

Comparison of Special Programs and Policies for Mature Women Students in Higher Education in Canada and China

Dongbo, Wei Hanguang Jin

Abstracts:

With the rapid development of science and technology, mature women urgently need to improve their technological knowledge and working skills. There should be special programs and policies for them in higher education, in which the Canadian government has paid great attention to their studies and almost all the women in Canada have attended universities now, but the mature women especially who are living in the country, in the remote areas, border areas, mountainous areas and national minority areas in China are semiliterate or illiterate. For this part there has been a good example from Canada which is worth seeing and being learnt in some cases. The Chinese certain authorities should have made more special programs and policies for those mature women in order to improve them in the education level.

Key Words

mature women Canada China special programs and policies

With the rapid development of science and technology, there have been many posts and vacancies in different fields taken by mature women who urgently need improving their technological knowledge and working skills. There should have been special programs and policies for them in higher education. Are there any special programs or policies for these mature women in higher education in Canada? The answer is positive. The Canadian government has paid great attention to their

studies in higher education, and set very good examples to be worth seeing. How about China? In a comparison of these two countries, it is clear that China should learn from Canada in this part and should have given more special programs and policies to mature women.

In the past, the few mature women received higher education; as they were confined working in their own houses where they had to feed their children, look after their husbands and do the housework that had always been their main job. Now, they've come to realize that they really need further study, which not only let them to be left behind by others but keep up with the fast pace of development in the modern world. At mean time some mature women have already gained higher education, but they still want to increase their career opportunities and try to learn new technologies.

Mature women need special programs and policies because they have more problems and difficulties that afflict them greatly than any man else. For them, more troubles and anxieties that face with have to be overcome or compromised before or while studying. Firstly, they have children and family responsibilities, in which nobody could help and do instead of them. Secondly, they may have financial problems as studying in university they have to pay for the tuition for the special period when

income source has no way. They have to solve this problem, because they must support their families. Thirdly, they are faced with age bias. All the students and teachers in their class may be younger and they would think that mature women should have known more than what they have. For this, mature women students must have to learn to be comfortable with younger students and teachers in and out of class. Lastly, mature women cannot have so much energy to give to their studies as young people can.

Mature women in China are faced with enormous barriers in terms of education, whose average educated level is far below that of the middle school according to Xie Heng, a Council Member of the China Family Planning Association and of China's Secretary in the Chinese Embassy in Washington,

"More than 70% of school dropouts are girls. And more than 70% of China's 220 million semiliterate or illiterate people are women." (Downloaded from Internet <http://www.1990institute.org/pubs/ISUPAP8.html>).

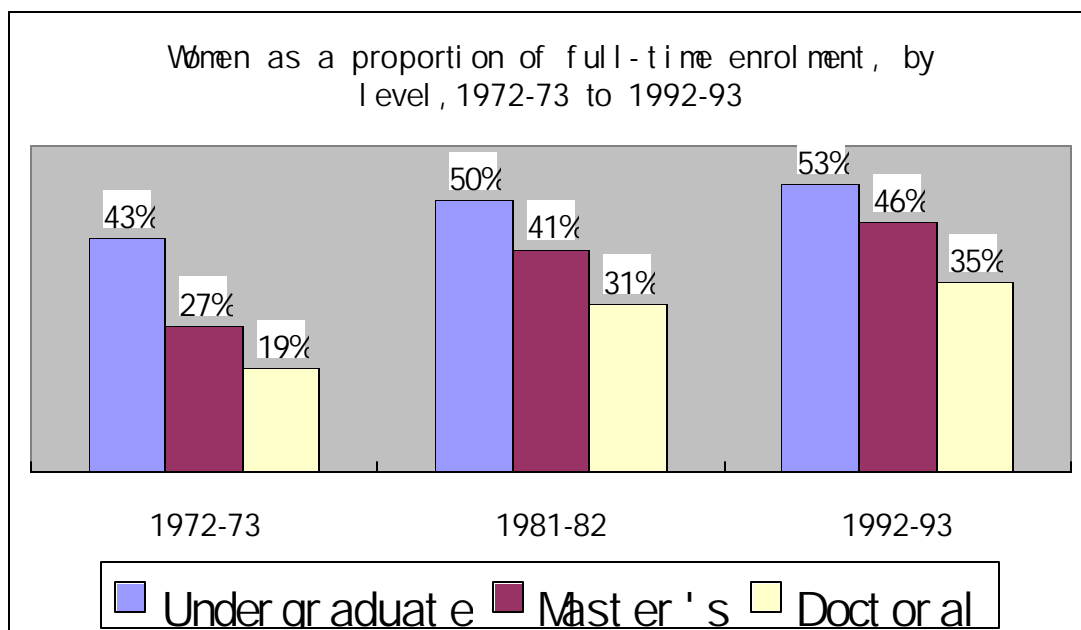
One of the reasons for the statistics was caused that most mature women in China are in the country, remote areas, border areas, mountainous areas or national minority areas. Another reason is that all people over the age of 40 years experienced the Cultural Revolution in

