
THE HISTORICAL ASPECT OF NON-STATE HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

Teterina Vera Vladimirovna,

Associate Professor,

Department of Pedagogy and Educational Management,
Vitebsk State P.M. Masherov University, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences

Zhou Jiangqin,

Master Student Vitebsk State P.M. Masherov University

Knowledge of history opens the door to the future

The article deals with the historical aspect of non-state education development in China.

Introduction. The Chinese educational policy is aimed at further improvement of Chinese higher educational system where non-state educational institutions occupy a significant place. More and more parents and students are showing interest in changing the nature of higher education activities, in having the non-traditional forms of education that are characterized by the construction of individual learning routes, the development of the creative potential of an individual. In this regard the study of the historical background of non-state higher education, its modern state and the perspectives of its development is of great importance.

Some aspects of the development of private educational institutions have already been studied by Chinese scientists, such as: Chen Dubin, Huang Yao, Li Nianliang, Li Yan, Liu Zhiwen, Xu Xuqing, Zhao Lianzhang etc.

But the problem of the origin and historical evolution of non-state universities' development hasn't been the subject of special research.

Main part. In China Yu Genyuan was the first to propose the concept of "private universities" in the Modern Chinese Dictionary of New Words, and defined private universities as higher education institutions established by individuals, social organizations, and collective ownership units that do not seek profit but mainly rely on their own education funds [1].

Non-state educational institutions have rich history beginning from the Spring and Autumn period when Confucius "widely recruited disciples and established private schools" to the emergence of social forces in education in China [2]. The

tradition of private higher education can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn Period (770–221 BC) and the Warring States Period that were the embryonic stages of private higher education in China. The reason why private schools emerged and developed rapidly during this historical period was due to the profound political background, power struggles and incessant wars among various feudal lords. As the result official schools fell into disrepair, the classics was spread and academic pursuits declined. The chaos and weakening of cultural and educational policies, as well as the relaxation of rulers' control over people's thinking were typical for this period. In addition, due to the political need of the new landlord class to cultivate scholars, a hundred schools of thought emerged and private schools appeared. Taoism, Dharma, as well as Yin Yang, agriculture and medicine Confucianism and Mohism were the prominent schools of thought at that time [3].

During this period, Confucius founded the "Confucian School" and taught Confucian classics in his own private schools, creating a tradition of private education. With the passage of time, the scale and influence of private schools gradually expanded, becoming one of the main forms of education in China at that time, and also a model of donating funds to run schools in ancient times. In addition to Confucius and his disciples, the following philosophers such as Mozi, Han Feizi, and Xunzi also taught their own theories in their private schools, making important contributions to the development of ancient Chinese education.

During the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD)

private higher education underwent further development. During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, imperial academies were established to cultivate officials, while also providing opportunities for the people to study. During the Eastern Han Dynasty private schools flourished and many famous schools of thought emerged, such as the Confucian, Taoist, and Legalist schools. In addition, during the Han Dynasty some private academies emerged, such as Luoyang Academy and Chang'an Academy, providing more learning opportunities for the people.

During the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties (220–589 AD) due to frequent wars, official schools were gradually declining while private schools were gradually emerging. The development of private schools provided more people with opportunities to receive education, including some wealthy families and businessmen. Those people made significant contributions to the development of private higher education by sponsoring schools or opening their own educational institutions such as private schools and academies.

During that period, some famous private schools and academies also emerged one after another. Such as Luoyang Academy, Chang'an Academy, etc. There were also some privately run schools, such as Lanting Academy founded by Wang Xizhi. During that period private higher education emphasized the cultivation of students' moral character and knowledge, as well as the personalization and diversification of education, laying a certain foundation for the later development of higher education in China.

