

Private Colleges and Universities under Government Management and the Direction of the Development of Private Colleges and Universities - Perspective of Guangzhou Xinhua University during the Epidemic

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ABSTRACT

Guangzhou Xinhua University (formerly Xinhua College of Sun Yat-sen University, which was converted from an independent institution to a private institution in 2020) banned students and teachers from leaving school when a student from the school's Dongguan campus was confirmed to have been infected with COVID-19 on 20 June 2021. The government promptly assumed control of the school and implemented measures to ensure the safety of the lives and property of the school's 20,000 students and faculty members. The school has been managed by the government to weather this crisis quickly. Fortunately, all the teachers and students of the school are fine and have increased their experience in facing difficulties. Unfortunately, many problems with private colleges have come to light during this outbreak. This study analyses the development of private colleges and universities and the way forward based on the perspective of private colleges and universities after the government takeover during the pandemic.

Keywords: government; private colleges and universities; epidemic

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between private colleges and universities and the government is an important issue discussed in social and education circles, and the way out for private colleges and universities is precisely the concern of countless teachers, students and parents. In the third meeting of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the Ministry of Education announced that it would firmly and consistently make public compulsory education better and stronger, whilst completely respecting the autonomy of private compulsory education schools to run their respective institutions. However, in *On the Relationship between Private Universities and the Government* Feng (2017) explains that the government has a tendency to be indecisive in developing and regulating private universities, and that it both encourages and restricts the development of private universities. Private Chinese universities have a high degree of freedom, but the level of hardware and software rooted in private universities continue to have difficulty competing with public universities and overseas public schools. Bo (2021) explains that most students have been affected in terms of the changing of teaching methodologies. Accordingly, the government should enhance its effort to support and supervise private universities, rather than to buy them out after they have been able to compete with the best public universities. This study analyses the effectiveness of government regulation of private schools through the period of the Xinhua College epidemic.

INADEQUATE INTERNAL SYSTEMS OF PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

On 3 June, the Guangdong Health Commission released the latest information on the epidemic. From 0 to 24 hours on 2 June, there were 15 new indigenous confirmed cases in Guangdong Province, 4 of which were asymptomatic infections referred for confirmation, and 5 new indigenous asymptomatic infections. Undoubtedly, the risk is increased given that Dongguan

is adjacent to Shenzhen and the town of Machong in Dongguan City, where Guangzhou Xinhua University (Dongguan Campus) is located, only a river away from Guangzhou, with over 50 majors and over 10,000 students in the school.

In recent years, the town of Machong, where the school is located, has developed tourism and its economy has gone from the bottom rank to the top 10 in Dongguan. The increase in visitors and demand has stimulated the development of commercial tourism, thereby leading to a virtuous economic cycle, with an increasing number of visitors, strong economic potential, and attracting countless of students to study. When the epidemic broke out in Guangzhou, the school acted promptly by banning students from leaving the town of Machong and restricting those in Guangzhou from returning to school. When everyone thought nothing was wrong, the risk was often present.

Private colleges and universities, in which decisions are made by a team of teachers or by a board of trustees, lack the government's capability in school management and assessing social force uncertainty, thereby substantially precluding the probability of an epidemic infecting university students. Today, low social recognition, imperfect teacher training mechanism, unscientific teacher assessment mechanism, and unhealthy teacher incentive mechanism all affect the development of universities (Yang, 2021). Private colleges and universities, entangled with many things, have difficulty in developing because the teaching force wants to be perfect but is restricted. The reason is precisely the lack of appropriate management capability, in which unfavourable conditions, such as viruses, will affect the situation, and in serious cases, even affect the minds of students and the future and destiny of the university. If the government does not strengthen its talent attraction, then private institutions of learning will experience considerable problems with the quality and safety of education.

Since the outbreak of the new crown epidemic in China, various places and campuses have taken precautionary measures. However, implementing these measures independently may not be possible, and problems are constantly exposed, which would be markedly effective if they were controlled in some way by the government's management of private schools.

