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Civil service executive development in China: An overview

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Civil service executive development has become increasingly important for China since it began market reform in the late 1970s. As society becomes more complex, diverse and open, and as citizen expectations of the government become more demanding, the professional training of public managers has become indispensable. To reduce gaps in executive capacity created by rapid development and a relatively stable bureaucracy, the Chinese Government has launched ambitious efforts to modernise its civil service, focusing on staff in leading positions. Like many other countries, China faces the task of designing and organising executive development programs to make governmental officials more efficient, accountable and clean.

China's efforts in civil service executive development have been a result of both its modernisation and its institutional environment. Executive development in China's civil service takes the form of cadre education and training (CET). Under the political leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the Western practice of a 'neutral' civil service does not exist. Civil servants in China are still treated as cadres who, according to the Civil Service Law of 2005, are supervised by the party. The CCP's political, ideological and organisational

leadership over the public sector has set parameters over the relatively young Chinese Civil Service by specifying the fundamental values of civil service (Jing and Zhu 2012). In fact, civil service development has been embedded into the old cadre personnel system (Chan and Li 2007). The party's organisational system is directly in charge of CET, particularly for cadres at or beyond county/division level. Training of entry-level civil servants is left to governmental organisations. One of the CCP's rebuilding efforts in recent years, CET has come to play an increasingly important role (Shambaugh 2008). CET features a peculiarly Chinese approach to shaping the civil service, especially its high-ranking officials, and achieving the necessary executive capacities for the country.

This chapter seeks to provide a better understanding of Chinese CET. The chapter will first offer an overview of CET including its historical development, major institutions and training system, and then discuss the functions of CET in China's governing system. A case study of the Shanghai Municipal Committee Party School will illustrate CET activities.

The historical development of cadre education and training in China

CET can be traced to the CCP's infancy. Effective training of cadres was deemed essential during the revolutionary periods. Although early CET was far from systematic, it was an integral part of the party's core political and ideological work. Marxist–Leninist theories and Mao Zedong's thoughts were used to train cadres, soldiers and the working classes to unify their thoughts and actions. The focus was to mobilise their loyalty to the party and the revolutionary cause, and there was an overwhelming emphasis on the party's desire for capable cadres to make revolutionary ideals a reality. As Mao Zedong emphasised, 'after political routes are set, cadres determine their implementation'. He further identified unified frontlines, military struggle and party development as the three keys to the success of the Chinese revolution, with the last the most important (Mao 1968: 569). In 1939, the CCP established the Department of Cadre Education, which was later absorbed into the Department of Propaganda (DOP), which took responsibility for cadre education before 1949 (DOO of the

CCP 1989: 312). In general, in-class training was difficult to organise, with the exception of training for high-ranking officials. CET was often carried out through studies organised by the party and governmental agencies, and was practised and strengthened in cadres' daily work. In times of war and vast change, political work including CET guaranteed the political quality and solidarity of cadres and created a strong fighting team, in comparison with the Kuomintang (KMT) government, which the communists saw as corrupt and factional.

CET in the early years of the People's Republic of China inherited the traditions established in the revolutionary period. Before the completion of the socialist transformation in 1956,¹ which was defined as China's shift from a period of socialist revolution to one of socialist construction, the CCP's major task was to consolidate its political leadership and restructure society. Yet although CET maintained its focus on political work, it had to adjust to the increasing demands of socialist construction by improving the capacity of revolutionary cadres. The training system was gradually established, enriched and institutionalised. External training institutes, especially the party school system, were systematically established. The DOP and the Department of Organisation (DOO) were two major party agencies in charge of CET. Categories of CET included political theory education, professional education and cultural education,² which could be delivered through on-the-job study or full-time study in schools (requiring leave from work). As China entered the 10-year Proletarian Cultural Revolution that returned the party's focus from construction to revolution, political movements were relied on to purify the cadre team and CET was paralysed.