During the Sui and Tang dynasties (618–907AD) private higher education experienced even more prosperous development by establishing imperial and national academies, cultivating officials and scholars and also providing opportunities for the public to study. There were also some privately run schools, such as Bailu Academy and Yuelu Academy. During this period that private higher education focused on cultivating students' comprehensive qualities and practical abilities and emphasized the practicality and applicability of education. The "Nine Classics" and "Four Books" of the Tang Dynasty were widely spread and academies also began to rise.

The "imperial examination system" of the Song Dynasty made private schools the main training institutions for the imperial examination. According to statistics 173 academies were built during the Song Dynasty. The article "Overview of Academies in the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties" said that 203 academies in the Song Dynasty almost replaced official schools as the main higher education institutions. Among them

the most famous academies were: White Deer Cave, Stone Drum, Yingtian Prefecture, Yuelu, Songyang Academy, etc [4].

The development of modern private universities have also been rooted in the soil of Chinese society. The main reason why private universities in China are not as good as first-class private universities in some developed countries abroad is that they were restrained by China's feudal autocracy and the existing social, historical, and cultural traditions.

We can draw a conclusion, the development of private schools in China during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods went through a process from germination to prosperity, making important contributions to the development of ancient Chinese education. The rise and development of those private schools also laid the foundation for the later development of private higher education in modern China.

In modern times, from 1840 to 1911, it can be said that it was the initial period of private higher education in China. The formation of modern private higher education can be traced back to the late Qing Dynasty. At that time, a group of kind-hearted individuals and international students were struck by the development and the strength of the West. With the aim of "saving the country through education," they criticized traditional education for being "empty and useless," at the same time passionately dedicating themselves to establishing new style of schools [5]. In 1862, Nanyang Public School was established, becoming the first private university in China. In addition, some private academies and schools, such as Shanghai St. John's College and Tianjin Beiyang School, also were developing during that period. Those schools innovated content and methods in teaching, emphasizing practice and practicality, and accumulated enough experience for the development of private higher education in China.

In 1904, the Qing government promulgated the "Guimao Education System", which was the first systematic education system in modern China to be implemented nationwide, including higher education. During that period, private education experienced rapid development mainly in two forms: private gatherings and lectures, and private schools that were founded and managed by individuals. Private gatherings and lectures appeared during the Spring and Autumn period, when the emperor lost his official position. As a result, official schools were declining while private schools were flourishing. Private schools were founded and run by individuals emerged during the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China period, usually consisting of

teacher training schools, and vocational schools. After the Xinhai Revolution, the country needed a large number of talents and at this time the education was extremely backward. Therefore, the Nanjing government paid special attention to the development of private schools while developing public schools.

From 1911 to 1949, China's private higher education entered a period of stable development. In 1911, after the victory of the Xinhai Revolution, new regime proclaimed the slogan for "revolution and education to run parallel" and "education promotion", and proposed a blueprint for building new education. The education of the Republic of China inherited the heavy burden of thousands of years of feudal education in China. Against the historical background of foreign powers using the force to open up the country, it was seeking for solutions to China's education problems [6]. In 1912, after the establishment of the Republic of China, private education received a better development environment. After 1912, the Ministry of Education of the National government successively issued the "Special Schools Order", "University Order", and "Regulations for Private Universities", which clearly stipulated that individuals have the right to establish specialized schools or universities. In 1913 the Ministry of Education issued the Private School Regulations, that standardized the conditions and management system of private schools.

In 1922, the National government promulgated the Regulations of private schools, further regulating the operation and management of private schools, making them more legal and standardized. There were 15 private universities that the government agreed to pilot, but due to a surge in quantity and a severe lack of educational resources, the quality of education declined. In 1927, after the cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, private education received a better development environment. The political environment of cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party provided better conditions for the development of private education, and many private schools began to join the ranks of revolution, becoming important places for cultivating revolutionary forces. After the victory of the Northern Expedition in 1928, the Nanjing government strongly encouraged private higher education and strengthened supervision of the quality of private universities. In terms of the number of schools, there were 31 private universities (including universities, independent colleges, and vocational schools in 1931), accounting for 30% of the total number of universities in the country [7]. After the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1937,

private education suffered a huge blow. Many private schools were occupied by the Japanese invading army, their property was damaged, and many schools were forced to close.

