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Colleges between Public and Private: An Ethnographic Case Study of Independent Colleges in China

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Xiaopeng Shen

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Colleges between Public and Private:
An Ethnographic Case Study of Independent Colleges in China

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of California, Los Angeles, 2020
Professor Val D. Rust, Chair

Independent colleges in China are a group of peculiar higher education institutions emerging in the late 1990s and expanding at a speed, hardly seen in any other higher education systems but maybe conceivable in the context of China's large college-aspiring population and miraculous economic development. One of the most peculiar things about independent colleges is their institutional nature – whether they are public or private. Building upon the literature context of privatization in education and China's higher education experience, this study investigates this young group of higher education institutions growing up in China's market reform era. The central research question focuses on the nature of these independent colleges from an insiders' perspective. Are they truly private higher education institutions born out of China's market reform efforts in the higher education sector? Or are they rather some market adapted extension of some public higher education institutions? To answer these questions, a macro-perspective analysis is given to both present the important social policy context for China's privatization experience and describe the Chinese characteristics in the higher education privatization process. More importantly, a micro-perspective is further provided in the form of an ethnographical case study to reveal the nature of independent colleges from an insiders' point of view. The ethnographical case study is based upon Schein's theoretical framework for studying organizational/institutional culture. Physical "artifacts", espoused official value and differentiated assumptions are investigated to provide a wholesome

picture of the institution. Zhejiang University City College, the first independent college in Zhejiang, is selected as the site for this ethnographical case study.

Through this micro and macro-perspective study, it is found that 1) founding public higher education institutions exert great influence over the operation of independent colleges. Their crucial role in the emergence and development of independent colleges is a pragmatic policy decision to quickly expand and diversify the higher education provision. Therefore, the influence of the public force shall not be overlooked in China's higher education privatization experience. 2) Students in independent colleges hold an ambiguous view on the nature of independent colleges. On the one hand, because of the participation of public higher education institutions they see independent colleges as more trust-worthy and quality-ensured. On the other hand, they are troubled by the marginalized/stigmatized status of independent colleges as minban (private or people run in literal meaning) higher education institutions in China's public dominant higher education system. 3) Faculty and staff in independent colleges are able to see both the advantages and disadvantages of this hybrid model of higher education. Academic resources and social recognition are important advantages. Lack of character and autonomy are mentioned as disadvantages. However, many argue independent colleges shall not go on a path with more independence. More support from the public higher education institution and the local government is essential to its future survival and success in China's public dominated higher educationsystem.

Keywords: Independent Colleges, Minban, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Privatization, Massification, Chinese Characteristics, Organization Culture

The dissertation of Xiaopeng Shen is approved.

Richard Desjardins

Carlos A. Torres

Yunxiang Yan

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List of Acronyms

ZUCC	Zhejiang University City College
ZJU	Zhejiang University
HEI	higher education institution
HE	higher education

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Acknowledgements

Writing a dissertation can be a lonely quest for the researcher/writer, but it is also a collective process with the writer drawing upon the intellectual inspirations and support from every man and woman who offers care and advice for the research and writing. I am very grateful for the intellectual community I have been able to engage in while doing my research and writing up the dissertation. It makes the process less lonely and it is because of the support of this caring community that I was able to complete my dissertation.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Entering the gate of Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC), it is hard to miss a huge grey boulder, inscribed with golden characters – truth seeking and innovation, noticeably standing in the front of a lawn. These are the school motto of this college as well as Zhejiang University (ZJU), which enjoys a high prestige in China and has been the sponsoring institution for ZUCC. The sharing of the same motto is an embodiment of the same DNA. And inscribing them on an immense boulder, impossible to move, seems to symbolize the unbreakable blood connection between the two institutions, maybe even a connection like one between a mother and a son.