From 1978, CET began a stage of restoration and rapid development as the CCP shifted its focus to economic market reform and globalisation. In 1980, Deng Xiaoping proposed 'Four General Principles' (4GP) of cadre team building: revolutionary spirit, youth, knowledge and professionalism. In the same year, the DOP and the DOO jointly issued the *Opinion to Strengthen Cadre Education Work* and decided to establish a network of cadre education comprising party schools

1 The period from September 1949 to December 1956 is known as the period of 'Socialist Transformation', during which the state nationalised private capital and established an economic system based on public ownership.

2 Professional education trained cadres in knowledge and skills for dealing with their work. Cultural education was to improve cadres' general level of education.

and professional cadre schools. In 1984, the Central Leading Team on Cadre Education was established within the DOO. Provincial counterparts were also established. Since then, the DOO and its local branches have been entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating cadre education issues.

Post-1978 developments in CET are reflected in the following aspects of the program.

Management system

Although many agencies at multiple levels of the hierarchy have various types of authority in relation to the management of CET, the DOO plays a leading and coordinating role. At the central level, DOO is responsible for major directions, policies and plans for CET. It monitors CET at central and provincial agencies and organises CET for centrally supervised cadres. The DOP is responsible for directing theoretical studies and organising CET for cadres in propaganda and culture systems. The Ministry of Personnel directs and coordinates the training of civil servants and professional technical personnel. The state-owned Asset Supervision and Management Commission directs the training of cadres in state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The State Development and Reform Commission approves central CET bases and projects. The Ministry of Finance makes financing policies for CET. Other party and governmental agencies are also involved.

Three characteristics can be identified. First, while both party and governmental agencies are involved, party agencies play a dominant role. Second, the authority to organise CET involves a relatively centralised cadre management. The DOO may organise CET not only for cadres that it directly supervises but also for cadres one or two ranks lower.³ Third, across-the-board management is applied as party cadres, administrative cadres, SOE cadres and professional-technical cadres are all covered by CET and are expected to receive synchronised education and training.

3 For example, Central DOO organises CET for both provincial-level and bureau-level officials. It also trains county mayors and party secretaries.

Training system

The training system comprises party schools, administrative schools, cadre schools and cadre training centres, university training programs and social training programs.⁴ At the central level are the Central Party School, the National School of Government, three Cadre Schools (Pudong, Yan'an and Jinggangshan) and Dalian Senior Manager School. Of these, party schools are the major channels of CET. In 2009, there were 4,501 training bases at or beyond county level, including 3,115 party schools, 295 administrative schools, 424 cadre schools and 667 training centres, with a maximum capacity to accommodate 1.32 million students at any given time. The number of employees in these institutes reached 184,000, including 108,000 faculty members, 6,034 full professors or researchers and 27,000 associate professors or researchers (Zheng 2010: 166). In addition, these institutes have adjunct faculty members including leading party and governmental cadres, external experts and professors and entrepreneurs.

Targeted cadres

Cadres at all levels and in all categories are targeted by CET, although party-governmental officials at or beyond county level and their deputies form the core focus of CET. In 2004, China had more than 40 million cadres, including more than 500,000 cadres at or beyond county/division level; about 40,000 at or beyond the municipal/bureau level; several thousand high-ranking officials (provincial/ministry level); and about 200 central committee members (Wei 2004: 3). Cadres are classified into several major categories with corresponding CET programs. These categories include party-governmental leading cadres, young cadres, civil servants, SOE managers, professional technical staff, judges, procurators, police and other political legal cadres, grassroots cadres, ethnic minority cadres, non-CCP cadres, female cadres and West Region cadres.⁵ Corresponding to the career stages of officials, CET programs are generally classified as pre-promotion training, post-promotion training, positional training and specialised training.

4 In addition to this domestic training system, a substantial number of middle- and senior-ranking Chinese public servants are sent abroad for executive development.

5 Refer to the *2001–2005 National Plan of Cadre Education and Training*, issued in January 2001 by the Central Committee of the CCP.