The modern definition of a capitalist is also changing and some capitalists have assumed certain social responsibilities (Chen, 2014). Thus, countless capitalists play a social role by establishing private universities to train people for society. However, capitalists make their profits by running businesses, and private schools are just one means of gaining profit. When the market is hit, the impact on investments in school construction is even greater, and the prestige of business is insufficient to match that of government, which the people are willing to trust more than ordinary business. Moreover, given that entrepreneurs establish their own universities, the cost is relatively high, and the quality and level of students from all over the school are uneven. In addition, numerous capitalists invest in an attempt to gain the sympathy of students, thereby resulting in a vicious cycle. For tax purposes, there are always many catering businesses in the annexes of private universities and colleges, but students in private universities and colleges have poor self-control, so more of them are addicted to enjoyment. The lack of a practical base within the school and the expensive tuition fees for a minor makes it difficult for students to concentrate on their studies. The lack of government funding is the reason why countless students have been taken to quarantine during the epidemic. Furthermore, schools are not advised to rely on their own development of academic whilst their hearts and minds are not in professional learning.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AND GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT

The following crucial question should be answered: What will be the state of private colleges and universities under government management? The following section is a discussion (from

several perspectives) of the actual situation of Guangzhou Xinhua University after it was taken over by the government during the epidemic.

GAME BETWEEN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AND THE GOVERNMENT

Guangzhou Xinhua University had conducted two nucleic acid tests before a case of new crown was reported. At this point, the school issued a ban on students leaving the dormitory the night before the report, with the dining hall supplying meals and one person from each dormitory sent to the dining hall to buy food. When the results of the outbreak were reported, the government immediately took over the school amidst of the crisis and had an emergency meeting with the school management to discuss the ban on students leaving the dormitory and various actions to reduce the risk. The following day, the school authorities decided to allow well-protected teachers and volunteers to deliver meals to the buildings. However, the hasty coordination resulted in the school lacking sufficient supplies, and it could not get in the supplies it had purchased on its own. The government bought additional supplies, so that several dormitory blocks did not get their meals until that afternoon. What is most unhelpful is the impact that can result when the measures taken by private universities and the government are relatively static.

The government buys supplies but cannot get in, as if private universities are free to develop but are restricted by the government. The government buys additional supplies, as if it does not trust the way private universities develop and wants to help these schools move in the right direction with some assistance. However, the lack of practical action on both sides can cause some damage. The reason is that the disagreements between private schools and the government have reached a bottleneck, with the former focusing on short-term benefits and the latter on long-term gains. Private universities want to develop but are short of funds and look to the government for financial assistance. Meanwhile, the government expects universities to develop freely but is slow to act.

There exists certain cooperation between private universities and the government, but this cooperation is often limited. For the sake of maximising their respective interests, companies want private universities to bring them high returns, and the government wants them to be acquired at the lowest possible cost when they reach a certain development level. Numerous private universities want to develop and innovate, but the development of innovation requires huge amounts of money. It is impossible for private universities and colleges to achieve total liberalisation due to corporate influence. Cost regulation is the lifeblood of the business' future. The cash flow of the business runs through a long period of time before reaching its colleges and universities, and the process is long, so many private colleges are slow to develop. The government does not want to promote their development at a high cost at this time and sits back and watches for the right time to make an acquisition that minimises its own costs and maximises its benefits. In the competition between the two sides, they appear to be in extreme positions, and the existence of this extreme game makes the good better and the bad worse, thereby making private institutions of learning unpopular.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AFTER THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDED SOFTWARE

During the epidemic at Guangzhou Xinhua University, the government took over immediately and there was a lack of coordination between various parties at the time of handover. However, after the government took over completely, the situation improved. Additionally, the government dispatched additional medical staff to the school to protect the lives and property of the students, and armed police officers to maintain and coordinate order in the school. The government effectively organised every nucleic acid test and isolated close contacts in time to isolate the mode of transmission of the epidemic. When the government took over, all problems

were solved, supplies were sufficient, hearts and minds were trusted, and all teachers and students were confident that they could win this tough battle.

However, when the government took over, students and management have full confidence that the power of government which will not only bring confidence to the school, but also inspires belief in the students to contribute to the school. The limited management authority given to private colleges by the government and the fact that the school's input is obtained through the management of the enterprise, makes school management unable to be fully independent of the economic situation of the enterprise. This situation is particularly true when the government uses the enterprise management model to manage the school. Additionally, the school's funds will be biased in the direction of profitability, thereby deviating from the general direction of the school's operation and management and will even lead to serious financial crises (Liu & Cai, 2021; Jiang, 2019). Although there is strong support from the alumni association, its contributions are minimal. In this case, private universities are risky and make people feel they are unreliable. With the government's involvement, the bottom line of the private school is maintained and the school's financial situation is completely free from worry, and the government will assume its due financial responsibility.

