

2. THE HIGHER EDUCATION CHANGES THE SOCIAL STATUS OF CHINESE WOMEN

2.1 The Development of High Education

Among all educational activities, higher education is the most important way to improve the quality and social

status of women. But the real modern higher education of China started lately, and the higher education for women did more lately. In the spring of 1920, Peking University enrolled its first three girls to listen in the class, and at the same year in autumn, it enrolled officially nine female students, it was the first time for China to open classes for both girls and boys in the universities. After 1949, especially after the reform and opening (in 1978), along with the implementation of basic national policy such as science and education strategy, talent strategy and gender equality policy, the higher education of Chinese women began to make considerable progress. In these years, women's higher education has been achieved gratifying results, mainly reflected in the following areas: **Firstly**, the proportion of female students in university, accounting for the proportion of the total number of students in higher education on all levels, is increasing steadily. *Gender Equality and Women's Development Assessment Report*

(1995-2005) shows that higher education is the fastest growing field of gender equality index. The total number of female students in all higher levels of education has a large increase in the number and proportion. The following table compares the proportion of female students in undergraduate, postgraduate and PHD in fifteen years.

Table 3
The Proportion of Female Students in Universities
(Data From ME)

	1987	1995	2000	2007	2010	2011
College students	33%	35.4%	41%	48.1%	50.42%	51.04%
Master	21.3%	30.6%	36.1%	46.7%	49.82%	50.23%
PHD	8.8%	15.5%	24%	34.1%	34.9%	36.7%

The following curve figure can give us more clear impression:

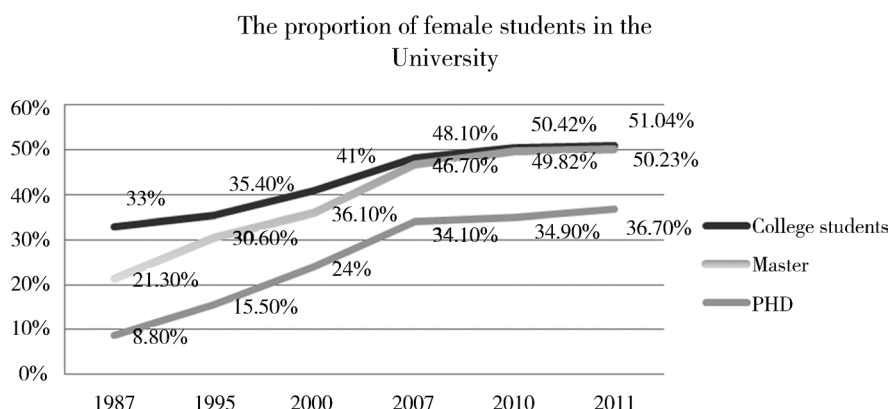


Figure 3
The Proportion of Female Students in the Universities

From Figure 3 we know that the proportions of female undergraduate students, female Masters and female PHDs are all increasing in the last 15 years, but the increasing rate of female doctoral students is the largest. This means that the women's education level is getting higher and higher, and the corresponding abilities and confidence of female students are growing.

Secondly, the development of female colleges or universities is booming. According to the statistics, up to 2010, there are 14 women's higher education institutions, the number of students is more than 30 thousand, together with the female students of coeducational universities, the total number of female college students is larger than 12.2 million in 2010. In fact, in some comprehensive university, "girls boom" has aroused public concerns, some popular professions, such as the journalism department, tourism department and language departments, the ratio between male students and female students was 5:1 in 1980s, now this ration has changed into 1:5. In Shanghai International Studies University, for example, female students accounted for 70 percent of the total number of

school in 2007. In East China Normal University, male and female ratio of the department of Chinese graduate students closes to 2:13 in 2008, which all mean that female education has reached very high position. **Thirdly**, the study of women's issues which is an emerging field of higher education has gotten more and more attentions. From the last twenty years of last century, many universities began to set up institutions to study women's issues, and there are also some departments for opening research of women's issues were established outside of universities. In 1998, Peking University became the first one to enroll the masters for studying women's issues. In recent years, the research of women's issues has been concerned by more and more scholars; they published a series of articles and books on women's issues. These studies increase the social status of women to a very high position. **Fourthly**, both female teachers and female students play important roles in higher education. In 2008, among the college teachers, female teachers accounts for 48.4%, and the proportion of female professors title is 22.2%, female associate professors accounts for 40.1%,

