

Publication Introduction

Book title: **The Emergence, Expansion, and Transformation of China's Independent College System: A New Approach to Higher Education Development**



Author : Qiuqing PAN

Just like in Japan, as universities in modern China become more popular and globalized, various approaches to education are being explored to keep up with the times. Amidst this, independent colleges emerged in the late 90s as new higher education institutions based on comprehensive universities. This book traces the development of the unique system of independent colleges from their inception to the

present, capturing their diverse educational practices, effects, and the challenges they face, making it a comprehensive study without precedent.

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Summary of This Book

This book takes the independent college system in China, which is a new attempt at higher education development, as a case study. Examining its inception, dissemination, and transformation elucidates how various challenges born from complex social environments like declining birthrates, internationalization, and diversification are addressed in China. It clarifies what kind of attempts are being made in China for higher education development and what implications the independent college system brings for higher education development. The book, based on the concept of the Public-Private Partnership model, attempts to reassess comprehensively and systematically in terms of research perspectives, methods, used data, and analytical indicators. Specifically, longitudinal and cross-sectional methods are used for analysis, and theoretical, case, and student evaluation perspectives are included in the research viewpoints. Data from both current student surveys and graduate surveys are used.

Furthermore, in addition to various indicators based on the IEO model, such as "Obtained Information," "Educational Environment," "Student Engagement," and "Outcomes (Satisfaction, Achievement of Educational Goals, Acquisition of Knowledge, Skills, and Qualities, Educational Utility)," attachment indicators measuring the investment value of one's department, such as "Would you recommend your department to others?" and "Is your department worth the investment?" are included to avoid bias and prejudice often associated with satisfaction. This rigorous approach significantly contributes to verifying the applicability of the Public-Private Partnership model in higher education. Therefore, this book is essential reading for university stakeholders worldwide who are exploring how to utilize the Public-Private Partnership model in the operation, management, and innovation of educational institutions, particularly private universities, and examining evidence-based policy-making (EBPM).

The structure of this book is as follows. First, in the introduction, based on the social background of the pros and cons surrounding the independent college system in Chinese higher education, including abolition debates, the problem is identified. Furthermore, the limitations of previous research are examined, and the significance, analytical perspective, and framework of this research are clarified. The outlines of each chapter are shown below.

Part One is positioned as "Formation" and consists of Chapter 1. Chapter 1 aims to explore the factors that led to the birth and expansion of the "independent college" system in China and its particularities. Based on Clark (1983)'s "triangle of coordination" theory, it elucidates the factors for the emergence and expansion of independent colleges from the perspectives of the state, research institutions, and the market (students and investors). It also clarifies the issues arising from the complexity, diversity, and particularities of independent colleges, and through these, discusses the validity of the five research questions presented in the introduction and the usefulness of the analytical perspective of this book.

Part Two, titled "Development," consists of Chapters 2 to 6 and systematically examines quality assurance and differentiation of independent colleges compared to other higher education institutions from aspects such as student attributes, educational processes, learning outcomes, and educational utility.

Chapter 2 focuses on the government's attitude and guidance towards independent colleges, examining whether external quality assurance activities were implemented and their effects. It also touches on how early problems like quality decline were resolved through policy regulation and the limitations of policy guidance towards quality improvement and differentiation.

Chapter 3 examines changes in the social image of independent colleges from the student perspective, considering the 20-year development and the background of external quality assurance. As a result, the image of "high income, low academic ability" has been dispelled, but the establishment of a unique identity as a substitute for national universities is still unclear.

Chapter 4, unlike Chapter 3, examines quality assurance and differentiation of independent colleges from the perspective of internal quality

assurance activities and their achievements. It analyzes and considers the actual situation and degree of penetration of applied education from the perspectives of the government, institutions, and students, as well as the degree to which policy objectives have penetrated institutional decision-making and their limitations.

Chapter 5 analyzes and considers the educational effects of independent colleges from the perspectives of "quality assurance" as setting and achieving unique educational goals and "differentiation" from parent universities and other higher education institutions. It clarifies the determinants of educational effects through stepwise multiple regression analysis. It discusses the degree of achievement in applied human resource development and the polarization of quality among independent colleges.

Chapter 6, based on the indicators of educational utility and attachment to the alma mater, examines the investment value of education from the perspectives of current students and graduates as consumers.

Part Three, titled "Future Prospects," in Chapter 7, based on the premise that the direction for the sustainability of independent colleges is no longer visible, examines the institutional, educational, and social environmental challenges these independent colleges face, based on theoretical trends in institutional change, and presents prospects for the future.

Part Four, titled "Implications for Higher Education Development," in the final chapter, re-organizes the analysis results of each chapter and attempts a re-evaluation of the significance and social function of the independent college system. It clarifies the new academic value of this book by considering the pros and cons of independent colleges, the validity of the research methods, the utility of research results, future prospects, and the possibilities of policy criticism. It presents implications for the development of higher education.

Finally, this book is an unprecedented research book that provides a new and comprehensive perspective as the community examines the historical background of independent colleges and their future outlook as a new attempt to develop higher education. I hope this book's findings will serve as useful references for researchers, policymakers, and education stakeholders, among others.