However, some private schools still remained, becoming an important component of education during the Anti Japanese War. After the victory of the War of Resistance against Japan in 1945, private education was restored and developed. In 1946 the Nationalist government promulgated a new "Regulations on Private Schools". The number of private schools was constantly increasing, making important contributions to China's education industry. Modern times were the most prosperous period for private universities in China, and many famous private universities emerged during the period of 47 years in the Republic of China.

The period from 1949 to 1978 was characterized by private higher education transformation in China. On the eve of the foundation of the People's Republic of China, there were 82 private universities in the country, accounting for about 40% of the total number of universities. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the government carried out the rectification and reform of private higher education, nationalized private universities and implemented a unified enrollment and graduation distribution system. The total number of students was about 23770.

In April 1949 the People's Liberation Army promulgated the Eighth Chapter of the Constitution, which stipulated that the People's Liberation Army should protect all public and private schools from infringement. In December 1949 at the first National Education Work Conference held by the Ministry of Education it was pointed out that private schools run by Chinese people should generally adopt the policy of "actively maintaining, gradually transforming and providing key subsidies", except for "extremely destructive ones that should be banned" [8]. In 1952 the Ministry of Education carried out nationwide adjustments, according to which some private universities were either combined with other public universities, or directly renamed to public schools. For example, the departments of Yanjing University were split into humanities and joined Peking University, while the sciences were merged with Tsinghua University; Beijing Union Medical College was managed by the Ministry of Health and renamed to China Union Medical College Hospital.

By 1953, private schools had disappeared from China for decades. From this perspective, due to government intervention at the time, the development pattern of higher education to a certain extent did not match the development

Table 1. Review of Major Private Universities during the Republican Era

SCHOOL NAME	SCHOOL ADDRESS	EXISTENCE TIME	FOUNDER	FINAL RESULT
Fudan University	Shanghai	1905–1942	Ma Xiangbo	Change to a public university
Zhonghua University	Wuchang	1912–1952	Chen Xuankai	Incorporated into Central China Normal University
Chaoyang College	Beijing	1913–1950	Wang Youlin	Merge with North China University to establish the People’s Republic of China
Republic of China University	Beijing	1917–1949	Cai Yuanpei	Incorporated into Hunan University
Nankai University	Tianjin	1919–1946	Zhang Boling	Change to a public university
Xiamen University	Xiamen	1921–1937	Deng Cuiying	Change to a public university
Datong University	Shanghai	1922–1952	Hu Dunfu	Incorporate into relevant higher education institutions in Shanghai
Daxia University	Shanghai	1924–1952	Ma Junwu	Incorporated into East China Normal University and Shanghai University of Finance and Economics
Guanghua University	Shanghai	1925–1951	Zhang Shouyong	Incorporated into East China Normal University and Shanghai University of Finance and Economics

Table 2. The quantitative composition of students

The number of students in private universities	Beijing	Shanghai	Tianjin	Nanjing	Wuhan	Guangzhou	Total
	2376	13139	1401	974	1185	4695	23770

needs of education at that time, resulting in the long-standing private higher education in China being blocked, and it was not until 1978 that it slowly resumed.

