

Miantao Sun

THE CONCEPT OF TIZHI (SYSTEM) IN CHINESE EDUCATION

中国教育体制论

◆ 孙绵涛 著

LIAONING PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE

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Contents

Foreword	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii
Brief Introduction to the Content	xv

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Topic	1
1.1.1 The aim of research	1
1.1.2 Research question	2
1.1.3 Research design	2
1.2 Research Ground	6
1.3 Research Methodology	7
1.3.1 Data gathering	8
1.3.2 Data analysis	15
1.3.3 Modes of analysis	20
1.4 Structure of the Dissertation	22

Chapter Two: Theories and Terms

2.1 Theories Related to the Research	25
2.1.1 Theory of analysis of education policy	25
2.1.2 System theory and organization	27
2.1.3 Theory of construction of institutional reality	31
2.1.4 Analytic philosophy of education	33
2.1.5 Theory of formal logic	34
2.2 Terms Related to Education <i>Tizhi</i>	35
2.2.1 Definition of education <i>tizhi</i> , education, system, organization and institution	35

2.2.2 Definition of education <i>tizhi</i> , regulation, law and rule	37
2.2.3 Definition of education <i>tizhi</i> and education system	38

PART I

CURRENT IDEAS ON EDUCATIONAL TIZHI REFORM

Chapter Three: Understanding Education *Tizhi* in Current Education Reform--Key Policy Documents

3.1 The Review of the Content of <u>Decision</u> (1985)	41
3.1.1 Description of the reform content	41
3.1.2 Analysis of the reform content	46
3.2 The Review of the Content of <u>Outline</u> (1993)	52
3.2.1 Description of the reform content	52
3.2.2 Analysis of the reform content	59
3.3 The Review of the Content of <u>Reform</u> (1999)	66
3.3.1 Description of the reform content	66
3.3.2 Analysis of the reform content	70
3.4 The Summary	77
3.4.1 Sub-education <i>tizhi</i> and factors in the three documents	77
3.4.2 Relationships education <i>tizhi</i> reform deals with in the three documents	82
3.4.3 Characteristics of education <i>tizhi</i> reform in the three documents	85

Chapter Four: Current Education *Tizhi* Reform--Some Examples

4.1 Review of Education Reform from 1949 to 1978 and Its Relation to the Current Education System	87
4.1.1 Review of education reform from 1949 to 1978	87
4.1.2 Current education system and the organizational map of educational administration	97
4.2 Education Reform from 1978 to 2000	100

4.2.1 Reform of school education <i>tizhi</i>	101
4.2.2 Reform of educational management <i>tizhi</i>	110
4.3 Summary	121
4.3.1 Similarities between the two stages and its references	121
4.3.2 Differences between the two stages and its references	123

PRAT II

CRITIQUE AND RECONSTRUCTION

Chapter Five: Critique of Understanding of Education *Tizhi*—Methodological and Substantive Issues

5.1 Critique of Ideas from the Three Documents	127
5.1.1 Findings from the three documents	127
5.1.2 Considerations of the problems in the three documents	129
5.1.3 An interim summary	140
5.2 Critique of Ideas from Other Sources	140
5.2.1 Critique of ideas from interviewees	140
5.2.2 Critique of ideas from scholars' writings	144
5.2.3 Critique of ideas from language	151
5.2.4 An interim summary	154
5.3 Summary	156

Chapter Six: Towards A Better Theory of Education *Tizhi*—Methodological and Substantive Issues

6.1 Description of the Conceptual Model of Education <i>Tizhi</i>	157
6.1.1 Defining education <i>tizhi</i>	157
6.1.2 Conceptual diagrams	158
6.2 Justification for the Conceptual Model of Education <i>Tizhi</i>	161
6.2.1 Methodological considerations for the justification	161
6.2.2 Justification from theoretical perspective	163

6.2.3 Justification from an empirical perspective	170
6.2.4 Justification from comparative perspective	176
6.3 Summary	181

