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## Research on Current Private Higher Education in Shandong Province

DING Rui<sup>[a],\*</sup><sup>[a]</sup> Shandong International University, Weihai, China.

\* Corresponding Author.

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### Abstract

After 30 years' development, private higher education in China has gradually entered into a sustainable and benign development stage. As a large educational province, the development of Shandong's private higher education plays an important role in the national development. In this paper, through the investigation and study of 39 private colleges (including independent institutes) in Shandong on the layer and level of running school, talent training quality and educational modes and types, I try to find the problems in private higher education in Shandong Province during the period of last thirty years and give countermeasures to them.

**Key words:** Private higher education; Optimization; Strategy

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### INTRODUCTION

Since the restoration of the college entrance examination in 1978, China's higher education has transformed from elite education to mass education and meanwhile private higher education also appeared and developed. As a major province of Education, Shandong's private higher education started from scratch in the mid-1980s, expanded from small to big and developed from weak to strong. The

paper, basing on the present situation of private higher education in Shandong Province and analyzing several private undergraduate colleges and colleges from different aspects and layers, points out the problems and puts forward optimizing proposals.

### 1. MEANING OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

Being different from public education, private education refers to individuals or social organizations except national institutions using non-state education budget to set up schools or other educational organizations for the public. For a long time, there mainly have been three statements about private education--private, civilian-run and society-run. Provisional Act of Private Higher College issued by the Ministry of Education in August 1993, points out that private colleges are higher educational institutions founded by individuals or various social organizations excluding government institutions, state-owned enterprise and administration institutions through self-financing. Under the Private Education Promotion Act, private college, as an important innovation of China's higher education system and mode, belongs to the public welfare undertakings and is an integral part of socialist education so it must strictly stick to the party's educational policy. Meanwhile, under the Act private college has the following characteristics: one foundation that it must strictly stick to the party's educational policy; two key elements- firstly the founder must be various social organizations or individual except government institutions, state-owned enterprise and administration institutions and secondly school starting-fund are not from state education budget; five independence- independent legal entity, financial system, recruiting, issuing diplomas and campus.

## 2. PRESENT SITUATION OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN SHANDONG PROVINCE

Shandong's private higher education can be traced back to the mid-1980s and after thirty years' eventful development now it has stepped into a new period of developing from big to powerful. According to the 2011 Statistical Bulletin of Education Development announced by Shandong Provincial Department of Education, there are altogether 39 private colleges in Shandong with 30520,000 students including 20 postgraduate colleges(12 independent institutions included) with 10,250,000 students and 19 higher vocational schools with 20,270,000 students. Among them twelve colleges are located in Jinan, nine in Qingdao, three in Weifang, two in Dezhou, Yantai, Zibo, Dongying, Qufu and one in Liaocheng, Taian, Rizhao, Zaozhuang, Penglai. Private education break through the traditional pattern that the college is all established by the government, expand the educational investment channels, enlarge the scale of higher education, promote the rational allocation of higher education resources and satisfy the society's demand for higher education.

### 2.1 Gradual Enhancement of Running-School Levels

The implementation of the Private Education Promotion Act issued on September 1, 2003 promoted the transformation of Shandong private higher education from increase in number to quality upgrading period. In that year, the independent institutions- Shengli College of China University of Petroleum, Literature and Economy College of Yantai University and Qindao College of Qingdao University were firstly established. In 2005, the number has increased by 8 :Independent Institute of Ocean University of China(in 2011 approved by the State Ministry of Education it was renamed as Qingdao Technology College ) ,Yanshan College of Shandong Economic University, Haidu College of Laiyang Agricultural College, Xingtian College of Qufu Normal University , Dongfang College of Shandong Finance University, Lishan College of Shandong Normal University, Dongchang College of Liaocheng University, Quancheng College of Jinan University . At the same year, Yantai Nanshan College and Qingdao Binhai College was upgraded to the undergraduate colleges. In 2008: Weifang Science and Technology College, Shandong Wanjie Medical College and Shandong Yingcai College and three undergraduate colleges in 2011: Shandong Xiehe College, Qingdao Yellow Sea College, Qingdao Technology College and an independent Institute of Modern Creative Media Institute of Beijing Film. By 2012, private undergraduate colleges in Shandong Province having the ordinary higher academic education enrollment eligibility reached 20, accounting for 51.3% of the private colleges in Shandong Province.

