

Investment and Management Research of Community Colleges in the United States

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Abstract

Education in community schools in the United States has flourished several years, its scale and influence are extremely significant for the American higher education. The paper, by expounding the development history, investment and management form of community schools, found its characteristics, then revealed the development of connotation of community colleges and can be used for reference to the Perfect structure and development of higher education in China.

Key words: Community school; Investment and management; Higher education

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many countries are trying to increase their education distribution by multiple avenues. In China, since the implement of reform and open-up policy, there are tremendous improvements in education investment; however, serious problems still exist including the shortage of financial support and the unreasonable structure of higher education.

As we know, the American community college may appear as a somewhat peculiar, specific institution. Students study for only two years to earn an associate degree and for even shorter time periods if they are

interested in a vocational certificate. With the exception of certain vocational programs, almost anyone with a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) credential can be admitted to a public community college. Community colleges tend to be popular among students who can attend college only part time, who have had poor grades in high school, or who are looking for a vocational qualification rather than an academic one. Because of the life-determining nature of college entrance examination in China, accessing to university which is prestigious is the pursuit of majority of Chinese high school graduates and their parents. This is one of reasons that vocational colleges in China are unpopular, and the structure of higher education in China grows unequally.

Today in China, we have to face a conflicting condition that there are serious lack of higher vocational education, the higher regular university tuition and the people pursuing more opportunities to receive higher education. Will we let this condition go on in China? How about change the structure of higher education in China? And how about learning from the U.S. in terms of higher vocational education like developing community college?

This paper helps readers understand the community college through its historical roots and the services it can provide effectively and successfully for today's rapidly changing educational and economic demands. An examination of investment and management will explain why the community college developed, and why it is an important institution of higher education whose purpose is to support economic development, then finding out the suggestions to help Chinese higher education development.

1. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES

American community college can be referred to as two years college, and also called primary college or technical

college. It is different from the university in China that American community college is for two years and equivalent to junior college or higher vocational college in China. Students in community college can choose a variety of practical and technical programs, then get an employment after graduated in two years, or can study the course of ordinary university and continue to research in the university.

American community colleges go back to the late nineteenth century. The first community college is Joliet Junior College in Illinois in 1901. It has a history of more than 110 years. American community college has changed, enriched and perfected the pattern of higher education in the United States, and achieved the goal of American education democracy, and became the key role of realizing the popularization in education area. Community college has different development in different periods, but no matter which stage of development, or which period community college always get the strong supporting from American people and government. Servicing the community is the tenet of running school, and is one of reasons for the existence of community college. The reason for their existence and their enduring popularity. First, communities wanted them. Larger universities had turned more and more toward research whereas communities needed colleges that were responsive to local needs and helped train workers who could advance the industrialization of the local economy. In addition, it was a point of pride that the community has a community college. Second, progressivism thoughts of social justice through education had begun to settle. This realization of social justice was to be achieved by promoting public rather than private education, making vocational education be equivalent to ordinary academic education (this is suggested that all students need to accept basic training in vocational education), and requiring all teachers to obtain higher education training (which means training in teacher training colleges or normal schools). These seemingly conflicting missions of supporting both industry and social change derive from the American thinking that educational institutions are best suited to respond to societal needs and should be charged with being the driving force behind preparing citizens and workers for change.

Community college is divided into the public and the private in property: The public means the two-year college establishing by the state government, the private two-year college is dividing into profit organization and not-for-profit organization. In terms of function, whether public or private community college has following three functions: One is university transferring function which means students completed courses credits in two years, and awarded the associate degree, if he or she wants to continue to study, then will turn into normal four-year university for studying another two years to get the bachelor degree. The second is vocational

and technical education function, means carrying out vocational training, students study and develop the ability of professional technology. The last one is re-education function, which means carrying out compensation education and continuing education, like on-the-job postgraduate students in China. In this way students can study in community college to improve and update their knowledge while work, then to obtain opportunities for a higher level job promotion. The top purpose of running American community college is serving the community, and meeting the demand of community education. Therefore, the educational goal of community college must be to meet the diversity needs of the local community, and the curriculum must be combined with the reality of community closely. Community college education is be oriented two-year comprehensive local higher education which is based on local community, facing local community, and serving local community. Development of college cannot leave the community, at the same time, college also pays close attention to the development and demands of local community, and focuses of concern in community. From the perspective of education to serve the community, making the personal quality and knowledge structure of local community staff appropriate to the construction of community by training the talents in local community will solve problems which need to be solved in community. The curriculums of community college are diverse, comprehensive, and updating timely. Subject setting includes the art, the science, the agriculture, the engineering, the business, the economics, the management and the medical science. Many courses adjust contents to satisfy the economical or cultural characteristics in the state or local community and the development of community industry.