PART III

APPLICATIONS

Chapter Seven: Application to Educational Reform--State

7.1 Reform of Education Organization and Education Regulation	183
7.1.1 Reform of education organization	183
7.1.2 Reform of education regulation	193
7.1.3 The relationship between the reform of education organization and the reform of education regulation	202
7.2 Reform of School Education <i>Tizhi</i> and Education Administration <i>Tizhi</i>	203
7.2.1 Reform of school education <i>tizhi</i>	203
7.2.2 Reform of education administration <i>tizhi</i>	218
7.3 Summary	228

Chapter Eight: Application to Educational Reform--School

8.1 Reform of Management Organization and Management Regulation within the School	229
8.1.1 Reform of management organization	229
8.1.2 Reform of management regulation	236
8.1.3 Relationship between the reform of management organization and the reform of management regulation	241
8.2 Reform of Four Sub-intra-school Management <i>Tizhi</i>	242
8.2.1 Reform of school leadership <i>tizhi</i>	242
8.2.2 Reform of school implementation <i>tizhi</i>	248
8.2.3 Reform of school consultation <i>tizhi</i>	253
8.2.4 Reform of school supervision <i>tizhi</i>	254

8.2.5 The relationship among the four sub-intra-school management <i>tizhi</i> reforms	256
8.3 Introduction of Management <i>Tizhi</i> Reform of 49 MSW	256
8.3.1 The content of school management <i>tizhi</i> reform	257
8.3.2 The achievements of school management <i>tizhi</i> reform	259
8.4 Summary	260

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1 Major Findings	263
9.1.1 The conceptual model of education <i>tizhi</i> has become more holistic and comprehensive	263
9.1.2 The conceptual model of education <i>tizhi</i> has been proven to be more adaptive and specific for the reform	264
9.2 Contributions of the Findings	265
9.2.1 Theoretical contribution	265
9.2.2 Practical contribution	268
9.3 Limitations of the Study	269
9.4 Suggestions for Further Research	269
Bibliography	271
Appendices	297
Appendix 3 Glossary	329

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

China is a huge country, with a civilization extending for more than five thousand years. During this long period, many specialized concepts have arisen out of Chinese culture, which have had a very high degree of influence on Chinese education. *Tizhi*--sometimes understood as "system"--is one of these concepts. What is the meaning of *tizhi*? And how do the Chinese people use this concept in the field of education? This dissertation attempts to provide a theoretical and practical understanding of the concept of *tizhi* in Chinese education. It also attempts to develop and defend a notion of *tizhi* that can be used in a normative way to prescribe directions for educational reform.

The introduction begins by outlining the research topic. It then turns to the question of its theoretical and practical significance, and to a discussion of research methodology. Finally it concludes with an outline of the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 Research Topic

1.1.1 The aim of research

The aim of study is to describe and justify a new conceptual model of education *tizhi* (*jiaoyu tizhi*) so as to provide a coherent account of education *tizhi* reform in China.

In China, many research studies on education have focused on the reform of education *tizhi* (e.g. Yao, 2000, p.101). Recently, more studies have focused on the reform of educational administration *tizhi* (*jiaoyu xingzheng tizhi*), and also on the reform of higher education *tizhi* (*gaodeng jiaoyu tizhi*) (e.g. Wu, 1999, p.23 & Yao, 2000). However, there are currently no specific studies into the meaning of the concept of education *tizhi* despite its obvious importance in policy and research on reform of education *tizhi*. The principle focus of this research is to develop an account of what counts as an appropriate meaning for education of *tizhi* in China. To achieve this aim, the study is not just a better definition of *tizhi*, but a better theory that will provide a framework for effective reform of education *tizhi* in China. A revised framework may improve people's understanding and more importantly, may help us to establish a conceptual model of education *tizhi* which will provide a coherent account of education *tizhi* reform and to clarify thinking about the

reform of education *tizhi* so as to make that reform more effective.