Schools taken over by the government are financially stabilised and the internal security system and other fundamental interests of teachers and students are completely assured. When basic financial issues are secured, the school can gather additional funds to invest in its academic foundation, enabling it to focus on academic research and produce numerous academic talents.

CURRENT SITUATION OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AND THE GOVERNMENT

Despite the epidemic at Guangzhou Xinhua University, the support given by the government managed to safeguard the lives and property of the entire school. After a thorough examination and investigation to ensure that risks were reduced, the autonomy of the school was handed back to the university and the government withdrew from the school. When the government withdrew from the school, it appeared to take something away with it, which is still the same campus, but everything was back to normal. The power to procure is expected to return immediately to the school and the autonomy of the market is back in the hands of the school. Accordingly, Guangzhou Xinhua University's greatest encounter with the government comes to an end. Admittedly, the government has invested substantially in the school, but it is low compared with public institutions, and investment given to the school by the board of trustees is clearly insufficient to justify the government's investment in public institutions (Pei, 2021), to the point where the development of private institutions is considerably difficult.

In an environment where public colleges constant, the market for private colleges and universities in China is at a distinct disadvantage, with limited capital investment in terms of scale, faculty strength, quality of provision and scale and quality of student population, amongst others. These aspects present significant uncertainty to the long-term development of private colleges and universities. The government is markedly concerned with self-run institutions, such as the Dongguan government, which spent over two billion dollars to establish the City University of Hong Kong (Dongguan campus) and 10 billion dollars to establish the Bay Area University. These institutions cater to the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area strategy of national development, thereby making the development of private universities in the Greater Bay Area appear inferior.

Some problems have arisen, such as the fact that private universities exerting their best effort to advertise their excellence. Some of them even exaggerated their self-worth to attract students to apply for the university, but numerous small internal problems have yet been solved or are in the process of being solved. Many of these problems are not known to students but only to directors or management. This situation will increase the credibility of private

universities and enable numerous outstanding people to apply for admission to private colleges and universities to achieve the gathering of talents (Chen, 2020).

Currently, numerous independent institutions have been converted to public colleges. The reason is that this approach can establish a college or university at minimal cost and retain the standard and quality of its teaching. Thus, the government's idea is to establish another leading undergraduate university with the goal of attracting numerous talents to compete with other world's leading institutions. The cost of investing in new universities can be as much as the total investment of several private universities, and the future cash flow of a locality and its future economic benefits can be predicted by the universities being built. Although the focus is on the future and on the new first-class universities, private colleges and universities are currently struggling to survive, unattended private colleges and universities abound and their development is evidently superior that they can hardly even reach the top.

Meanwhile, overseas private institutions have lucrative funding and strong reputation (Chen, 2018). In China's private colleges and universities, corporate funding can only support teaching and research and is almost completely out of reach (Xu & Hu, 2020). Accordingly, the following question must be answered: How can a university without research nurture talent and develop the cause of private education development? Guangzhou Xinhua University has witnessed the determination of all its members through the challenges of the epidemic. However, it also has to face the problems encountered by private colleges and universities. During the epidemic, the government can guarantee the adequacy of campus materials, but the problem of college facilities and platform for academic research will be difficult to secure. The reality of private universities, equipment, system cannot always keep up with the public universities. If we want to improve the quality of private universities and colleges, the government needs to increase its help; in terms of adjustment and control of the economy, education configuration and other aspects, so that private universities and colleges are more excellent, and that private institutions of learning can also make a greater contribution in the education sector.

WAY OUT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The following recommendations are presented to implement the 'Implementation Opinions on Regulating the Development of Private Compulsory Education' (No. 3306, 2020), which was studied and formulated by the Ministry of Education, and to regulate and promote the development of private colleges and universities.