Research Problem

Independent Colleges are a group of peculiar higher education institutions emerging in the late 1990s and expanding in a speed, hardly seen in any other higher education systems but maybe conceivable in the context of China's large college-aspiring population and miraculous economic development during the first decade of the 21st century. One of the most peculiar things about Independent Colleges is their institutional nature – whether they are public or private. An interesting irony about these Independent colleges, that may shed insight into the nature of these colleges, is that although they are given the name of "Independent" Colleges they are hardly independent in any sense, because they are often closely dependent on a mother-like sponsoring public higher education institution. Nonetheless, the name was officially given in 2003 with the hope to regulate the spin-off secondary colleges of those key public universities and rectify the convoluted connections between the public higher education institutions and the affiliated colleges (Ministry of Education, 2003). In a word, the new name of Independent Colleges is more about addressing the existing controversies and presenting the supervising goal for this group of newly-emerged and unregulated higher education institutions than reflecting their status or nature. This ironic reality may tell much

about the reforming era of China and its changing higher education structure, in which many things are pragmatic experiments embodying the spirit of "passing the stream by groping stones"—a famous line from Deng Xiaoping, the chief engineer for China's opening-up and reform. Under the backdrop of socialist market reforms, HE also becomes the important policy experimental field displaying the Chinese characteristics baffling the western audience.

In addition to making sense of the name and nature of independent colleges, these recently-emerged higher education institutions were not fully studied when discussing the massification process in China. According to Trow's theory on the transition of HE from elite to mass and to universal access, China's HE entered the stage of massification around 2002 with the gross participation rate reaching the point of 15% (Yang, 2004). In 2017, this number has come to 45.7%, according to the Ministry of Education data. Though attention has been given to this significant increase in HE participation rate, the story behind this massification is less well-narrated. The rise of independent colleges has actually coincided with the massification process. Therefore, as an important contributing factor to massification, independent colleges deserve better understanding.

Last but not least, as part of China's private higher education, independent colleges present the paradox of China's privatization or marketization experience. With the market reform in higher education starting in the late 1990s, some scholars have embraced the idea that China is also influenced by the neoliberal reform movement, which was started in the U.S. and U.K. with the withdrawal of public forces and the increasing role of private participation (Rizvi, 2006; Mok, 2007). How shall we understand China's privatization in higher education? What are the reasons for its privatization? What are the salient features for China's higher education privatization? These are interesting questions to reveal the Chinese experience with higher education privatization.

Therefore, this study of Independent Colleges in China assigns itself the mission to explain the Chinese characteristics in the recent changes of China's higher education system, namely the rise of a new type of private higher education

institutions having strong connections with some public higher education institutions in the context of China's HE massification and privatization. Through digging into the inner culture and living experiences of such institutions, I hope to present not only a clear picture of the recent change in China's private higher education but also a tentative window to explore the implications of Chinese characteristics in the age of market reform in a socialist China.

In the following, I will explain the research question, methods as well as some key concepts within this research so as to provide a grand tour for what this project is intended to achieve.

Research Questions and Purpose

China's market oriented reform in education started as early as 1985. Only in the beginning it is given an ambiguous term, called decentralization[1]. After all, the term "market" or "marketization" gives too much implication for a capitalistic turn. And China's market reform will take on its own logic, one with Chinese characteristics. With the "decentralization" policy guide, the state and all levels of government are relegating some power down to the social forces. However, to what extent should the non-government social forces be allowed to carry out the market oriented educational experiments? How shall the power relation between the government force and the social force be balanced? Last but not least, what are the social forces made up of in China's public dominated education system? Who are they?

The China experience is unique and often considered an elusive system difficult to understand. It is the purpose of this study to use the rise of independent colleges in China as a mirror to show what this "marketization" of higher education with Chinese

[1] As early as 1985, the CCP issued the *Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party of China on the reform of the Educational System* which marked the beginning of a process of educational reform and gradually aligned the educational system with the newly emerging market economy. *Outline for Reform and Development of Education in China* issued in 1993 restated the reduction of centralization and government control in general as the long-term goals of reform (CCPCC, 1993).

characteristics means. These colleges are an important product of China's market oriented education reform and its massification experience. Looking into their stories can help us figure out the logic of China's marketization in its own context.

This research project is going to be situated in the context of China's marketization and massification experience. The background story of this experience will be given before the project explores one specific ethnographical case.