1.1.2 Research question

The questions, which I hope to clarify and answer in the process of this research, are as follows:

- (1) What are the main current ideas on educational *tizhi* reform?
- (2) What are the status quo and main problems in current education *tizhi* reform?
- (3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of ideas of education *tizhi* reform and why?
- (4) What is a better theory of education *tizhi* and why?
- (5) How can this better theory of education *tizhi* be applied to the practice of education *tizhi* reform in China?

1.1.3 Research design

In order to answer these questions, the following sequence of inquiry shall be adopted.

First, I want to locate and investigate current ideas on educational *tizhi* reform in the period of time from 1978 to 2000. The reason for concentrating on this period is that China has opened its door to the world and has initiated economic reform from 1978. In order to match the steps of economic reform, the Chinese government placed an extraordinary emphasis on education *tizhi* reform since the 1980s (although admittedly the Chinese government had undertaken reform of the education system (*jiaoyu zhidu*) before this period of time). Of course, in order to make clear the original meaning of education *tizhi*, I will sometimes review literature over a wider span of time and examine education reform from 1949 to 1978. Reviewing the literature and conducting interviews are central to this stage of the research. To understand the status quo of education *tizhi* reform, I will survey of education reform in China. Relevant Department of the Ministry of Education, Hubei province, Wuhan city, Huanshi city, several counties, several universities, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools will be selected as areas of investigation. There are two reasons for my selection. One is that it covers macro-aspects (relevant department at nation level), medium-aspects (province, city and county), and micro-aspects (school), as well as rural areas of education, urban areas of education, education in developed areas (*Tongxiang* country in *Zhejiang* province) and education in less developed areas (*Yangxing* county in *Hubei* province). The other is that I have ready

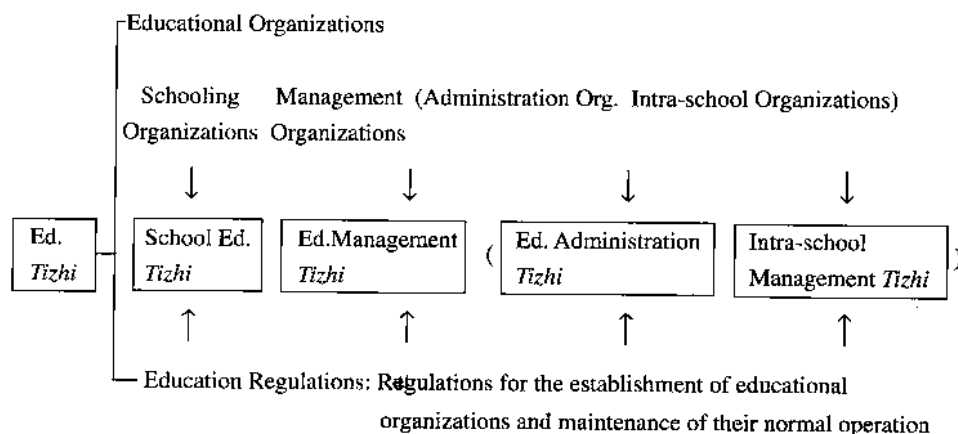
access to the data and policies concerning with these areas. To gain current ideas on education *tizhi* reform, official documents, academic writings, and other sources, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc. will be reviewed, and some education officials, principals, and some scholars will be interviewed.

Second, I will determine the advantages and disadvantages of current ideas on education *tizhi* reform by using theories which relate to this research. These theories are mainly to do with the analysis of education policy, understanding organizations as systems, and the use of conceptual analytic techniques from philosophy of education, theory of construction of institutional reality and some ideas from formal logic. The relationship between this research and these theories is very close. For example, the reform of education *tizhi* is actually one of the most important education policies in China, so of course we can use ideas drawn from education policy analysis to analyze the education *tizhi* reform. We can also take education *tizhi* as a sort of social system and organization, making it reasonable for us to adopt ideas from systems and organization theory to discuss education *tizhi*. Finally, how to reform the education *tizhi* involves understanding this and related concepts, thus drawing us into the use of conceptual analytic techniques. In order to analyze how to reify any proposed conceptual model of education *tizhi*, we need a deductive process. We also need an inductive process to go beyond cases, and a dialectical process, like abduction, that fits induction and deduction together.