female assistant professors accounts for 46.8% and primary title is 53.4% (data from ME). The women have played very important role in the whole higher education of China. In addition, female college students also play more and more important roles in universities. Many universities have girls organizations, which often organize the distinctive “Girl culture festival”, “Lectures on girls”, ---Female college students are increasingly active in cultural activities on campus, and have more abundant social activities than before. In sum, Chinese women have won the unprecedented prestige in the field of high education.

2.2 Higher Education Helps Chinese Women Gain Glory

With the increasing emphasis on education in China, the girls’ education level is also increasing gradually. In these years, most universities expanded the postgraduate enrollment ratio, and in some universities, the number of postgraduates has been same (or even exceed) to that of undergraduates. Hence, the number of female postgraduates is also increasing every year (see Table 3), and in some professionals, even there is a shortage of male postgraduates. With more and more women obtaining higher diplomas, women begin to play important roles in all sectors. Men might find that more female Masters and PHDs competed for jobs with them in these years and most female students are hard-working than them, which brings great pressures on men. Especially in some industries, such as teacher, doctor, tourist guide, accounting etc., women, with higher diplomas, patience and carefulness, can get better achievement than men. According to the Beijing Foreign Service Enterprise Corporation, they manage nearly 30000 staff, the men to women ratio is essentially 1 to 1 in 2010 (comparing to ten years ago: 1.4:1). These women have the equal treatment on appointment and salary as men. The vast majority of these women have university diplomas, with more higher education level, the more lucrative income can be gotten. Higher diplomas give women more self-confidence; they dare to compete for any positions if they want. More and more women become leaders by virtue of their abilities and courage, for instances, female principals, manageress, female politicians, women economists, women entrepreneurs, etc. Some women make men be willing to bow before them, which is difficult to believe in the ancient society.

Now, almost in all sectors in China, you can see some women who are confident, brave, active, educated and capable. Especially in cities, the “white collar” women armed with knowledge, compared to the older generation, more open to enjoy the freedom and personality development. They are sought after by the whole society, and the businessmen turn around them. You often can see some products advertisement which writes: “for the modern white collar women”. In the call of “knowledge

is productivity”, the pursuit of knowledge has been the ideology mainstream of more and more Chinese women today, which leads to more women in all areas of society, with knowledge, showing off their individual talents and charisma. According to statistic, in 2010, there are more than 1.1 billion female professional and technique personnel, which accounts for 48.6% in the total technique personnel. The ratio of female users in internet is 12.3% in 1997 and 40.7% in 2002 (Zhang, 2010). Based on the calculating of National Bureau of Statistics, the Chinese women’s contribution to the GDP of China has more than 40% in 2002 (Ye, 2003).

The Nielsen’s gender evaluation system includes three sets: HDI, GDI, and GEM. Where HDI (Human Development Index) includes life expectancy, knowledge (literacy rate, average years of schooling), and income; GDI (Gender-related Development Index) is the human development index on the issue of gender inequality with weighted, i.e., the performance of the degree of gender equality indicators; GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) measures the status of women in political, economic, professional life situation in a country. According to these indicators, China is not ranked in the top 20, but not very backward. HDI is No.64, GDI is No.58, but GEM is No.28, not only far off other developing countries, but also superior to Japan, France etc.. This data has fully demonstrated that the Chinese women, with knowledge and confidence, have changed their social status rapidly. Step by step, women have forced the men to give up a part of their stage to them, and Chinese women have won the “half sky” by using their wisdom and diligent efforts.

3. THE PROBLEMS OF FEMALE EDUCATION AT THE PRESENT STAGE

Aristotle, the educator in ancient Greek, pointed out that “There must be excellent women and children, the city will be developed well” (Jing, 2007). Women receiving higher education not only affects their own social status and development, but also is an important condition to improve the population quality and social progress. But undeniable, at this stage, there still exist some problems of women’s education in China.