Cadres are required to participate in full-time study, central team study of affiliated party committees and on-the-job self-study. Off-work study has been the core and is also the focus of this chapter. According to the *Implementation Opinion to Train Cadres between 2008 and 2012*, the central committee organises annual seminars for provincial/ministry leading cadres while the central DOO organises annual seminars for major leaders of centrally supervised SOEs and financial agencies and for major leaders of centrally supervised universities. Every year, DOO also organises off-work CET in Beijing for 130 leading municipal cadres and 1,100 leading county cadres and expects to cover all cadres within five years. These cadres are required to have no less than 100 study hours of annual off-the-job training and no less than 550 cumulative study hours within five years.

Training content

Degree education was popular for CET in the 1980s as the general educational level of cadres was low at that time. The urgency for such education gradually disappeared.⁶ Currently, major categories of training content include political theory, knowledge and capacity, and party spirit (*dang xing*). Political theory education aims to consolidate cadres' political orthodoxy and their loyalty to the socialist cause. It is founded on Marxist–Leninist and Maoist thinking, and focuses on the socialist theoretical system with Chinese characteristics—for example, the 'Outlook of Scientific Development'. Knowledge and capacity education tends to improve cadres' knowledge of economic, political, cultural and social construction, and their leadership and technical capacities in handling pragmatic issues. Party spirit education aims to purify the officials as moral citizens committed to the people and their work. Morality, the party's revolutionary history, devotion to work and resistance to corruption are emphasised. Notwithstanding, content may vary according to the different focuses of the training programs, and training agencies may exercise discretion in determining the exact courses and lectures.

6 The proportion of civil servants with a college diploma or superior qualification rose from 30 per cent to 86 per cent between 1992 and 2007. These data are taken from a talk given by Yin Weimin, the Minister for Human Resources and Social Security, on 3 March 2009.

Institutionalisation

There have been efforts to institutionalise CET as part of regular party-governmental work. Legal, administrative and party documents were approved to guide and regulate its development. Both the *Provisional Regulation on State Civil Service of 2003* and the *Civil Service Law of 2005* stipulate training as part of the rights and obligations of civil servants. Basic training plans were determined by the party, which since the 1980s has continuously made five-year plans for CET. In 2006, the party enacted the *Provisional Ordinances on Cadre Education and Training*. After that, the Central Committee of the CCP and the State Council issued, respectively, *Work Ordinances of Party Schools of the Chinese Communist Party* and *Work Ordinances of Administrative Schools*. Basically, leading cadres at or beyond county level are required to undergo three months of CET including one month of study outside work every five years. These policy developments have created stable and ample resources for CET-affiliated agencies, especially the party schools.

Functions of CET in China's governance system

The functions of CET—explicit or implicit—have to be understood in the context in which they evolved. In the light of the CCP's continuing transformation from a revolutionary party to a ruling party, the many challenges it faces are to be tackled by its leading cadres. The design of CET reflects the party's desire to better cope with environmental challenges and rebuild itself. Meanwhile, informal roles are also played by CET that serve to reduce the gap between formal institutions and everyday life. The formal functions of CET, which correspond directly with the party's and the government's demands for loyal as well as technically competent officials, are addressed first.

Political (re-)engineering

CET demonstrates a repeated and limited politicisation effort on the cadre personnel system in order to create political loyalty and activeness. As the party has rejected social movements in mobilising and refreshing itself, indoctrination through CET is one major way to

create consistent actions and avoid internal conflicts. This is especially important as the government has basically made economic construction its highest priority, and as society is becoming increasingly liberal and open. CET features regular reminders of the leading cadres' role as agents of the party and the people, and functions as a preventative mechanism against distrust of the party and its political authority. It also strengthens psychological acceptance of an integrated party–state system. Pieke (2009) argues that the main mission of training remains Leninist 'unification of thought'; yet to overcome the rigidity of indoctrination, political learning in CET combines classic Marxist–Leninist theories and their recent local developments such as the 'Deng Xiaoping Theory', 'Three Representatives' and 'Outlook of Scientific Development'. Although CET produces high compliance with these principles, the party is aware of the gap between ideology and reality and has been trying to reduce it through efforts to adapt Marxism to the Chinese context.