Third, based on the analysis of the second step, by using a suitable method for definition, I will propose a revised definition of education *tizhi* in the context of what makes for effective reform. This revised conceptual definition will focus on exploring the basic factors which are part of the formation of education *tizhi*, and on the relationships among these factors. In order to establish this conceptual model of education *tizhi* during the process of making a revised definition of *tizhi*, I will examine the following questions: What kind of factors of education *tizhi* should be included? Why should the education *tizhi* include these factors? What is the relationship among the factors of the education *tizhi*? Why is there such a relationship among these factors?

In an earlier investigation, I concluded that the following conceptual model of education *tizhi* would be a fruitful starting point (Sun, 1994, pp.10-12):

Figure 1.1 A conceptual model of education *tizhi* in China



Let me give a simplified explanation of this conceptual model of education *tizhi*.

Education *tizhi* is the integration of education organizations (*jiaoyu jigou*) and education regulations (*jiaoyu guifan*). It includes two parts: 1) the organizations of education (*jiaoyu jigou*) and 2) the regulations that govern education (*jiaoyu zhidu*). The organizations of education include schooling organizations (*xuexiao jiaoyu jigou*) and management organizations of education (*jiaoyu guanli jigou*). The organizations of education are educating organizations (*jiaoyu shishi jigou*). Management organizations of education are educational administration organizations (*jiaoyu xingzheng jigou*) and intra-school management organizations (*xiaonei guanli jigou*). The regulations that govern education include rules and regulations (*guizhang zhidu*) which can ensure that education organizations run well. Education organizations adopt certain regulations to formulate school education *tizhi* (*xuexiao jiaoyu tizhi*). The management organizations of education adopt certain regulations to formulate education management *tizhi* (*jiaoyu guanli tizhi*). Among these, education administration organizations adopt certain regulations to formulate education administration *tizhi* (*jiaoyu xingzheng tizhi*). The intra-school management organizations adopt certain regulation to formulate intra-school management *tizhi* (*xiaonei guanli tizhi*).

Why is education *tizhi* an integration of the education organization and the education regulation components? Although this issue will be dealt with in more detail later, the

general answer is that from the perspective of institutional theory, which is the broad theoretical framework adopted here, much regulation is of the constitutive variety, and so play a role in defining the nature of an organization. This means that we cannot separate regulation, in this sense, from considerations of organization.

There are two primary components of the education *tizhi*: the school *tizhi* and the education management *tizhi*. There are two sub-components in the education management *tizhi*, namely the education administration *tizhi* and the intra-school management *tizhi*. The school education *tizhi* is the presupposition of the education *tizhi*. The education management *tizhi* is the guarantor of the education *tizhi*. The delivery of education within education organizations is the reason for the existence of the school *tizhi*. The education management *tizhi* is the mechanism by which the delivery of education is guaranteed. Thus, these two *tizhi* are closely related. There is also a relationship between the two sub-components of education management *tizhi*. The education administration *tizhi* functions as a macroscopic management *tizhi* while the intra-school management *tizhi* functions at the microscopic management level. The education administration *tizhi* must deal with the problems which the national government and the local government face. The intra-school management *tizhi* must deal with problems faced by the educational institutions. Thus, these two *tizhi* are also closely related.