The composition of students in American community college is very diverse. The student population at a community college mirrors the ethnic, cultural, gender, age, and socioeconomic diversity of the district more so than a university does. According to American Association of Community College (ACCA), the total enrollment of student in community colleges was 11.7 million in 2009, of whom 6.7 million took courses for credit and 5 million took noncredit courses. All over the enrollment students, thirty percent of them are full-time students. The remaining seventy percent of the students are part-time students, this part of students have been married or have a job, they just need a school that they can complete their course of learning according to their own life rhythm. And community college provides such a learning opportunity. 44% of American college students are studying in community college, according to statistics of ACCA, the American community college student enrollment reached 50 to 80 percent in 17 states; The enrollment reached 42 to 49 percent in 11 states; and enrollment reached 35 to 40 percent in 13 states, from

this, the American community college plays a decisive role in higher education system of the United States of American. There needs to point out specially that in all the community college students, about 51% of students' parents did not study in university or college, which means this part of students are the first generation of university students in their family. It can be imaged that if one local community absents a community college, there will be no entrance channel for the public. And a lot of people will never have a chance of entering the university under these circumstances.

2. THE INVESTMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

2.1 The Management of American Community College

The United States is a federal state. Its government management system is divided into three parts, the federal government, state, and the local government. So, the management system of higher education is similar with the government system, which is decentralization. This means the state government makes corresponding education laws and regulations according to actual situation of education and characteristics of local situation. Because of this management system, American community colleges in each states are in different ways, but the schools have a greater level of autonomy which makes community college serve local community, the public in the community, and the development of community better.

The board of directors of school management is the main management mode of American college. Community colleges more so than other institutions of higher education tend to have top-down organizational structures with strong leaders, limited faculty governance, and little if any student involvement. As a result of faculty teaching loads, the short tenure of students in their programs, and the need to react quickly to changing economic and political realities, decisions are sometimes made with minimal input from stakeholders. Each state, according to the different situation in community, has set up a corresponding district. The district has a different size which depends on the local population. Only one community college can form a district, or one district maybe has several community colleges. Regardless of district scale, the entire management mode is a board of trustees. A board of trustees or regents provides regulatory oversight. Boards usually have a membership made up of business or civic leaders from the college's district. American community college school board members were elected by the community voters which are the local community representatives of all walks of life or ordinary peoples. According to the needs and expectations of local people, members of board of school elected the trustees in

board of school who has overlapping six-year terms. These boards hire and fire the college president, make sure that the college is managed in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, oversee facilities management and construction, set staff and faculty salaries, confirm new faculty contracts, and approve or terminate programs.

Unlike the President Responsibility system in China, the headmaster of American community college is elected by the board of directors of school and need to report work to them. The president is the one who sets the tone for the institutional culture, and he has multiple functions and sometimes has to try to be everything to everybody in school. Presidents help develop institutional missions and goals, make administrative decisions, chair campus committees, meet with the board, raise money, lobby the state legislature, coordinate programs with other colleges, work with community leaders, and provide leadership for all on-campus functions. vice presidents oversee the day-to-day administration of the college in areas such as business and finance, academics and instructional services, student, affairs, administrative services, continuing education, or technology. Division or department chairs report to the respective dean or vice president. Depending on each college, academic programs may be divided into divisions of program clusters or related fields or departments of specific academic disciplines. The exact configuration depends on the size of the institution and the number of faculty and students in each program.

Table 1
The Relationship in School Management

Community public	(elect) →	The board	(appoint) →	president	(manage) →	Business in school
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2.2 The Investment of American Community College

Community colleges usually have six sources of revenue: tuition and fees paid by students, federal monies, state appropriations, local funds, income from sales and services provided, and other sources often referred to as *soft money* because of their limited and uncertain availability. All of these, the main sources are tuition and fees paid by students, state appropriations and local funds, and the other sources.

State funding, according to the different funding mechanism in each state, is usually negotiated with members of state legislature or the education administrative department of state. It can be divide into six kinds of capital form: (a) planned economy with centralized control, where the legislature appropriates a certain amount of money annually; (b) planned economy with some decentralization, where the legislature appropriates most of the money, but local sources or additional funding based on need are considered; (c) percentage matching, where the state pays a percentage of the college budget while the rest comes from other

sources; (d) flat grant, where community colleges receive the fix number of grant which matched the full-time enrolled students; (e) basic cost plan, where state and local matching funds share costs of community colleges, in order to improve the limited community support in those districts; (f) cost-based funding, where the state finance provide the necessary funds based on function, purpose, and some specific project courses. Property tax is the main source of local funds. In general, a percentage of the tax property owners in the district pay is set aside for the local community college. This money can be used for any expense in community college. If more funds are needed, colleges may ask for a special purpose tax, which can fund only the one program it is intended for, or a capital outlay tax, which may fund buildings and equipment. But the last two tax needs voters approved that school community funding may imposed by this way.

The tuition and fees paid by students, as the important part of community college sources, account thirty percent of the school investment amount, and are a persistent point of contention for every college student and administrator. Students want to be able to afford college, and administrators want to keep their colleges affordable. State legislators, on the other hand, want colleges to collect more tuition money so that state appropriations may be reduced. As a result which is obvious, the cost of attending a two-year college has seen some steep increases over the years. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the cost of attending a two-year community college increases nearly a double in the recent forty years (Table 2). Tuition is closely related to federal aid. Without aid, many students would not be able to afford a college education. Of all 2007–2008 full-time community college students, 65.7% received some sort of financial aid; 55.7% received an average of \$3700 in grants, and 22.5% received an average of \$4,900 in loans.

