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The New Sunrise Industry: Private Education in China

新兴朝阳产业：中国民办教育

Qiang Liu and James Tooley

刘强 詹姆斯·杜力 / 著



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Abstract

China's private education has made considerable progress since "reform and opening up", gradually formed systematic private education system involving the kindergarten, elementary school, middle school to high school, vocational high school, adult education and higher education, and become an important component of the whole Chinese education system. As such, China offers considerable lessons for the international community about the potential roles private education might play in education prosperity and social progress. This monograph outlines the growth and some of the major achievements of private education in China. The first and second chapters look back over the development history of Chinese private education from Confucius era to the establishment of modern private education system in the new age, and further analyze the achievements and respective features of the four development phases since "reform and opening up" in sequence. The third chapter describes the contribution of the private sector at all levels of education, from kindergarten to tertiary, and provides more details of three models of private education-traditional stand-alone schools and colleges, charter schools, and private educational chains. The regulatory environment for private education is described in detail in Chapter four. The chapter five offers case studies of some typical contemporary Chinese private education examples. Finally, the author discusses the opportunities and challenges faced in the development of private education in China, and looks forward to the future of its prospect.

It should be noted that, issues concerned private education in Xinjiang, Chinese Tibet, Chinese Hong Kong, Chinese Taiwan and other regions do not get special in-depth discussion in this book due to the access of the relevant data, as well as the author's limited time and energy.

摘 要

改革开放以来，中国的民办教育取得了长足发展，逐步形成了从幼儿园、小学、初中到普通高中、职业高中、成人教育、高等教育的办学体系和格局，成为中国整个教育事业的重要组成部分。中国民办教育的发展经验证明了民办教育在促进教育繁荣和社会进步中的重要价值，也为世界各国民办教育的改革、发展提供了启示与借鉴。本书前两章从孔子时代的私人讲学到新中国现代民办教育体制的建立，勾勒了中国民办教育的发展历史，并分四个阶段进一步深入分析了改革开放以来中国民办教育的发展成就与发展特征。第三章从幼儿园、小学、中学到大学介绍了中国各级民办教育的概况，并概括了中国民办教育的三种办学模式，即传统民办学校、民办教育连锁与特许学校。第四章从立法的角度梳理了中国民办教育的管理体制。第五章个案分析了当代中国民办教育的典型案例。最后，作者在第六章分析、探讨了中国民办教育发展所面临的机遇与挑战，并对未来的发展前景进行了展望。

需要指出的是，由于新疆、西藏、香港、台湾等地区的相关数据、资料获取难度较大，加之作者的时间和精力有限，因而本书没有专门针对这些地区的民办教育问题展开深入探讨与论述。

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1 The Resurgence of Private Education in China

1.1 Introduction

Private Education in China is flourishing. From being outlawed under Chairman Mao Zedong in the 1950's, it began to make a comeback after the policy of "Reform and Opening Up" in 1978. Progress was slow at first, then accelerated to create perhaps one of the most vibrant Private Education markets in the world. Official figures in the year 2000 shows that 43% of universities and colleges are in private sector with 11% of total student enrolment. A quarter of all kindergartens are in the private sector with about 13% of total enrolment. At primary and secondary school level, the contribution from the private sector is much smaller, ranging from 1% at the primary level to 6% in vocational secondary schools.

But these figures mask dramatic regional variations. In the coastal province of Zhejiang for instance 76% of kindergartens, 26% of regular senior secondary schools and 34% of vocational secondary schools are in the private sector. In Shanxi Province which is the capital city of Xi'an ancient is famous for its 2,000 years old Terracotta Warriors, can be found fully one seventh of all China's private colleges. In CHENGDU the capital of Sichuan Province the total private investment in education in the year 2000 matched the total of government investment in education over the last 12 years.