Problem 1, the whole educational level of girls in countryside is still low. In cities, as one child per family, whatever boy or girl, parents give same love to him or her. Hence, girls and boys have same opportunity to access to education; girls can accept all the education from primary to PHD if they want. But we must notice that there are more than 800 million people (nearly 60%) living in countryside, a lower level of living makes a lot of girls cannot get the equal opportunities access to schools as boys. Especially in some remote and poor areas, this situation is more serious. Basic education is the foundation

for women's development projects, and it also decides whether they can receive the higher education in future. However, in these remote and poor areas, affected by social attitudes and economic conditions, the enrollment ratio of girls is still low now, but the dropout rate is very high, which affect the implementation of education. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education, there were 4.03 million school-age children who were not in school in 2006, and 2.539 million of them were girls, the proportion is 60.3%. In these poor areas, each family can have two children or even more. But many parents have strong feudal ideology, they pay attention to the boys' education, while ignore the girls'. They think that boys can lead the family's future, but girls only can serve other family after they married. So they try their best to send sons to accept education, but let girls do farm works and wait for marriage. Even the law of nine-year compulsory education forces some parents to send their girls to school, but once the family is in need of labors, the girls must leave school firstly, even if the girls have better scores than boys. According to the sample results of 4 counties in the southern of Ningxia, the dropout rate is 16.3% in 2006 (Li, 2007), and this rate is much higher before 2006. Most girls were forced to give up learning by their parents.

In addition, let's observe the whole country; the female education still focuses on primary school and junior middle school. According to the statistics of Ministry of Education, in all schools (including primary schools, junior middle schools, higher middle schools, universities, and other educational institutes), girls accounted for 44.2% in 2005, which seems plausible, but the disparity in different stage is big. For example, in Heilong Jiang province, the percentage of female students in primary school is 46.4%, reduced to 42.1% in junior middle school, dropped to 37.2% in high middle school. So in these years, Chinese government began to enact some laws to ensure all the girls to accept education at least 9 years. At the same time, take some welfare measures to help poor mountain children to receive education. Now the average year of female education has reached 7.3 year in 2008, only one year less than men. In 2009, the sex ratio is about 0.89 in higher middle schools, indicating that the proportion of girls receiving secondary education, compared with boys, is nearly same. But we must recognize, the overall levels of women's education in many provinces are significantly lower than the national average. The statistics of 2006 show that, in addition to Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, North China, Northeast, where the girls accounted for the moderate proportion, the proportion of girls in the southeast coast, southwest and northwest provinces are all low.

Problem 2, gender inequality still exists in higher education and jobs. This kind of inequality exists especially in the postgraduate stage. In universities, some

professors manage a number of research projects, and they are more inclined to recruit male students to help them complete the projects. In the entrance exams of Master and PHD, girls tend to obtain higher scores than boys, but male students are more likely to get the instructor's letter of acceptance. Admittedly, the research capability of girls is generally lower than that of boys, especially in natural sciences, but in history, philosophy, ecology, psychology and other social science, the girls are not inferior to the boys. Even so, girls still cannot compete with boys in these professionals. And this kind of inequality has affected the girls' passion for learning.

When the girls enter the society, they find that this kind of inequality still exists. Some women cannot get equal opportunities in some jobs as men even they have much higher education level. By searching the files of students looking for jobs in recent years, we find that, even though the female students have higher grades and qualifications, they are more difficulty to find ideal jobs than men. Some employers give public statements to recruit only boys and some employers prefer to boys when boys and girls have the same condition. Even some industries with high ratio of women, such as teachers, accountants and so on, begin to recruit men in these years. A school official said that there were too many female teachers in the school, and it was hard to distribute those heavily manual tasks. Moreover, all female teachers are not good for students; male teachers can bring masculinity to boys. Accountant is very suitable for women, for their carefulness and patience, but a leader of accounting firm said that he wanted to recruit more men, for it is very dangerous for all women to work in the night during the busy period. The difficulties of female students looking for jobs have greatly dampened the enthusiasm and consciousness of women accepting higher education. Some girls, being afraid of this pressure of job, choose to study abroad and work abroad too, some women decrease the requirements of jobs, and some even give up learning and wait to marry without work in the whole life.