Fourth, I will apply the conceptual model of education *tizhi* to the practice of the current reform of education in China. The application includes two levels: state level, and school level. I choose these two levels because I take both the national level and provincial level or county level as concerned with macroscopic level, and take the school as concerned with the microscopic level. As claimed above, education *tizhi* includes two factors: education organization and education regulation, and includes three sub-education *tizhi*: school education *tizhi*, education administration *tizhi* and intra-school management *tizhi*. With these distinctions in mind, we can clarify ideas concerning reforms aimed at education *tizhi*. The reform of the education *tizhi* can be viewed in two lights: 1) a two-factor reform (*liangge yaosu gaige*) focusing on educational organization and regulation; or 2) a three-sub-*tizhi* reform (*sange tizhi gaige*) focusing on the school *tizhi*, education administration *tizhi* and intra-school management *tizhi*. Reform efforts, either the two-factor reform or the three-*tizhi* reform, must be simultaneously applied to all relevant components of the education *tizhi*, so as to respect their interconnected relationships. The purpose of applying this model to practice is not to experiment at state level and school level. Instead, I propose

to provide a prescription of education *tizhi* reform for the state and for the school and to further explain how to use this model in practice. Of course, this model can be used to guide school reform. (My application of the model in a secondary school in Wuhan will be described in Chapter Eight). So with regard to the state level, I want to explain how to reform education organizations and education regulations, and how to reform the school education *tizhi* and education administration *tizhi*. But with regard to the school level, I also want to illustrate how to reform management organizations and management regulations and how to reform the sub-management *tizhi* within school.

1.2 Research Ground

The issue of *tizhi* is a very important one in China. The reason for this is because, from the view of Chinese traditional culture, when Chinese people talk about management and reform, they usually hope to use a framework which is called *tizhi* to guide their activities. In its educational aspects, that is the reason why the term *tizhi* is frequently referred to in Chinese education reform. However, while *tizhi* is generally understood as a Chinese equivalent of "system", there is evidence that this could be inaccurate and even misleading.

In the reform of education in China today, the Chinese government considers education reform, including the reform of education *tizhi*, as necessary to economic and political development. In January 1985, the Chinese government promulgated "The Decision on Reform Education *Tizhi* Made by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party" which initiated the reform of education *tizhi* as a part of the whole reform movement of education. The reform of education *tizhi* has thus become an important agenda item for the Chinese government. In order to make the reform of education *tizhi* effective and successful, it is necessary for policy-maker to have clear ideas about education *tizhi* reform. Failure to do so could leave the reform of education *tizhi* ineffective and unsuccessful. In order to begin this task of clarification of education *tizhi*, the first thing for us to do is to construct a satisfactory conceptual model of education *tizhi*. However, this issue has seldom been studied in detail. In spite of the fact that the Chinese government has deemed reform of education *tizhi* an important agenda item, for various reasons, the general climate has remained unfavorable to the reform of education. That is there are currently many problems inherent to the reform of education *tizhi*. For example, when the Chinese government began to reform the education *tizhi*, emphasis was placed on the reform of power and

responsibility of the administrative organization of education, thus ignoring the reform of education for the organization of education. In the past few years, the central government gave more autonomy to the local government and allowed the local government to set up higher education institutions according to the needs of local economic development. As a result, the structure of the education *tizhi* for these institutions of education was loosened. A number of higher education institutions were upgraded from the college level (which had unqualified teachers and a shortage of facilities) to the university level. The number of universities increased from 758 in 1984 to 1703 in 1995, (*Guojia jiaoyu weiyuanhui*, 1996), a phenomenon which greatly influences the quality of higher education. Why are there such problems in the reform of education *tizhi*? The main reason, I claim, is that the basic concepts behind the reform of education *tizhi* are not clear. By seeking to clarify basic concept and integrate them into a systematic and comprehensive understanding of education *tizhi*, this research can have practical significance in China by promoting the effectiveness of the reform of education *tizhi*. This is the first reason for me to pursue this research project.

Secondly, this research is not only of practical significance for education, it also has theoretical significance. For instance, in the study of educational administration there is uncertainty and disputation in the question of what relationships exist among the concepts of educational organization, the concept of educational regulation, the concept of education *tizhi*, the concept of school *tizhi*, the concept of education administration *tizhi* and the concept of intra-school management *tizhi*, and in the question of what differences exist between the education administration *tizhi* and education management *tizhi*. The results of this research, based on developing the conceptual model of education *tizhi*, will not only explore the meaning of this concept itself, but also will clarify the relationships among these concepts.