After the reform and opening up in 1978, private education gradually resumed operation under the name of “private education” or “social force education”. In October 1978 a tutoring class of cultural courses aimed at preparing for college

entrance examination appeared in Changsha, Hunan. Later it gradually developed into Hunan Zhongshan Continuing Education University, which acquired features of a private university. In October 1980, Jiuyi Mountain College, the first private university was established in Hunan in New China. [9] In January 1981 the State Council approved the “Trial Measures for Higher Education Self-study Examinations” formulated by

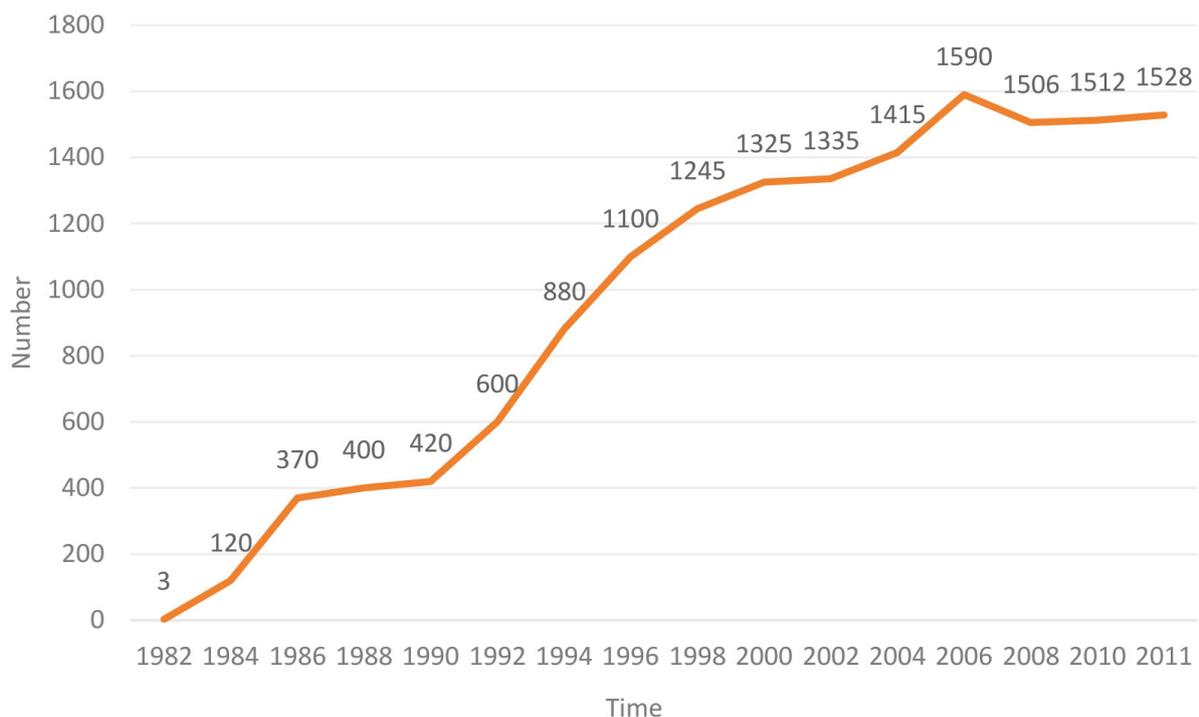


Table 3. Chart of the number of private higher education institutions in China from 1982 to 2011

the Ministry of Education, that officially allowed individuals or groups to hold tutoring classes with the nature of self-study and examination assistance for the first time. In March 1982 China Social University, the first university run by social forces in New China, was established, marking the beginning of the development of private higher education in China. In 1984, with the support of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission and the Haidian District Government, Beijing Haidian Day University was officially founded, becoming the first private institution of higher education in Chinese Mainland. However, due to the unstable policy environment at that time, the development of private higher education was greatly restricted. In 1985 the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Reform of the Education System was promulgated, in which Article 2 clearly stated that “localities should encourage and guide state-owned enterprises, social organizations, and individuals to run schools”, and encouraged all public institutions and individuals to donate funds to aid education. By the end of 1986, there were 370 private higher education institutions nationwide [8].