Political engineering is also crucial because 'united thought' is especially important for China with its large population and regional diversity. The Central Government needs a strong hand to guarantee effective implementation of its policies across very long chains of command. Concentrated study provides an opportunity to directly convey the central authority's political intentions and policy objectives, mobilise compliant actions and impose accountability. For example, to push forward the New Village Construction policy, the Central Committee in 2006 organised 50 seminars on this topic for county mayors and party secretaries across the nation, and trained 5,740 such cadres. In 2008, to disseminate the spirit of the third plenary of the Seventeenth Party Congress, more than 2,000 party secretaries of Chinese counties were trained.⁷

Capacity and knowledge building

Besides the emphasis on improving the political quality of cadres, CET is also expected to create and maintain talent and intellectual capacity for economic modernisation. While pre-promotion training, post-promotion training and positional training share a relative focus on theories and 'party spirit', specialised training tends to have

⁷ In 2008, there were 2,862 counties in China.

a greater emphasis on leadership and specialised knowledge. General management, public administration theories, leadership skills, economic theories, philosophy, finance, social management, history, communication skills and many specialised seminars are offered. The training system, including party schools, is making efforts to modernise its faculty team and introduce new elements of training. In her study of the Shanghai Party School, Tran (2003: 15) argues that the school is being gradually turned 'into a modern institute of public administration, where the teaching has a direct application to the management of the city'. This may be a slight exaggeration, but it reflects the fact that party schools have been trying to increase their attractiveness by offering useful training.

While CET's formal functions are directly emphasised and pursued, some informal functions are also created as by-products. These functions are far from unimportant.

Collective as well as stratified identity

CET gathers cadres of comparable age and rank to study together. A strong sense of mission is created as peers, either leading cadres or their deputies, are learning the skills of governance together. This easily builds a collective identity among the elite who were previously the proletarian vanguards and are now the country's decision-makers. Such an identity helps to differentiate the cadres from directionless bureaucrats. Meanwhile, the ranking-based training system creates an internally stratified identity as officials tend to identify more with peers of the same rank.

Social connections

Related to collective identity are the social connections that can benefit officials in handling public and private issues (Tran 2003; Pieke 2009). Chinese society has continued to rely heavily on interpersonal relations (*guan xi*), which are a form of social capital with both positive and negative effects. Seminars, classes and extracurricular activities create lasting networks characterised by a common identity, trust and reciprocity.

The case of the Shanghai Municipal Committee Party School

As the designated principal channel of CET, party schools offer the best lens through which to observe the evolving trends of CET. In the following sections of this chapter, the Shanghai Municipal Committee Party School (SMCPS) is used as a case study to illustrate trends in CET. The SMCPS was established in June 1949, one month after Shanghai was taken over by the People's Liberation Army. Since then, the SMCPS has been responsible for training leading cadres. As in the majority of China's provinces, the SMCPS is integrated with the Shanghai School of Government. We rely heavily on information on the SMCPS website for this analysis (now discontinued).

Educational programs

The educational programs of the SMCPS include degree education and non-degree CET. Degree education has been diminishing due to competition from ordinary universities. The SMCPS stopped its distance-learning program in 2010, and will gradually stop recruiting undergraduate students who are jointly educated by the Shanghai Normal University and the SMCPS. The core of degree education in the future will be its masters program.

CET constitutes the focus of the SMCPS. In recent years, 10,000 students have been trained annually, divided more or less equally between planned programs (*ji hua nei pei xun ban*) and ad hoc programs (*ji hua wai pei xun ban*). Planned programs are regular programs provided for local cadres, with a certificate issued by the SMCPS; unplanned programs are for cadres outside Shanghai and even for officials in Hong Kong and Macau according to the requests of their supervisory agencies, with a certificate issued by the Training Centre of the SMCPS. The latter is mostly a response to market demand. In general, a program accommodates about 50 students. The future plan of the SMCPS is to train 15,000 students annually.⁸

8 This goal was in fact achieved in 2010, in time for the Shanghai Expo.

Planned programs

Planned programs are the core competency of the SMCPS and are designed and operated by its Education Department. In 2010, the SMCPS offered 86 planned programs (58 types of programs) and trained 5,808 students. Table 3.1 shows the structure of the training programs. These programs in general last between several days and several weeks.