With a key focus on the recently emerged higher education institutions--independent colleges, the central research question is what independent colleges are or how we shall understand this peculiar group of higher education institutions in terms of its privateness and publicness. The nature of independent colleges is important because understanding them from an insider's perspective can help to reveal the implications for the marketization with Chinese characteristics in the field of education.

Research Method

With the most current research on minban higher education mainly focusing on macro-policy and structural perspective, the understanding of these universities as organizations from a micro-perspective is lacking. How these colleges are functioning on the hybrid public-private model and how this model was understood by the inside members are worth exploring questions in order to discover the nature of the hybrid model. The study of independent colleges from the theoretical lens of organizational culture is particularly valuable in revealing the lived experiences of those involved in daily operations and providing knowledge for beliefs and assumptions surrounding this new HE model.

Burton Clark is one of the pioneers in studying organizations as culture. His concept of "organizational saga" emphasizes on the role of key institutional stories/events and that of certain charismatic leaders in forming the legend and building up distinctive colleges (Clark, 1970; 1972). In studying the subcultures within HEIs, Clark takes a cultural look at the different academic disciplines and

reveals the specialization and differentiation of disciplinary worlds (Clark, 1987).

Tierney, in defining the essentials for studying higher education organizational culture, lists six elements for studying the culture: organizational environment (controlling or amenable to changes), mission, socialization (role learning), information (information production, communication), strategy (decision making) and leadership (1988). Researchers seeking to understand better the culture of one particular college or university can examine these six concepts to reveal the shared value and the construction of that value. The approach recommended by Tierney reflects a more integration perspective and is weak in disclosing the internal struggles or conflicts in value.

Schein (1992), a professor in management from MIT, borrowing concepts from anthropology, proposes another organizational culture framework: artifacts, such as physical environment, social environment, technology, overt behavior and symbols; espoused values, such as those institutionalized beliefs; and assumptions, such as assumptions about nature of reality, human relationships, and human activities. Here the first dimension is more physical and can be found in the college logos, curriculum, programs, administrative structure and etc. The second dimension reflects the purpose of integration for a common culture. It is often the official narrative of that institution or the legend. The third dimension embodies the differentiation within the organization, and the conflicted assumptions may appear due to disciplinary or status differences. In that sense, the faculty from different disciplines and students from different backgrounds may hold different views on the publicized mission or value.

In the field of Chinese higher education studies, some literatures take an interpretive lens to narrate the story of HEIs (Pan, 2009; Hayhoe, 2011; Rhoads, 2014). Pan's study takes Qinghua University, one of the most prestigious universities in China, as a case and focuses on relationship between the state and the university in the changing social context to reflect upon the issue of university autonomy (2009). Hayhoe uses the institutional portraits as a way to give an overview of the status of higher education in China. Twelve universities in different regions and representing different types of HEIs are selected to reflect upon the changing nature of China's HE

in a mass HE era (2011). Rhoads, interested in understanding the rising research universities with a global ambition, takes four case studies of prominent universities (Tsinghua, Peking, Renmin, and Minzu) to highlight the current push for building China's world class universities (2014).

These studies give us some detailed understanding about the institutional changes in China. The different institutional experiences reveal not only the cultural character of the universities but also the interaction between the institution and the changing HE environment.

In my research, I will particularly borrow the research model from Schein to conduct an ethnographical case study from the perspective of institutional culture. In the following, I will discuss the importance of insiders' ethnography, which is a key research method conducted for this study.

Ethnography, as a meaning-making endeavor, has gone through some transformation in the past few decades. The goal of creating value-neutral and objective research has been challenged by the rise of native anthropology, or "insiders" ethnography, which takes a critical view at the established authority and turns to a kind of value affirmation research (Erickson, 2011). In this way, a variety of insiders' anthropological researches have turned up since the 1970s, focusing on revealing the black and native American communities from insiders' viewpoint, rather than from one of an "objective" white American perspective (Aquilar, 1981).