The bare statistics mask the extraordinary entrepreneurial vitality in the private educa-



tion sector too. There are several shareholding companies running “chains” of schools providing educational opportunities from kindergarten to university. One such company has 11 schools in 12 cities with total enrolment approaching 20,000. But private sector involvement is certainly not just about serving the needs of the wealthy. Many private primary and secondary schools have emerged precisely to meet the educational needs of the poor, “floating” or itinerant populations in the major cities whose children are generally refused to enter government schools because they are not categorised as local residents. There are experiments too in public-private partnerships that have created “charter” schools and colleges that are also serving the poor. These are failing state schools, contracted out to private entrepreneurs under contracts that offer far more ambitious private sector involvement than their Western counterparts. In Shanghai, there were 67 charter primary and secondary schools while in Tianjin there were 120 schools in the year 1999.

Meanwhile, similar developments are taking place at the tertiary level with Wenzhou University leading the way by being privatised, with local government holding 40% of the equity and private investors finding the other 60%. Finally, the Chinese government is openly encouraging innovation and investment in the private education sector by talking explicitly of “the Education Industry” and its important perceived role in development. All this in a span of only 20 years or so of private sector development with only a decade or so of active encouragement.

China offers considerable lessons for the international community about the potential roles of private education that might (help) in the development. The reasons why the private sector’s involvement is seen as desirable are likely to be applicable to many countries across the world while the regulatory environment that has emerged can offer lessons, both positive and negative, for other countries seeking to reform.

This monograph outlines the growth and some of the major achievements of private education in China. It is aimed at both policy scholars and general readers interested in global developments in private education but also at educational entrepreneurs and investors interested in the potential of the Chinese education market.



To understand contemporary private education, it is advantageous to look back over its long history from its earliest realisation under Confucius 2,500 years ago, to its relationship with the West in the 19th century. Its disappearance under Communism for twenty-odd years and its dramatic resurgence in the late 1970s. Chapter 2 then describes in more detail the four stages of modern private education development, from 1978 to the present, outlining the major processes that brought about changes and the reaction of private educational entrepreneurs to these developments.

The current landscape of private education in China is outlined in Chapter 3, describing the contribution of the private sector at the five levels of education from kindergarten to tertiary. It also provides more details of three models of private education - traditional stand-alone schools and colleges, charter schools, and private educational chains - and outlines the nature and extent of the sector in four major areas of private educational activity in Beijing, Guangdong, Zhejiang and Xi'an.

The regulatory environment for private education is described in detail in Chapter 4, pointing to regulations at national and local level and the changes being written today in part to liberalise the educational market. "Snapshots" or "vignettes" of the private education sector are provided in Chapter 5, putting a human face on the statistics and discussion of earlier chapters showing some examples of the range and scope of private education in China today. Finally, Chapter 6 outlines the future prospects for private education in China, discussing the opportunities and threats to private education and the national discussions about the future of the "education industry".

1.2 Ancient Private Education: The Legacy of Confucius

Private education in China goes back 2,000 years during the Spring, Autumn and Warring States Period (770-221BC), when war led to the collapse of officially-sponsored schools, the first private schools were launched by fugitive officials among whom was



Confucius.

In fact even before Confucius, private schools were in operation. According to Chinese historical records, the earliest private school was run by Deng Xi, a former senior official in the State of Zheng who taught students how to engage in the practice of law with his book “Zhu Xing” (Laws on Bamboo Slips) (He, 2001; Zhu, 1995). However, because historical records of Confucian private schools are more common than others, Confucius had a profound impact on Chinese ancient history so researchers usually regard him as the founder of Chinese private education.

Confucius was born in 551BC. When he was around 30 years old, he began teaching proposing “You Jiao Wu Lei”. They are, That school accept and enrol students no matter how rich or poor civilians or nobles, young or old no matter where they come from (Kong, 1997). This was a milestone in the history of Chinese education because before that time, only rich and aristocratic children can go to school.