Table 3.1: Planned programs offered by the SMCPS

Main programs (zhu ti ban)	Leading cadre programs (1)	Post-promotion training of cadres promoted to vice bureau-level positions.
	Leading cadre programs (2)	Positional training of bureau-level cadres.
	Division-level cadre programs	Positional training of full division-level cadres.
	Middle-aged and young cadre programs	Pre-promotion training of backup cadres to be promoted to vice bureau-level positions.
	Non-CCP middle-aged and young cadre programs	Pre-promotion training of backup cadres without a CCP membership who are to be promoted to vice bureau-level positions.
	Young cadre programs	Pre-promotion training of deputy cadres to be promoted to vice division-level positions.
	Leading division-level civil servant programs	Post-promotion training of backup cadres to be promoted to division-level positions.
	Specialised topic programs	Specialised topics for officials at or beyond vice division level.
Other programs	Assigned programs (Wei tuo he zuo ban)	All kinds of general or special training on the request of party-governmental agencies. In general, for cadres at or below division level.
	Self-sponsored programs	Programs developed by the SMCPS. Information is disseminated to organisational and personnel departments of party-governmental agencies who may voluntarily send their cadres to participate.
	Faculty training programs	Programs to train the faculty members of party schools in Shanghai.

Source: Shanghai Municipal Committee Party School (internal planning document).

Different programs target different cadres and have different training content. The *main programs* are the most important for the SMCPS as they reflect the basic CET mandates. The Organisational Department of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the CCP and

the Civil Servant Bureau of the Shanghai Municipal Government are responsible for assigning students to these programs. Consequently, students are of high rank—in general, beyond the vice division level. *Assigned programs* are joint programs between the SMCPs and party-governmental agencies (which send students to the programs). *Self-sponsored programs* depend on the SMCPs's judgement of current demands for training; these programs may be increased or closed according to the 'market' response. The above three categories account for about one-third of the programs. *Faculty training programs* serve to enhance the human capital of faculty members in Shanghai's party school system and the number of programs is small.

Content of training

Despite a general emphasis on theories and 'party spirit', there is significant variation in training content across the programs. The *main programs* have demonstrated a consistent commitment to political and ideological training. For example, the 76th positional training of bureau-level leading cadres, held over one month in 2011, had four teaching units: including 'In-Depth Study of Socialist Theoretical System with Chinese Characteristics', 'Major Theories and Practices in Reform and Development', 'Carry Out the 12th Five-Year Plan and Push Forward Shanghai's Socioeconomic Development' and 'Party Spirit Analysis'. The first unit was part of theoretical studies, the second and third were part of capacity and knowledge training and the last unit was part of party spirit training. Of the 22.5 study days, the first and fourth units accounted for 10.5 days (46.7 per cent). Such a proportion has been consistent across the main programs, with the exception of specialised topic programs. This coincides with Liu's (2009: 106) observation that the curriculum of the Central Party School is 'infused with the values and political culture (including belief conflicts) of the national elites in the Party centre'.

There are two main types of *specialised topic programs*. One is to train general leadership capacities. For example, the Twenty-Sixth Specialised Topic Program on Essential Comprehensive Capacities of Cadres, held in 2010, had seminars on the following topics:

- study and practice of the Outlook of Scientific Development
- writing official documents
- making speeches

- innovative thinking
- modern social intercourse and etiquette
- psychological adaptive capacity
- coping with complex international situations
- the China model from a global perspective.