### 2.2 Enhancement in the Overall School Level and Talent Training Quality

With the implementation of the Promotion Act, Shandong Private higher education is being widely accepted for their high level and talent training quality. Ten private colleges of Shandong are on 2012 China Alumni Association Top 100 Private Colleges (excluding independent colleges) . Great improvement has been achieved not only in running school level but also in the reform of talent training mode an, faculty and professional construction. By 2011, 18 private colleges (excluding independent colleges) in Shandong Province have completed 66 provincial quality courses and Early Childhood English Teaching Method of Yingcai Institute of Shandong won national quality courses in particular. Especially since 2005, 8 private colleges with modern educational philosophy and high teaching quality have been approve by the Ministry of Education to upgraded to undergraduate college. Making use of its educational advantages, Private colleges has also made considerable progress in the cooperation of school and enterprise and combination of learning and working. Private higher education in Shandong Province has formed a certain scale and a number of large scale private colleges with sufficient investment and good conditions appeared and formed their own school and teaching specialties.

### 2.3 Diversified Education Modes

#### 2.3.1 General Diploma Education

General diploma education is diploma education that conforms to the national setting standard and approval procedures with undergraduate and college level and which is included in the national college entrance examination enrollment plan and can organize teaching independently and independent award diploma. In 1999, Qingdao Binhai College and Shandong Wanjie Medical school was firstly granted by the Education Department of Shandong Province to recruit high vocational students within the plan, which was a breakthrough in the developing process of private college of Shandong Province, and since then private college were truly have independent award diploma qualifications. By 2012, all the 39 private higher college in Shandong has got the qualification.

#### 2.3.2 Aid-study of Higher Education

In 1984, Shandong Province set up a self-study examination of higher education system and in 1987, Shandong Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine University (Non-diploma College), the predecessor of Shandong Liming Science and Technology College was founded. In 1992, Qingdao Binhai College, the first aid-study college for self-study examination of higher education was set up. In 1998, the system of national certificate and degree examination in higher education was set in Shandong which is a part of national

examination system and a combination of aid-study and national examination. By 2003, there are altogether 48 aid-study schools for national certificate and degree examination.

### 2.3.3 Adult Higher Education

It refers to the education mode that the students must pass the adult college entrance examination and the school can be undergraduate college or college with the rights of organizing teaching independently and unaidedly issuing diploma. The teaching method of most private colleges is not solely and they usually adopt different teaching method for small groups in different time. For example, they assume the way of general diploma education in college stage and the teaching method in undergraduate college stage branches to two ways: some students get a bachelor's degree through participating in general diploma education after passing the college to undergraduate examination while others through adult higher education or aid-study higher education. Currently, Yingcai College and other undergraduate college assume adult education.

### 2.3.4 Order Education

Order education refers to the college according to the agreement with the employer training the qualified students to meet the requirements in the stipulated time for the employer. This kind of education enables a good cohesion between education and employment and the teaching content are more targeted and suitable to private college whose main purpose is to train applied talents.

### 2.3.5 Cooperative Training with Other Educational Institutions

Undergraduate and college on-line education, Sino-foreign cooperative education and vocational qualifications training are the most common.

## 2.4 Diversified Running-School Types

### 2.4.1 Government Run College

This kind of college is mainly public secondary vocational schools transformed from public schools and taking in the form of public support for private responsibility. For example, Dezhou Science and Technology Vocational College was founded on the base of public Dezhou Electromechanical Engineering College, a key provincial and ministerial college and Zaozhuang Science and Technology Vocational College on the basis of three state-level key schools-Tengzhou Senior Vocational School, Zaozhuang Industrial School and the Secondary Health School of Zaozhuang-was founded by the municipal people's government of Zhaozuang and Tengzhou.