The burden for private colleges and universities should be reduced and the correct leadership system must be selected. The government should increase its involvement in private universities and reduce the decisions made by enterprises for private profit. Hence, the school can form a team dedicated to leading the internal development of the school, and the board of directors can be assigned to supervise it. However, the involvement of the board of directors should be reduced to reduce the burden for school development, not simply to move forward in the direction decided by the capitalists and reduce resistance to the development of private universities. To effectively solve various problems that appear to have arisen during the Guangzhou Xinhua University epidemic, the board system should be optimised and improved, the headmaster's right to exercise management must be given and guaranteed, the supervisory board system must be established and improved, the school's leadership team should be selected and strengthened and the development of the school's management must be enhanced (Zhang & Song, 2020; Teng, 2019).

The management should find a way to cultivate a better learning atmosphere and strengthen the construction of academic style (Li, 2021). One is through strengthening of the government's supervision of private universities and colleges to change the existing bad

academic style and to address the root of the problem. This will in turn promote students to develop more sense of responsibility thus, continuously improving the construction mechanism of good academic style and transforming students' learning concepts. This will enable them to play the role of exemplary students to achieve a good learning atmosphere in private universities and colleges.

Collaboration should be implemented to attract the best teaching staff and optimise the allocation of resources for teachers and students. The government assists private universities in talent attraction and constantly cooperates with them to improve the talent introduction mechanism (Wang 2021; Yu et al., 2021). Private universities should even attract high-level talents with preferential policy conditions to strengthen the teaching force and create an excellent teaching team (Yang & Wang, 2020). The path of markedly efficient small class teaching should be continuously explored and applied to practice. The level of teaching team must be improved with excellent faculty structure, excellent teacher professional ethics and professional standards and new ideas of teacher academics to lead the improvement of the overall quality of students (Song & Qu, 2021). Moreover, students should be motivated to find their own main contradictions, improve student self-awareness, reduce the opportunity for students to go out of school frequently, motivate students to run to the school teaching area during all holidays, reduce the new crown infections by being in a certain fast-food restaurants or limit college students' four years' enjoyment and other unfavourable situations for their own development.

The government should strengthen regulation whilst insisting that private universities are free to develop (Zhou, Zheng & Jing, 2021). The government must assist private universities to develop a good corresponding system, supervise and adjust the system developed by the schools themselves and maximise the advantage of the government civil servants' talents to fundamentally solve the basic problems of private universities themselves, such as whether the emergency handling system is considerably guaranteed and implemented. Under government supervision, private universities should find the right positioning, grasp the key development and improve the characteristics of private universities (Han, 1995).

The government should strengthen financial assistance and private colleges and universities to strengthen scholarships and reduce the financial pressure of teachers and students (Zeng, 2021). The government would do well to increase the financial support of private universities, and should be markedly vigorous in supervising the infrastructure of the schools to promote the immediate and effective construction of school infrastructure. Private universities are prone to a deliberate tangle between profit and non-profit, which can cause numerous contradictions, resulting in numerous policies not being implemented and loss of authority. Government assistance can help reduce the risk of private universities facing closure owing to lack of investment, increased market demand and promote development.

The government should coordinate the allocation of resources in each school and increase funding to build a good research platform for teachers and students. Private universities must be linked with public universities to increase mutual exchange opportunities and set up cross-university lectures, amongst others, to improve the international perspective of all teachers and students. Private universities at the Pearl River port actively join the construction of universities in the Bay Area, align with high-level universities, accept timely supervision from the government and rectify their own flashy problems and increase the construction of teaching resource platforms for private universities to press the accelerator button for their development. Private universities should also actively explore paths, such as exemptions from master's degrees to give students a broad perspective and passionate university life.

With the help of the government, private universities should explore the right path of innovation and cultivate practical and academic talents. The majority of the students in private universities will choose to be employed after graduation, which makes professional theory and

academic experience considerably important. It is important to build the characteristics of private schools, integrate innovation and entrepreneurship courses with professional courses instead of simply going through the formality, and reform resources, management and methods in all aspects. The reasons are to fundamentally improve students' comprehensive quality and ability (Xin, 2016), and provide students with professionalism and multifaceted experience after leaving campus.

MODERN VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF GOVERNMENT'S STRENGTHENING COOPERATION WITH PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

During the epidemic at Guangzhou Xinhua University, being assisted by the government will make it twice as easy to fight the epidemic and solve the school's most pressing problems easily.