The other kind of *specialised topic program* focuses on knowledge and capacity in specialised areas. For example, the Second Specialised Topic Program on Social Organisation Construction and Management, held in 2010, had seminars on the following topics:

- current situations and tasks of social construction
- new thoughts on the development of social organisations in China
- comparison of the development and management of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in China and foreign countries
- innovations in philanthropic services
- a case study of the practices of social organisations
- on-the-spot teaching of the cultivation and development of community organisations
- teaching the survival strategies and values of social organisations
- the building of collaboration between governments and social organisations.

Although *specialised topic programs* tend to be pragmatic and technical, the seminars have been designed to ensure they are consistent with socialist theories and party spirit.

The design of *entrusted programs* and *self-sponsored programs* is similar to the above three kinds of programs. For *unplanned programs*, socioeconomic development in Shanghai and leadership and management are two major themes of training. While the *main programs* have to be approved by the Shanghai Department of Organisation, the SMCPs enjoys some discretion in designing other programs.

Trainers

In 2011, the SMCPs had 92 full faculty members, including 65 professors or associate professors. They were under a management and evaluation system similar to that of university faculty members, although their work emphasised applied research and training.

In recent years, the SMCPs has intensified its efforts to modernise its personnel by recruiting recent PhD graduates and established scholars from elite universities. However, its focus on training still makes it difficult to attract good researchers, who prefer universities with more academic breadth and freedom. The SMCPs has established incentives for faculty members to offer new courses, apply new methods of teaching and pay attention to student feedback. The SMCPs also sends them to the Central Party School or other institutes for training or degree studies, and provides opportunities for them to work in governmental agencies temporarily or to study abroad.

To enrich SMCPs's teaching resources, it has more than 30 experts and scholars as guest professors or researchers, and more than 20 leading cadres as adjunct professors. A teaching database has been established with more than 100 external experts and scholars and the courses they can offer. Currently, an external faculty teaches about 30 per cent of the courses. It is especially important for the SMCPs to offer specialised topic programs. It has been found that as the rank of students increases, the demand on external teaching tends to increase. In general, 70 to 80 per cent of CET programs for bureau-level officials involve external faculty teaching; the figure is 40 per cent for CET programs for deputy officials of bureau-level positions, 20 per cent for division-level officials and 10 per cent for lower-ranking officials. The reason is that higher-ranking officials tend to demand more specialised and more practical knowledge. It has also been found that more senior officials tend to prefer traditional methods of teaching while young cadres tend to accept new methods such as case studies, contextual teaching and on-the-spot teaching.

Local leading cadres are playing an important role in offering capacity and knowledge training. Major party-governmental leaders of Shanghai take turns to offer the first lecture at the beginning of every semester for the main program students. The Municipal Party Committee made a by-law in 2009 requiring leading cadres in Shanghai to do some teaching at the SMCPs. The SMCPs also collaborates with overseas institutes such as Oxford University and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University to offer short-term training.

Financing

The 2006 *Provisional Ordinances on Cadre Education and Training* stipulate that CET expenses should be listed as public expenditure in government budgets. In general, departments of organisation at different levels have funding for basic CET they directly supervise, while every party-governmental agency has some CET funding for their employees. In 2011, the Department of Organisation of Minhang District in Shanghai had a CET budget expenditure of RMB9.4 million (A\$1.6 million), accounting for 32 per cent of the total budgeted expenditure of that agency.⁹

The SMCPs charges all its students, though at present fees are charged to and covered by sending agencies. Since expenditure is fully covered by public finance, training revenue is submitted to the Treasury. The school's budget is also linked to the training fees it collects so there is a financial incentive for the SMCPs to expand training and attract more students. If market reform were ever introduced to the SMCPs, the ability to meet demand would be crucial in building its money-making capacity. The training fees from *planned programs* average RMB200 (A\$35) per person per day, not including textbook and accommodation fees. For *self-sponsored programs* and *unplanned programs*, fees are generally charged at the market level.