In 1992 private education in China entered a new stage of development. In the early 1990s China began implementing the policy of reform and opening up, and the education sector also began to undergo reforms. In 1993 the State Council

issued the Regulations on the Administration of Higher Education, clarifying the legal status of private higher education and providing support for its development. Afterwards, private higher education began to develop rapidly. In 1998 the Ministry of Education issued several opinions on encouraging and guiding social forces to develop higher education, clarifying the development direction and policy support for private higher education. In 2001 the promulgation and implementation of the Civil Education Promotion Law of the People’s Republic of China provided legal protection for the development of private schools.

In 2002 the Private Education Promotion Law was adopted and private education institutions entered the fast lane of development. The role of private education in China’s education system became increasingly prominent, with over 10 million students enrolled in it. In some areas the scale of private education even occupied half of the market. During that period, the development of private educational institutions showed a trend of diversification, with various types of educational institutions emerging one after another. Different forms such institutions as private kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and international schools were in blossom. At the same time the quality of private education was also greatly improved, receiving recognition and praise from

all sectors of society. In 2004, 2010 the Ministry of Education issued several opinions on promoting the healthy development of private higher education, proposing a series of policy measures to support the development of private higher education, including increasing government investment, supporting the construction of private universities and encouraging social forces to participate in it. Since then the country has successively introduced a series of policies, such as the “Interim Measures for Formulating the Constitution of Higher Education Institutions” and the “Interim Measures for Classified Management of Private Universities”, providing new opportunities for the transformation and development of private higher education. With the support of these policies, the number of private higher education institutions and students is gradually increasing. (See table 1.3 below).

In 2020 the 14th Five Year Plan of the country proposed to “support and regulate the development of private education”. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out the need to “guide and regulate the development of private education”, which reflects the importance that the Party and the state attach to private higher education. China’s private higher education has undergone more than a decade of active and rapid development.

During this period, although the scale of education still maintains growth, the growth rate has been far lower than in the past few years. By 2022, 764 private ordinary higher education institutions has appeared in China, accounting for 25,3% of the total number of universities in the country [10]. At the policy level, the country has successively introduced a series of policies to support the development of private higher education.

For example, in 2015, the General Office of the State Council issued several opinions on deepening the integration of industry and education, proposing a series of policy measures to support the development of industry and education integration in private higher education; In 2016, the Ministry of Education issued several opinions on promoting the reform of streamlining administration, delegating powers, and optimizing services in the field of higher education, further relaxing the management authority of private higher education.

The promulgation of these laws and systems demonstrates the high importance that the Party and the state attach to the development of private education in the new era, and provides important legal basis for private higher education to obtain equal educational status and social support.

The Opinion of the Ministry of Education on the Establishment of Higher Education

Institutions during the 14th Five Year Plan period proposes the basic principles of “reasonable planning and strengthened constraints”, which not only control the number of universities but also ensure the increase of gross enrollment rate in higher education. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, the number of private universities in China increased from 43 to 771 between 2000 and 2020. In 2021, it decreased to 764 institutions and remained unchanged in 2022. In 2023, documents such as the Implementation Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of the Teacher Team in Shanghai’s Private Colleges and Universities in the New Era were issued, implementing projects such as the “Private Teacher Plan” and “Private Education Plan” for private colleges and universities, and actively building a professional development platform for private college teachers.

In addition, some private universities have also obtained a certain number of career positions, such as Zhejiang Shuren University, Ningbo University of Finance and Economics, Xinyang University, and other private universities. In the 2023 recruitment announcement it was clearly stated that “solving career positions” is important for private universities to attract and retain high-level talents Guarantee.

Conclusion. Hence, we can draw the conclusion that since the reform and opening up with the joint support of national policies and social needs, China’s private higher education has gone through different stages of development such as exploratory development, positive development and normative improvement. It has embarked on the path of development with Chinese characteristics for private higher education.

In recent years with the ongoing deepening of globalization policy, the international trend of China’s private education industry has continued to strengthen. Educational institutions are enhancing their international level by borrowing high-quality educational resources from abroad and conducting international exchanges and cooperation.

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