Even getting the jobs, women have to face unequal treatments. In some companies, the women undertake the same works with men, but they get less and have to be led by men. In some bankers, schools, hospitals and accounting firms, you can often find a male leader manages his almost all female subordinates. Women paid a lot more on work than men, but have to get less than men. This is not a phenomenon unique to China, either is to the world. According to the statistics of "United Nations Population Fund", women bear the 66% global works and produce the 50% of global food, but they earn less than 10% of total global income, with only 1% of global property shares. This kind of inequality has affected the women's enthusiasm of living and working.

Problem 3, the social responsibilities and prejudices on women are still much heavier than men, which limit

women's personality development. On the one hand, there is no doubt that women bear more social responsibilities. They have to spend too much time on cooking, laundry, taking trivial chores and taking care of younger siblings and grandparents. Some girls get married early, so they have to take the responsibilities for the whole family and have no more chances or time to go on accepting education. On the contrary, men, whether marry or not, can focus on studying without worrying about these family responsibilities. On the other hand, girls bear more prejudices than boys. Many girls, after finishing undergraduate study, begin to consider marriage, for they know that more elder a girl is, more difficult for her to marry. In some universities, even some famous ones, some girls don't focus on their learning, but on housework, flower arrangement, make-up etc., they prepare for the marriage for they worry about whether they can find an ideal life partner or not. Those girls, who have obtained the Master & PHD degrees, often complain that it is hard for them to marry, for they are old and have much higher requirements for men. But on the contrary, the old men, regardless of educational level, can easily find very young wives. This kind of unequal social attitude increases women's pain, and their pain will in turn affect the choices of other younger girls. Now, more and more girls prefer to marry before applying for the PHD. But marriage gives girls more responsibilities and obligations; it is hard for them to continue learning.

4. MEASURES FOR PROMOTING THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN.

As described above, women's quality level affects the level of social development, so any nation and organization should not ignore the education of women. If a woman does not accept any education, she must lack the skills of life and work, and as a result, the possibilities of earning money through work, defending her right, influencing her family and public life are all very slim. Without education, a mother cannot teach her children well at home, and cannot lead children in the right way when they are in dilemmas. Without education, a girl cannot choose her favorite job, favorite life, even favorite life partner. On the contrary, if a girl continues to accept education to master or PHD, she will choose to marry later, to have few children, but can get more revenue and greatly increase the quality of her children. Hence, investment in girls' education is a wise choice, and is also the simplest way to promote the economic development for any nation. According to estimation, each additional year of school for all people, the average GDP of China will increase 0.37 percent, and the education time of women increases one year, the income of women will increase 10 percent (Zhang, 2010). More importantly, in China, women usually pay at least 90% of their income

for their families, while men only use 30-40% of their income. Hence, for the developing countries, investment in the girls' education is perhaps the best way to develop itself. Girls are powerful force, if given the opportunities; they will be the important force in promoting social development.

In the new century, at the social transition time of China, female education faces severe challenges, and bears with the arduous historical missions. In order to improve the status of women and let them play more important roles in the society, China should take a series of measures.

Firstly, let all people be fully aware of the importance of education on enhancing women's quality. Women account for about half of the total population, comprehensively improve the overall quality of women is in relation to the national economy, social development and the revitalization of the nation. The government should expand propaganda of the importance of female education across the whole country by using television, newspapers, seminars and etc. Especially let rural government departments and educational departments pay attention to the girls' education. Specifically, the government should help those feudal parents to get rid of feudal thoughts, let them be aware of the boys and girls equally important and ensure these feudal parents can give same attention to girls' education as boys'. Only when women themselves recognize the importance of education in their life, they will attach importance to education and cherish very learning opportunity. Only all parents recognize the importance of education in their daughters' life, they will create more opportunities for their daughters to accept education. Only all people of the whole nation attach importance to the education of women, and help women to receive more education, can the nation develop well.