In Aquilar's critical discussion on insider research, he raises some advantages claimed by ethnic insider researchers, which inspire the research approach for this dissertation. One advantage is that insiders can interact with local members in a more natural way and it is easy for them to attain a thorough rapport with informants, because they are able to better blend in and meet the social/cultural behavioral requirements. This is something I can be fully aware of when I have casual conversations or formal interviews with students and faculty at the site. As a fellow insider, I can tell whether they are engaging in a sincere dialogue or not and it is easy for me to interact appropriately or ask the right question at the right moment. This insiders' advantage offers me great convenience in understanding the context and

conducting the research interviews.

The other advantage, mentioned by Aquilar, is the ability to understand “a language of great subtlety which is beyond the reach of those who are not native speakers” and the politics behind it (1981, p. 19). In this study, some concepts with social/cultural implications are revealed and discussed. BianZhi, the public personnel system in English, is one such example. The story behind this meaning-packed social concept tells a lot about the subtle public influences at ZUCC. SanBen, the third tier college, is another one disclosing the rigidly hierarchical nature of China’s higher education system and the stereotypical baggage people in this kind of institutions have to carry with them. The implications of these concepts are beyond the studied institution and require the thorough knowledge as good as an insider to make sense and tell the story. It is important to note that an insider’s research enriches the current educational studies on China’s universities and colleges.

On the other hand, as an insider, I am also aware of the challenges. It is easy to take some ideas for granted and unable to see the “strange” things an outsider can usually discover. As Anderson-Levitt mentions, “ethnography requires a dual perspective: understanding the insiders' points of view to grasp the logic of their actions, but stepping back to take the outsiders' distanced perspective that makes visible what insiders would otherwise take for granted” (2006, p. 284). In order to avoid an insider’s negligence and bias, I took measures to keep myself reminded about the necessity to take a step back when needed. I find that listening, asking questions and taking reflective notes are particularly helpful. Let the interviewee finish the whole answer and ask even when I think I might have the answer. After interviews, I often took notes about the key issues turned up in the interviews and tried to write the explanation for audiences with no background knowledge. Also my anthropological learning has done me a great favor in keeping my mind alert about the fieldwork process and opening my anthropological eye for possible discoveries. When I went in the field as an insider researcher, I felt I was one of them but different in the way I think, speak and behave. It was like assuming a double identity, both as a participant and as a researcher. This awareness is not only interesting but also helpful

in revealing the otherwise obvious and taken-for-granted knowledge.

Last but not least, Schein's work on the study of organizational culture provides the research roadmap for this dissertation (2010). His insights on looking into the physical artifact, the espoused values and the cultural assumptions held by sub-groups have led this study to focus on the campus appearance, programs, admission ads, official websites and tuition structure for the publicly circulated institutional image and on the faculty and student experiences/assumptions for the underlying knowledges about this institution. It is in this way, I hope, that this research has done a thorough job in telling the institutional nature of independent colleges—what are they and what they mean in the context of Chinese higher education system.

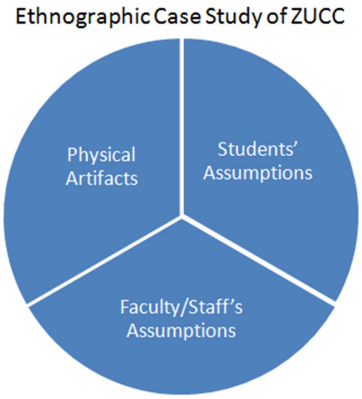

Figure 1.1 Ethnographic Case Study of ZUCC

Based upon the above methodological awareness, this research draws upon the qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups and participant observation, to dig into the insiders' perspective on the nature of independent colleges (Merriam, 2015). During this process, I conducted 15 formal interviews with fourth year students, 16 formal interviews with faculty/administrators who have worked there for at least six years and 4 interviews with faculty/administrators from three other independent colleges in Zhejiang. Interviews were conducted based on Seidman's guidance on how to conduct interviews for qualitative researches (2012). These interviews were recorded, coded and analyzed with the purpose to find the concerns and perceptions shared by the interviewees.