As a great philosopher and educator, Confucius studied the teachings of the virtuous rulers in Chinese history and edited the literary works emanating from them to become the textbooks in his school. Collectively known as the Six Classics, these works are the Book of Odes, the Book of History, the Book of Rites, the Book of Music, the Book of Changes, and the Spring and Autumn Annals. He made these teaching materials into what we know today as Confucianism, the main essence of traditional Chinese culture.

Until his death in 479BC, Confucius taught a grand total of over 3,000 students as he travelled from one feudal state to another. It was said that 72 of these students became his most learned disciples and gentlemen scholars mastering the Six Arts namely, the rites, music, archery, chariot driving, learning and mathematics. Confucianism gradually became the guiding force in the lives and minds of Chinese people in the centuries following his death. The Four Books of Confucianism are the Great Learning, the Doctrine of Mean, the Analects of Confucius, and the Book of Mencius which were the main textbook in Chinese schools for more than 2,000 years



until the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) (Qian, 2000) .

Even in the contemporary world, Confucian ideals have still affected Chinese society and culture. A large number of people both in China and worldwide study his teachings. Not only his ideas, but also his practice of running private schools has been reinvigorated. In May 2000, the Confucian Cultural University, a private college in honour of the great educator was established in Shandong, Confucius' hometown. Meanwhile, He Keyong, a teacher from rural Zhejiang Province, not only published a concise biography of Confucius, but also opened a private school in a little town to teach Confucian works to teenagers (Jia, 2000) . In 2001, after Confucius was inaugurated in Shandong, "Another school was named The Confucian Bilingual School", a Sino-Canadian joint venture school that taught both Chinese and English attracted 800 students from Shandong and other provinces in January 2002 (Xinhuanet, 2002a) .

1.3 Modern Private Education in China: From the Nineteenth Century to the Founding of the People's Republic

When foreign powers invaded China using guns and shells in the nineteenth century, it dawned on the rulers that the old education system failed to produce the scientists and officials needed by the country. New-style schools appeared after the Opium War (1840-1842) and a new education system developed by the end of the Qing Dynasty. Hundreds of thousands of students stepped out of small, old-style private schools to enter big new-style classrooms. In the following one hundred years, there were two types of private schools in China. One was the mission schools founded by foreign missionaries and the other was the private schools run by Chinese educators.

Foreign missionaries came to China to spread the gospel and establish schools expecting to spread Western values and culture that influence Chinese minds through the combination of religion and education. These mission schools also taught students



the new scientific knowledge being developed in the West.

The first mission school founded in mainland China was Ningbo Girls' School, which was built up in 1843 by British missionaries. Ningbo is a charming, medium-sized city in Zhejiang Province. In the next year in Ningbo, another mission school named Chongxin School was launched by the American Presbyterian Church. This school was moved to Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province and was renamed as Yuying Academy in 1867. In 1911, it became a founding part of Zhejiang University, a famous university in east China today (Wang, 1997).

Some figures indicate the extent of the development of mission schools in China. For instance, there were 1,296 Protestant mission schools in 1899 compared with only 20 in 1877. By 1914, the number had more than quadrupled. In 1912, the Protestant mission schools enrolled a total of 138,937 students compared with just 231 students in 1877 (Deng, 1997).

The new-style private schools on the other hand run by Chinese people appeared later than mission schools. As China turned into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society owing to foreign invasion, more and more high-minded Chinese - some of themselves studied overseas - became aware that establishing schools and improving education was very important for saving the country.

The first modern private school was Zhengmeng Academy that was opened in Shanghai in 1878 with an enrolment of 40-odd pupils. Zhang Huanlun, the founder of the new-style primary school provided a wide ranging curriculum including mathematics, geography, Chinese language, English and French, history, physical culture, poetry and music (Wang, 1997; Gu, 1991).

Similar to the mission schools, some of the private schools run by Chinese educators developed into the well-known educational institutions of today. In Tianjin, one of the four municipalities directly under the central government in China, a key middle school and a famous university, Nankai Middle School and Nankai University grew