Table 2
Tuition Fee of Community College During 1976-2007

Year	Annual cost	Percentage increase (%)
1976/77	\$283	0
1986/87	\$660	133
1996/97	\$1267	107
2006/07	\$2017	62

Note. Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2009.

Soft money means the other sources of funding in community college. To bring in extra revenue, colleges often lease facilities to outside businesses or agencies for event hosting. Another source of funding has been to provide paid services for hire to industry clients, usually in areas such as technology training or organizational development. Finally, support may come from industry partners (in the form of money or equipment), donations

and gifts, one-time government grants, and income from investments.

3. THINKING AND ENLIGHTENMENT

What is the final outcome of this paper about the role in higher education of community college? What are the answers to the questions asked at the starting of this paper? We believe that the answers are unqualified “YES”. How about learning from the U.S. in terms of higher vocational education like developing community college? Yes, we should learn from the U.S. in terms of higher vocational education like developing community college. How about change the structure of higher education in China? Yes, the structure of higher education in China have to been changed, community college will optimize higher education structure in China.

In the current global economic environment, access becomes more considerable than ever. Large numbers of people must be retrained; others who never needed higher education and never had to worry about global issues must be encouraged to consider college study; and previously severed of worked in a low position groups must be empowered to seize opportunities. For many people, community colleges will be the convenient and affordable choice in their pursuit to remain competitive in their workforce. Community college will solve the conflicting condition in Chinese higher education because it will offer more opportunities to access higher education and the tuition and fee will be less than university. Community colleges are uniquely positioned to respond to the increasing need for further education and training and they remain a ray of hope and opportunity for those who had always thought that higher education was beyond their reach. These two parts will make community colleges have a well-developed in Chinese higher education.

In conclusion, American community college has a long history and advantages, it is worth learning and using for reference.

According to the experience of development and practice of American community college, as well as the status of higher education in the United States, they show that community college would use to popularize higher education, develop professional and continuing education, and it has the effect and ability to promote local community economy, culture, and technique. The establishment of community college is helpful to build a reasonable structure of higher education development. There are mostly full-time ordinary universities in Chinese higher education structure, the higher vocational school decreased obviously. Under the condition that the Chinese higher education center of gravity deviated seriously, many school do not pay their attention on the characteristics of school culture and academic pursuits, but they pursue owning more master stations

and doctor stations. It is no use to a reasonable higher education structure for a country. Today, we have to face a conflicting and actual condition that there facing the serious lack of higher vocational education, the higher regular university tuition and the people pursuing more opportunities to receive higher education. It could be regarded as a kind of feasible to introduce American community college form to establish local and community higher education, to optimize the structure of higher education.

Perfecting forms of cooperation between college and local community. In the source of American community college funding, there are a large part of source coming from the cooperation between school and community industry. Establishing cooperation between college and enterprise, negotiating the school training curriculum plan, facing community demands, adjusting arrangements, these methods can maximize the realization of the function of school education in the transformation of social economic life. However, the current situation of higher education in China tends to be a part of school curriculum has not kept but another small part advanced the society and enterprise needs. It makes that students, after graduated, still need to accept further orientation in society and enterprises, and what worse is that learning knowledge at school does not apply to the job. That is the reason many college students in China are unfit for a higher post but unwilling to take a lower one after graduated. At the same time that is virtually a waste of education resource.

Figuring out specific objects and goals of higher education services. The American community is still strong after one hundred years development, it could have its own objective factors, but the many various requirements, like its commitment to lifelong learning, satisfying the community residents improving their career competence and the quality of spiritual and cultural life, and purposes which is enriching public life and servicing to the community are the key to success. Facing the demands of regional development, Chinese higher education is often ignored such requirements, and cannot be combined with local characteristics to running school. Under the influence of homogeneity, school development cannot make a difference seriously, So, drawing lessons from development of American community college and distinguishing service object of higher education are particularly significant. The rapid developments of economy and society put forward higher requirements to providing the level of talent in higher education of China. The local community and industry cannot be satisfied with the existing talent cultivation level, and ask for training more professional talents. It is not hard to find that students always can match the requirement of market development and the needs of community construction in training students in American community college. For Chinese higher education, it should be combined with market demands, set up corresponding and matching job

needs courses, figured out training objects, then avoided homogeneity and inefficiencies of curriculum.

Drawing lessons from the investment form of American community college, giving college true management power, letting school get the true school-running autonomy, and making sure school have necessary funding, our government should encourage college use various forms of school self-raised funds to develop school. For the investment forms of Chinese private higher education, it should be like investment form in American community college, this not only can stimulate the vitality of private education, promote the development of education, optimize the structure of higher education, but also can reduce the pressure of government education investment in some extent, and give the public more choices of education form.

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