If the government had continued to maintain a certain level of governance over Guangzhou Xinhua University, then there would have been a beneficial effect, in terms of funds and personnel, with the existence of a more meaningful flow to the community, following the deeper cooperation between the private college school and the government.

Thereafter, the development of the regional economy will promote the growth of the local economy (Yang, 2021), and jobs will be increased, thereby promoting tax revenue and increasing the vitality and dynamism of the regional economy. The school's specialisation can meet the needs of the region's development, achieve the precise staff job match for the region's development and directly provide staff for the corresponding jobs and reduce running costs. If the government cooperates with private universities for a certain period, then the school will certainly provide high-quality talents for the development of the region, and the government can achieve local development at a much smaller cost. Given that private universities will certainly increase their professional offerings and expand their enrolment, they indirectly raise the tax revenue of the region and can be substantially dynamic economic development.

Many measures in private universities are difficult to put into practice, and research and other aspects are lagging far behind. Government help will make private universities academically better, and this approach will allow schools to turn more and more of their fantasies into reality.

The government is a good helper when private universities are indecisive and a catalyst when private universities are slow to develop. With the government's help, the university and all its teachers and students will take up their social responsibility and continue to contribute to local economic development.

The government's help can also enhance people's confidence and trust in private universities, and excellent talents enrol in private universities, thereby leading to a qualitative change, when this private school becomes a comprehensively strong university, which will have a huge impact on society. This situation is not only limited to economic development but even cultural and ecological development. With private universities having their own characteristics, more talented people will choose these universities, which will be conducive to the blossoming of the cultural world, exchange of ideas and substantial improvement of students' intellectual abilities and awareness. Accordingly, they will be able to devote themselves to academic research and the study of the region.

The power of private universities cannot be disregarded, and their large numbers play an important role in the development of society. Whatever the course of this school, it provides a good supply of talents for the development of the place. With improved investment and development of the school, the place will further develop. In the short term, the investment may be large, but in the long term, it is well worth the investment. Currently, our society has numerous large cities. Hence, our government should focus on the cultivation of university students and improvement of their creative abilities, thereby improving the competitiveness of

students and driving the development of the region and progress of the entire area.

The needs of society are infinite, and our university students constitute another type of demand. In this way, the cycle continues and the ability of university students will become an immeasurable potential. If the government invests more or increases the supervision of private schools, then students will grow up to be successful, develop their own new ideas, have their own information on their profession and have the strength of their profession. Accordingly, the future development of the region and future economic development will be completed. With the countless talents of private colleges and universities collaborating in society, building our society together and building for a better future, the government's investment in private colleges and universities at this moment is worthwhile. The potential of private colleges and universities is greater than the potential of general colleges and universities, when the diffused colleges and universities have their characteristics, they will continue to progress, constantly seeking a correct and accurate direction, thereby cultivating professional talents and providing society with a quality workforce (Wang, 2021).

When the government adjusts the industrial structure of an area, it can discuss with the university how to cultivate talents in this area, and the private college can exercise its autonomy thereafter to adjust the direction of future development and increase the cultivation of applied and all-round talents. With all the conditions prompted, private institutions of learning will be able to adapt to changes in time to develop. With considerable cooperation, the government will impose preferential policies to private universities, the development of the school will have more potential and the operational burden of the school will be substantially reduced.

CONCLUSION

In an environment where public universities are highly regarded, the market disadvantage of private universities is obvious in the context of first-class universities and the limited funds of enterprises cause a shortage in input scale, quality of school operation, teachers and scale and quality of students, amongst others. The independent development of private universities is hampered by numerous problems, and the problems of schools are prone to a series of unpredictable and vicious effects, such as outbreak of new crowns in universities. These problems not only make private universities uncertain but also unstable. Moreover, when the market is subject to serious fluctuations, the university will face unprecedented risks. If the government increases its participation in the construction of private universities, provides additional funds and equipment to private universities, gives ownership to the university after it has determined its own characteristics and goals and can disinvest when the university has relatively grown, then the government will have a return on its investment when the majority of the private universities are comparable to some public universities (Chen, 2021), and the social benefits will be even greater. Generally, the benefits to society will be substantial.

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