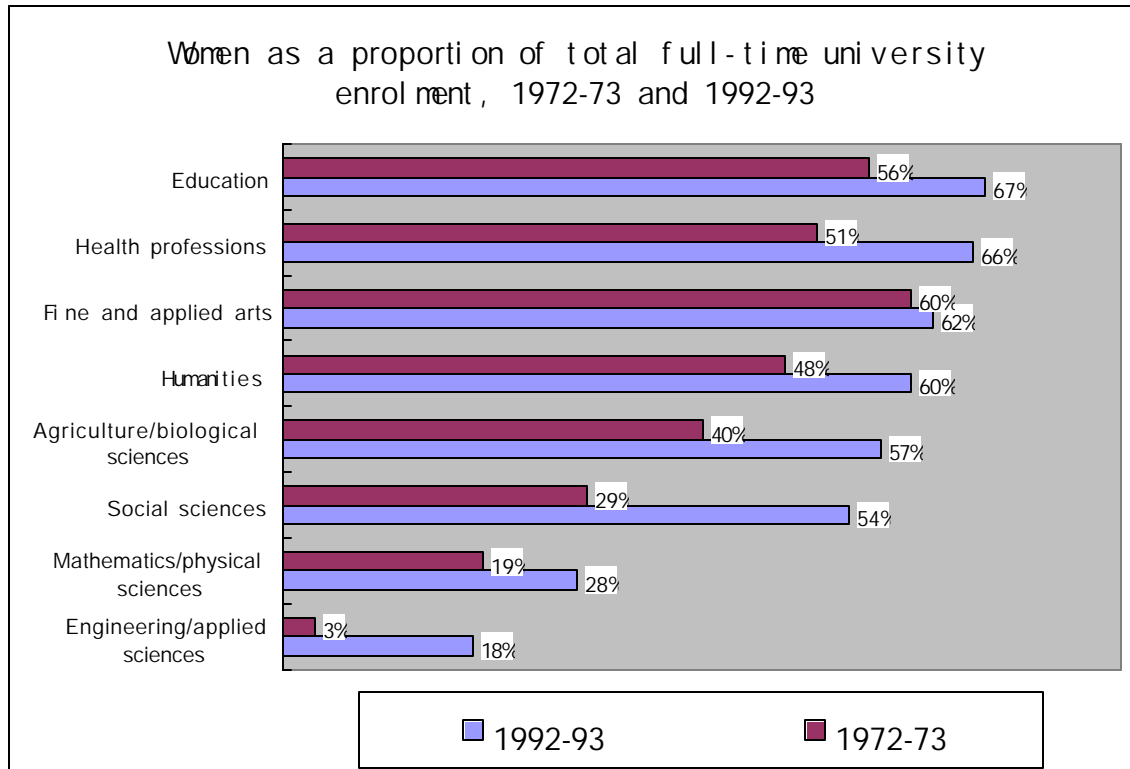
1966's during their youth. At that time of the period, all the school doors of the whole nation were almost closed. No regular education especially higher education had been available from 1966 to 1972.

Comparing the average education of women in Canada, we can be acknowledged of the fact that the majority of women have higher education. Following are some statistics about Canadian women in education, from the statistical report Women In Canada 2000,

“Women majority in full-time university studies. In the 1997—98 academic year, 55% of all full-time university students were females, up from 52% in 1992 – 93 and 37% in 1972 – 73”. (page 87)

There are also charts from Canadian social trends – winter 1995 by Josse Normand (page 18).

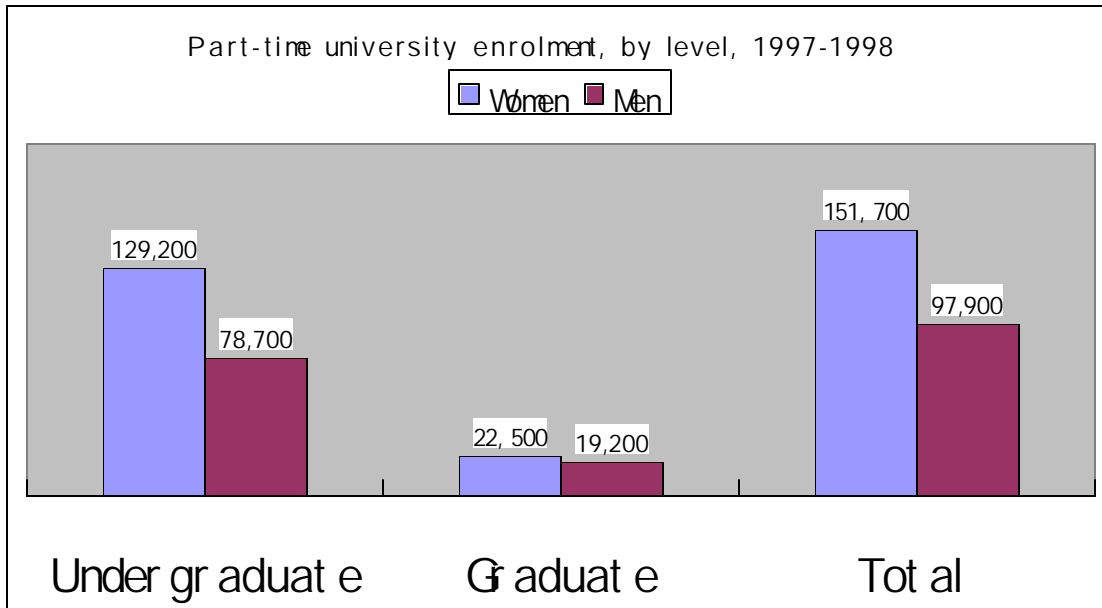




Normand's report indicates there is almost no difference in levels of education between men and women and between those from cities and those from the country in Canada.