Secondly, the government should enact necessary laws and provide financial assistance to promote the implementation of girls' education. To improve the quality of women and develop women's education, the basic education of girls is very important. The government should protect every girl to have equal right of accessing to not only compulsory education, but also all the higher education. Now China has canceled the tuitions and other fees for compulsory education in nationwide, but there are still some parents would not like to send their girls to schools. The government should force these parents to send girls to schools by enacting laws. For those poor students who have finished 9-years education, but still would like to study, the government should subsidize them to continue studying, ensure that each girl can complete all the studies which she wants. In addition, construct the trinity's working mechanism among parents, community and schools to reduce the number of girls of dropping-out, to ensure the school-age girls to access to education, to

lay solid foundation for improving the quality of them.

Thirdly, the government should enact laws to protect all rights of women at work. Now some industries prefer to men, underestimate the roles of women, for they think that women do not have strong body as men, and most women are too concerned about their families, cannot focus on work. These prejudices of the enterprises have frustrated those women with high education level. In addition, many companies do not want to provide women with long paid maternity leave. The government should correct these practices of enterprises, let them respect women and give women equal opportunities to compete jobs with men. Moreover, women need legal protection on work time, salary, promotion, paid maternity leave etc. Besides, China should vigorously develop the vocational education for those women who have no university diplomas, and carry out a wide range of technique training for them. Full use of social education resources, create opportunities for adult women, unemployed women, and women with disabilities to study, increase the income of women and provide a vast space for gender equality.

In sum, improve the quality of women; we should adhere to education-oriented. The government should build a new pattern of lifelong education of women and to help all women get a better social status through education. Through policy guidance, let majority women link their personal development to regional development and social development, enhance their self-consciousness and let them live confidently.

CONCLUSION

In ancient China, women were humble and illiterate. After experiencing the development of thousands of years, especially the last 100 years, women finally stand up to win their own stage. In this process of changing, education is a critical factor. By receiving a better education, women began to have confidence to play more important roles in the work, life and society. They use their knowledge to create countless values, at the same time, educate and influence the next generation, thus to affect the development of whole nation. It can be said that women's progress is the key for social progress. But we must admit that there still exist some problems

about women's education now, such as the overall level of women's education in countryside is low, unequal treatment still exists in schools and jobs. Therefore, China should pay more attention to women's education; take some measures to solve these problems. If we increase the level of female education, the country's population quality will be improved, and then the whole society will be improved.

REFERENCES

- Dongyuan Chen (1998). *Life history of Chinese women*. Beijing: Beijing Business Library.
- Guangfen Yan (2006). *New thinking on higher education for women* (pp.18). Beijing: Chinese Women's College.
- Huang Guozhen (2008). Developing the women's higher education, promote the social harmony in an aging society. Beijing: *Journal of Beijing City College*, 4, 87-90.
- Helin Li (2007). The extent of female education and improve the quality of the population. *Social Science Forum*, (4), 149-151.
- Jing Fang (2007). Female education Tao Xing Zhi. *Nanjing Xiaozhuang College*, (3).
- Li Zong (2008). Educational level of mothers to the quality of their children. Jiangxi: *Jiangxi Institute of Education*, (10), 52-58.
- Ping Zhuang (1991). Social return on female education. *Journal of Social Research*, 34-36. Beijing: Social Research Institute.
- Qiaoyun Jia & Yuming Ji (2007). Concerned about the adult female education: the key to improving the quality of adult education. Heilongjiang: *Journal of Adult Education of China*, (10), 84-85.
- Shuwen Zhang (2010). On the quality of female education impact on the population. Hunan: *Hunan sociology network*, 4, 89-92.
- Ting Liu (2006). Development of female education in China and thinking. *Jiangxi University of Finance Staff*, (3), 133-134.
- Wen Zhen Ye & Jianhua Liu & Juan Du & Yiran Xia (2003). Chinese women's social status and its influencing factors. Shanghai: *Journal of Chinese Woman*, (15), 78-80.
- Yinhe Li (1995). The status of Chinese women ranked No. 28. Ningbo: *China Social Sciences Report*, 101, 101-104.
- Yu Wei (1995). *The Education of Chinese women*. Hangzhou: Education Press of Hangzhou.