### 2.4.2 Enterprises Run College

Some powerful civilian-run enterprises (including township enterprises, private enterprises and foreign-investment enterprises) with distinct characteristics set up schools through direct investment or merging and transforming public secondary vocational school. For example Shandong Wanjie Medical College established

in March, 1999 was invested by Wanjie Group under the approval of the ministry of education and Yantai Nanshan College by Nanshan Group, a large civilian-run enterprise, with 1.5 billion investment. Besides the above two colleges, there are six college of this sort: Weifang Institute of Technology, Shandong Shenghan Vocational College of Finance and Trade, Shandong Huayu Vocational Technical College, Shandong Kevin Vocational College of Science and Technology, Qingdao Hengxing Vocational Technical College and Qingdao Institute of Technology.

### 2.4.3 Individual Citizen Run College

This type of college is established by citizens independently or jointly or in the name of the company owned by a citizen. Usually the start-up fund of the college is small and when the fund is accumulated to certain extent the college use loan from bank or other organizations to build schools and then the college accumulates more fund to develop. This kind of college is a major part of the private colleges in Shandong Province including Qingdao Binhai Institute, Shandong Yingcai College, Shandong Xiehe Institute, Shandong International University and Qingdao Huanghai Institute.

### 2.4.4 Independent Institute

Independent Institute is a kind of private higher education organization and the combination of general higher college's educational resources and social capital which is established by the general undergraduate colleges and individual and whose educational fund comes from non-state financial funds, such as Lishan College of Shandong Normal University co-organized by Shandong Normal University and Langchao Group in 2005. By 2012, there have been 12 independent institutes in Shandong Province.

## 3. PROBLEMS OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN SHANDONG PROVINCE

Shandong private higher education's appearance and development played a positive role in the promotion of the education system reform and the operation mechanism transformation, meeting the demand of society to education, as well as developing education resources in a deeper level. However, since there is no experience to be referred to, problems and contradictions are unavoidable in the development of private higher education.

### 3.1 Imperfect Evaluation System

Presently in China there is not a scientific and diversified evaluation system to assess the private higher school and the current assessment to private higher school is a kind of top-down activities which mainly dominated by the government. As the evaluation system use uniform requirements and standards to assess schools of different levels and types, it is not helpful to the development of private colleges' characteristics.

### **3.2 Pursue High Level and Large Scale Blindly**

Many private higher schools don't know which level they belong to and the significance of rightly awareness. They are content with the authorized mode and blindly use the first-class university standards to develop the school without the guidance of mature and systematic theory. Due to the social statue of private higher school and its development, most of the private higher vocational colleges set upgrading to undergraduate college as their development goal and some of the colleges with weak foundation lose their characteristics as higher vocational college after they are upgraded to undergraduate college and stick into an embarrassing situation.

### **3.3 Excessively Pursue Comprehensiveness and Multidiscipline.**

After having been upgraded to undergraduate colleges, many private colleges pursue comprehensiveness and multidiscipline and it seems to having become a developing trend and a sign of high level.

For example, Yantai Nanshan College currently has 24 secondary schools and 68 majors covering technology, literature, economics, management science, art, and many other disciplines; Shandong Yingcai College has 12 secondary schools, 66 majors covering technology, management, education, literature, agriculture, medicine and law; Shandong Xiehe College upgraded to undergraduate college in 2011 has 35 majors covering medicine, economics, linguistics and engineering. Multidisciplinary comprehensive undergraduate colleges can attract more talents and gain more preferential conditions for professional development and expanding so many higher vocational schools invest a lot on upgrading to undergraduate college. But some schools don't take their condition into consideration and blindly pursue comprehensiveness and multidiscipline instead of improving the education quality, which leads to the unclear characteristics and poor competitiveness. As a result, they lose their advantages to single discipline higher vocational college.