There are special programs and policies implemented by the Canadian government and Canadian universities that should serve as examples and would help mature women in China. In Canada, according to the government statistics from A Gender-Based Statistical Report "Women in Canada 2000":

" Women also make up the majority of part-time university students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In 1997 – 98, 62% of part-time undergraduate students and 54% of those at the graduate level were women." (page 88)



From the above we can know that part-time studies are very popular for mature women in Canada. In Canada, there are many mature women students taking correspondence courses. These correspondence courses help mature women finish their courses in their own homes. They can take care of their children and families, while finishing their courses and getting degree credits. In China, the Chinese government has already set up various adult learning colleges and universities, such as TV University, adult education university and spare-time adult university. But these universities are only located in cities, where people living far away from cities still have their problems in study. China has as vast land as that in

Canada but the population is much more than it. We suppose according to the existing situation in China whether we can take it into consideration that Canadian correspondence courses are suitable for mature women, especially those women in the country.

Another advantage in Canada is that mature women students not only have the “ Human Rights Act” ensures their “rights to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities, without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, color, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status or handicap.” (Downloaded from Internet <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/laws/H-6/text.html>) But also have the “Pregnancy Discrimination Act” to protect them during their study period.

In China, there has been a great changes taken place as compared with it used to be very strong sex discrimination and age discrimination. The Chinese government has broken the former regulation that those who were over 25 years old could not study in universities from 2001. As it is just beginning, however, nearly no one over 45 years of age has entered universities to do graduate work in China. Besides as it is, just from 2001, graduate students can be allowed to pause their studies to look after their

children when their babies need feeding and they can go back to continue their study when their children are bigger in certain period.

In Canada, mature women students also have less strict policies than normal students in various universities. For example, at Queen's university, if mature women are full- time students for three years or not qualified as university students, yet they can be admitted to a degree program as part-time students so long as they obtain at least 60 percent in their first course. China should have descended the qualifications for mature women who want to attend universities, and give more chances to those who want to pursue their higher education.

There are various kinds of special financial supports only for mature women in Canada. These supports include the following:

Margaret McWilliams Pre-Doctoral Fellowship,
Dr. Marion Elder Grant Fellowship,
CFUW Memorial/ Professional Fellowship,
Beverley Jackson Fellowship,
1989 Polytechnique Commemorative Award,
Bourse Georgette Lemoyne,
Margaret Dale Philp Award,
Alice E. Wilson Award.

(Downloaded from Internet <http://www.cfuw.ca/00-eng.pdf>)

At Queen's university there is special Bursary Support for mature women students. If they need tuition, books, emergency assistance, unexpected day care, medical or other expenses causing financial crisis,

these special financial supports can help them. In this part, there is a lack of financial support for mature women who want to obtain higher education in China. It is comparatively difficult for them to get aid from universities or from the government. Of course, we, as a large population, have our own particular situation, even those who are qualified young people to enter the university are very hard to get loan, not to speak of the mature women. But the Chinese government and some enterprises should give some help to mature women with financial problems. We should have set up personal donations and some of regulations to solve this problem.

Now, in almost all universities in Canada, there are children care centers for the children of mature women students. These centers make it easier for mature women to take courses.

Conclusion

Since the world has been changing dramatically, “manpower” markets have been turned into “intelligence-power” markets. No education means any future. China is so rich in human resources and they are the treasure of the country. The education of this human resource is so important that it stands for the country’s strength. If the education standard of mature women is high in a country, which must be strong, for mature women directly influence the next generation. In this case, education policies to

help them are absolutely necessary. To ensure the nation's quality, the government in China should do more in this field and invest more in education, develop and set up more special programs and policies for mature women.

References From Internet and The other Places

a. Fellowships And Awards For The Academic Year 2001-2002

“Canadian Federation of University Women”

b. Heng, Xie “ The Changing Role and Status of Women in China”

(Downloaded from Internet [http://www.](http://www.1990institute.org/pubs/ISUPAP8.html)

1990institute.org/pubs/ISUPAP8.html).

c. Queen's University Calender

“Admission as a Mature Student”

d. Statistics Canada- Catalogue no. 81-229 “Postsecondary enrolment related to relevant age group, by level, age group and sex, Canada, 1992-1993 to 1996-97”

Education in Canada, 1998 .

e. Policy on Discrimination because of Pregnancy

f. Human Rights Act.” (Downloaded from Internet [http://www.](http://www.1990institute.org/pubs/ISUPAP8.html)

1990institute.org/pubs/ISUPAP8.html).