In terms of careful selection of interviewees, the interviews with students were relatively easy to arrange. Students tend to be more open-minded and willing to share their true ideas. 15 interviewees came from eight different secondary colleges within ZUCC. The criteria for selecting interviewees include the number of years at ZUCC and the representation of different programs. Also, willingness to share is also a soft requirement, since uncooperative interviews yields not only little useful information but also false one. Beyond formal interviews, I have also conducted 5 focus group discussions with each one having four to six students participating. These are usually students from the same program or school. It happens that when I invite one student for interview, he or she wants to bring his or her friends to contribute as well. In this case, I always turn the interview into some small focus group discussions, which provide opportunities for participants to not only verify each other's information and perceptions but also stimulate voluntary responses. I find these small focus groups especially informative and inspiring in terms of understanding the students' perspective.

The interviews with faculty/administrators are less easy to arrange, especially for some administrators who currently hold leadership positions. Some tended to avoid sharing their personal thoughts, or politely decline to accept interviews. Faculty tended to be more cooperative in accepting interviews and sharing ideas, partially because they mostly saw me as fellow teachers working in the same college. Therefore, 11 out of the 16 interviews conducted at ZUCC were conducted with faculty from different programs. Just as what I did with students, I tried to give representation to the eight secondary colleges at ZUCC. For the selection of administrator interviewees, participation in the ZUCC staff organization activities turns to be very helpful. Through these activities, I was able to meet the co-workers in the administration building, who I usually have less chance to interact with. The 4 interviews with faculty/administrators from other independent colleges in Zhejiang serve to find out similarities and differences among independent colleges in the region so as to provide supplementary support for the ethnographic case study.

In addition to interviews and focus groups, participant observation is also a key

research method in collecting data (Spradley, 1980). Carrying a researcher's lens, I wrote fieldwork notes for some of the activities I participated in. These activities include opening ceremony for freshmen, commencement ceremony, campus job fairs, student club activities, staff soccer and badminton clubs, student recruiting/admission meetings, anniversary celebration events and so on. These are great events for me to learn the official narrative or the espoused value, as well as the nuances between the official narrative and the understanding of different participants on campus.

Concepts

Private HEI in China and the Concept of Minban

Private schools have a long history in China, rooted in Chinese culture's great respect for learning. In pre-modern China, private schools, in contrast to government schools, were established, financed, and run by Confucian scholars or societies. Since the formation in the Spring-Autumn period, private schools have existed in China for over two thousand and five hundred years. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was often considered one of the very early private tutors who established private schools in Chinese history (Deng, 1997). The influence of the private education fluctuated with the rise and fall of dynasties. During the Song Dynasty, Shuyuan (academies) were quite influential and became the nurturing place for new social and cultural ideas, such as Neo-Confucianism (Walton, 1999; Lee, 1999).

During the Republican era of China (1912-1949), China's modern private universities started to emerge with the increasing aspiration to learn from the West and modernize China. Some of today's well-known universities, such as Nankai, Fudan and Xiamen, can find their origins in either patriotic Chinese entrepreneurs or western missionaries. In the 1910s and 1920s, due to the constant wars and weak central government their number actually surpassed that of public universities (Song, 2003).

That tide was interrupted when many private schools became nationalized after 1949. The socialist system wiped out the private sector and set up the national HE system after the model of the Soviet Union. Specialization in curriculum and class conflict in school politics began to take the central stage. It was not until the opening up and reform in 1978 that the nation shifted from its ultra-leftist position to a more moderate one tolerating trials in market-oriented reforms. In the name of market reform and modernization, private enterprises, including private schools, began to reemerge and develop, though still within the regulative framework of the socialist state.