Besides its theoretical significance for education, this research may also have a broader theoretical significance, for instance, if we explore the structure of education *tizhi*, it probably helps us to understand the structure of the social system or social organization from a new aspect. (See Chapter Nine for further discussion of this point).

1.3 Research Methodology

The basic methodological approach of this research is a philosophical reconstruction

of a range of concepts associated with educational uses of the term *tizhi* and their justification. This is an exercise that cannot take place in an empirical vacuum. It requires an analysis of actual organizational structure and process. For this purpose, in common with the majority of researchers who are interested in conducting social research projects, I prefer to adopt qualitative methods for the collection and analysis of data. In qualitative studies, data collection and analysis go hand in hand to promote the emergence of a substantive theory grounded in empirical data (Glasser and Strauss, 1967).

1.3.1 Data gathering

The fundamental methods relied on by qualitative researchers for gathering information are (1) participation in the setting, (2) direct observation, (3) in-depth of interview, and (4) document review (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 78). Broadly speaking, I used these four methods to gather data in the process of this research. Because I myself am a participant in both the reform of education and this research project on the reform of education in China, I am not only participating in this reform, but also observing and experiencing some reform events. However, the formal research methods I want to mainly use are the interview and literature review inasmuch as, for my purposes, the document review actually belongs to the literature review. Each of these methods is discussed below.

1.3.1.1 Literature review

The literature review provides the framework for the research and identifies the area of knowledge that the study is intended to expand. It demonstrates the underlying assumptions behind the general research question (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 28). In particular, by reviewing literatures in both Chinese and English, this research study hopes to gain evidence for answers to a range of questions, including:

How many documents, promulgated by the national government, related to the reform of education *tizhi*? What are the key documents? And what are the contents of these documents?

What is the earliest literature which advances the concept of *tizhi*?

How is the education connected with the term *tizhi*?

What is the approximate meaning of the concept of education *tizhi*?

What is the relationship between the education *tizhi* and education system?

What is the relationship among the *tizhi*, education, system and organization?

What is the relationship among regulation, law and rule?

What is the relationship between the *tizhi* and the terms of regulation, law and rule?

The questions above concentrate on three main issues, i.e., how people understand education *tizhi*, what kind of theories lies behind these understandings, and what is the relationship between the education *tizhi* and its related aspects. In order to gain clarity on these issues, I want to review the policy documents, and other sources, including scholars' writings and dictionaries, in which the ideas on education, scholars' understandings, and some theories related to this research, and terms related to education will also be reviewed. Of course, besides the literature above, in the process of literature review, I also want to review newspapers and some statistical materials so that an overview can be obtained.

1.3.1.1.1 Review of policy documents

The policy documents to be reviewed here are not the documents published by the local government and by the schools; rather they are the documents promulgated by the national government since the reform of education *tizhi* is a policy of the national government.

Although the Chinese government has actually engaged in reforms of education before 1980s, the term *tizhi* in the policy documents of education reform has been seldom used. Instead, "education system" (*jiaoyu zhidu*) and "school leadership and management" (*xuexiao lingdao yu guanli*) have been frequently used in the documents (Liu, 1993 pp. 35-65; pp. 609-702; pp. 1088-1096). There may be two reasons for this. The first is that people probably think that *tizhi* is equal to *zhidu*, so to reform education *zhidu* is equal to reform education *tizhi*. The second is that people may think that *tizhi* refers to administration and management issues, i.e., how to deal with the issue of running a school between the central government and the local government, how to deal with the issue of the relationship between the government and schools, and how to deal with issue of organization within the school. The time when the Chinese government formally started to use the term *tizhi* in the policy documents of education reform really begins in 1985 when the Government promulgated its policy document on education *tizhi* reform which was called Decision on Reform of Education Tizhi Made By the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (hereinafter called Decision). From then the term *tizhi* is frequently used in government documents and in scholars' writings. The reason for this shift, I think, is that along with economic reform gaining momentum, the main issues faced by the Chinese government in