Quality assurance

The SMCPs has no real competitor in the training market as its *main programs* have a monopoly and create a unique platform from which to extend the value chain by developing other programs. Nonetheless, quality assurance has been receiving more attention due to some indirect competition and widespread cynicism among students. The establishment of the China Executive Leadership Academy Pudong (CELAP) in 2005 has challenged the SMCPs's leadership in setting benchmarks for CET even in Shanghai. Many universities and training enterprises are expanding their share in the CET market. For example, Fudan University, under the support of the Shanghai Department of Organisation, offers a specialised topic program (Public Management Capacity and Leadership Quality Program) to train bureau and division-level officials. On the other hand, the formal goals

9 Available from: shmh.gov.cn/xxgk/Content.aspx?id=89714 (accessed 2011) (site discontinued).

of CET are often only achieved to a limited extent as the courses can be old-fashioned, far removed from reality or authoritative rather than analytical, and this affects the enthusiasm of students to participate. These are issues faced across the board by the party schools and they put pressure on schools to seek feedback from and meet the demands of individual cadres.

Quality assurance at the SMCPs has multiple aspects. First, the SMCPs established a consultative team for the design and planning of training programs in 2009. The team comprises 12 members including the vice-chancellor, the provost, the chief officials of the educational, student and research departments, and officials from the Municipal Department of Organisation and the Municipal Bureau of Civil Servants. This team examines the main programs and decides on their appropriateness. Second, the SMCPs has been active in developing new programs and new courses. In 2007, it offered 17 new programs, accounting for 16.5 per cent of the programs offered in that year and 33.8 per cent of the students trained. In 2008, it offered 20 new programs. The new programs tend to keep pace with the fast-changing national and local socioeconomic conditions. For new courses, programs need to pass a two-stage review. Third, the SMCPs has used multiple methods to discover and respond to the demands of cadres. Since the spring of 2008, it has carried out an annual questionnaire survey of the training demands of its main program students. In October of the same year, it cooperated with five district party schools and the Party School of Municipal Construction Commission to survey students about training demands for 2009, obtaining 705 responses from students in these schools. Fourth, choice and evaluation have been introduced. For example, the second of the four study units of the positional training of bureau-level leading cadres comprises seminars on economic, administrative and social issues. Given the required number of credits, students can decide what to study by themselves. Further, the SMCPs has improved student evaluation of program design, program operation and teaching quality by making the evaluation process, standards and reward–punishment measures more sophisticated. Seminars that on two consecutive training sessions cannot achieve 70 per cent student satisfaction¹⁰ will be suspended.

10 A student is considered satisfied if he or she assigns a general evaluation score of no less than 80 to a seminar.

Conclusion

CET in China has evolved over time, adapting to new demands and expectations, and keeping pace with the goals and missions of the CCP. Consequently, the changes and challenges faced by the CCP in governing the country are also reflected in the evolution of CET. CET has been strengthened in recent decades to enhance the capacity of the party and the government to identify and address governance issues. In that process, CET has shifted from training cadres with revolutionary thoughts to developing cadres with political loyalty and the capacity to manage a complex society. CET also has a secure, institutionalised source of funding. The whole system of CET is very different to executive development in Western countries, although CET continues to learn and adapt from overseas practices.

In the preceding discussion, some basic characteristics of CET can be identified. First, CET features highly centralised, rigorous and authoritative planning and operation by the Department of Organisation. CET is organised according to party directives rather than legal or administrative guidelines. Such a top-down model emphasises the demands and concerns of the party. Meanwhile, market elements and greater choice are gradually being introduced into CET.

Second, political engineering remains a fundamental goal of CET. In accordance with the exclusive leadership role of the party, the content of CET focuses on political learning and analysis of party spirit. Virtues of civil service neutrality are not recognised. CET also functions as an important form of policy mobilisation. Due to the rapid growth of a complex society, more attention has been paid to the practical usefulness of CET, even as the party explores ways to modernise, seeking a strategic response to a rapidly globalising world.

Third, CET features the comprehensive management of cadres. It covers not just party-governmental officials with party membership, but also officials of minor parties or those without any party affiliation, and officials of the People's Congress, SOEs, public service organisations such as universities, and social organisations. While officials with different occupational backgrounds may be matched with specialised training programs, pre-promotion, post-promotion and positional training programs are essentially the same for all.

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