### **3.4 Repeated Majors and Indistinct Characteristics**

Major setting is a very important part of the education content and orientation. Influenced by the cost of new major and the employment orientation, most of the private higher colleges are in favor of popular majors as art, education, management and tourism which lead to the repeated major and indistinct characteristics. According to statistics, several private undergraduate colleges as well as some higher vocational schools have the same majors such as English, law, computer, international economy and trade, management (such as marketing, administrative management, tourism management) and accounting. Private college's majors mostly focus on some popular majors and it is not helpful to the college's long-term development and also leads to structural unemployment problem in certain region.

## **4. STRATEGIES OF OPTIMIZING PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN SHANDONG PROVINCE**

How to construct a good rational private higher education system in our province remains to be a problem with the background of diversified run-school modes. Through the analysis of the problems in current private higher education of Shandong Province, strategies optimizing Shandong private higher education are given here.

### **4.1 Follow the Rules and Strengthen Communication**

There is not a fixed way to run higher schools so no matter who runs the school he must stick to the rules of running school and only by this way the school can avoid detour and develop well. Otherwise the school will be doomed to fall into decay with the development and reform of higher education.

To certain extent the sustainable development of private higher education relies on the strengthening of its faculty. Along with the university's enrollment expansion, some public universities made regulations that prohibit its in-service teachers' to do part-time jobs outside the university. While in foreign countries, such as Japan, under the "Education Civil Servants Act", the university teachers can do part-time jobs on condition that it won't affect his job in the university. It can not only arouse the intellectuals' enthusiasm and expand their visual field but also be helpful for academic integration of different higher college's disciplines. We can learn from Japanese and to realize resources sharing between the public colleges and private ones.

### **4.2 Highlight Features and Find a Suitable Position in Education**

Private higher colleges have great autonomy in running school which enables them to think independently, make deep research and pioneer other cultural organizations, so they must rationally orient themselves. That is to say they must stick to the rules of education, persist in their own characteristics and inherit excellent educational tradition so as to form their own educational thought and theory that fits for their educational tradition and manifests their characteristics. How to rationally orient themselves private higher colleges must make full consideration of their tradition, concept and characteristics. Rational orientation must be based on deep understanding of their advantages and characteristics and can strengthen their advantages and display their characteristics. Two questions must be taken into consideration when private higher college orient themselves: one is whether private higher colleges are complements to public higher colleges or the copy of them; another is that what kind of colleges they want to be-the leader or the follower in the field of education.

### 4.3 Perfect Evaluation Systems to Promote Development

First of all, appraisal institution should be diversified and professional. The unbalanced development of different private higher colleges leads to different level of education quality, so facing various types of private higher colleges the evaluation body should also be classified. In addition, the functions of the government should be weakened while the role of the intermediary should be emphasized. We must make reference to the advanced experience of foreign countries to develop authoritative intermediaries and give full play to the intermediary in the evaluation of private higher colleges.

Secondly, evaluation criteria should be scientific. The fund of running private higher college comes from social forces so they should participate in making up evaluation criteria to assess the qualification of the college. The evaluation to the faculty should focus on the education structure of them, fields that they come from, the double teacher's training and proportion in the them and their capability to meet the needs of the teaching work; the evaluation to the talent training quality is based on the students' ideological and moral quality, cultural quality, professional quality, physical and mental quality.

Finally, evaluating modes should be diversified. In China more external evaluation to private higher colleges comes from the government than internal evaluation from the colleges themselves. Frequent internal assessment is helpful to grasp the detailed material about teaching, adjust the teaching process, deepen teaching reform, make up for the weak points and constantly enhance running school level and education quality to satisfy the needs of socialist construction so it is an important way to improve running school quality.

Although in China private education has existed for more than 2000 years, it is still not mature in modern sense. At present, theories about private higher education need to be deepened and a complete set of theory

guidance and evaluation system are waited to be built. As an organic part of social science, private higher education is inevitably influenced by economy, politics and culture. Private higher education has gradually become an important part of the overall education in Shandong province. Only by comprehensive study combined with time and place can private higher education better serve the regional economic development and head for modernization and internationalization.

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