Therefore, private education can be traced back to the Confucian tradition in ancient times. The early missionaries, in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, brought the modern concept of university and discipline into China and established some of the earliest modern universities, such as Yenching University (Predecessor of Peking University, John Leighton Stuart serving as the first principal) and St. John's University.[2] However, since the founding of the communist China, many of these missionary universities were broken up and their programs were incorporated into different specialized colleges in order to reorganize higher education under the Soviet model of educational specialization. Until the opening-up and reform in the 1980s and 1990s, the contributions these missionary schools made in

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- [2] St. John's University was an Anglican university in Shanghai, founded in 1879 by American missionaries. It was one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in China. In 1952, the communist regime adopted a policy of specialist curriculum reform in higher education with the influence of the Soviet model. St John's was broken up. The humanities part went to the East China Normal University (ECNU) and the medical school became part of today's Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Yenching University was founded in 1915 and the famous missionary-educator John Leighton Stuart was the first principal of the university. In 1952, it was also broken up and the different departments were incorporated into several specialized universities. Peking University inherited its arts and science faculty. More information can be found on these two books: Chen, Kaiyi. *Seeds from the West: St John's Medical School, Shanghai, 1880-1952*. Imprint Publications, Chicago, 2001. West, Phillip. *Yenching University and Sino-Western Relations, 1916-1952*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.

modernizing China were acknowledged in retrospect (Hayhoe, 1996). However, they have permanently disappeared from the Chinese soil with only history and memories left in books.

The current condition of private HE in China has a lot to do with the large context of the over 30 years' state-led market reforms. The private education, often referred to as minban education (民办教育) in public media and government documents, is considered of great strategic importance in supplementing the overloaded public universities and mobilizing various social resources in education provision. Thus, from the viewpoint of the state, private participation is desired and encouraged as long as it is properly regulated and supervised. Social forces or even individual investments are encouraged to bring diversity both in educational forms and financial input to the homogeneous and overburdened public higher education (Hayhoe, 1996).

Minban or people-run (民办) in its literal meaning, is an important concept reflecting the current condition of private HE in China.[3] After the communist take-over of many private properties in 1949, most private owners and their private businesses were deemed politically incorrect and gradually nationalized. In political ideology, a sense of communal living was greatly exalted and actions with private consideration were deemed undesirable (Tsang, 2000). Therefore, the term – private, though widely used in the Republican China, began to be an anachronism. It even caught up the negative implications of being capitalistic in such an era of nationalization and communism. However, still a small group of non-governmental institutions remained and conducted businesses in a realm permitted by the state. Minban, deemed neutral and insensitive, became a term used to describe a wide range of schools and businesses run by social organizations or individuals. Of course, before 1978—the beginning of the reform and opening up, most minban schools were run by industrial enterprises, urban communities and rural cooperatives either owned or backed by the government. Thus, minban can mean a kind of low level participation

[3]In this paper, the term private is used to stand for minban, since in most English language scholarship the term private is used to make sense to the English audience. However, it is important to know the hidden implications of the term minban.

of the government and withdrawal of the government funding, but the government stays in the backseat and is ready to take over the wheel if necessary.

Since the reform and opening up, various forms of minban organizations began to emerge and develop. The term is used with some other terms sharing similar connotations, such as people-managing (min ying 民营), socialization (she hui hua 社会化), denationalization (fei guo you hua 非国有化), and marketization (shi chang hua 市场化), to describe the privatization in the post-Mao reform era. To this day, the term minban still bears some negative connotations, implying the possibility of losing collectively-owned or state-owned capital, profit-driven and uncertainty (Francis, 2001). Despite over three decades' market reform, the state forces seem still the most reliable, especially in education, and the volatility of the market proves minban somehow a tricky concept. Therefore, the term minban shows the Chinese characteristics. It reflects the nature and implication of the market/private-oriented reform under a socialist state, which is cautious about the vague political boundary between what is socialism and what is capitalism.

Types of Minban

In the current context of China's private HE, the picture of minban is becoming increasingly complex with both the rapid rise of young Independent Colleges and the foreign HEIs entering China's market in various ways.

In Wang's work on privatization of HE in China, he offers a more nuanced taxonomy, considering the nature and history of the ownership. Basically, he divides the private sector into two groups (2013). One is the traditional minban (private) HEIs originating either from a former public institution transforming its ownership or a newly established non-public ownership. This group can be traced back to the early 1980s with the establishment of Zhonghua Societal University in 1982 in Beijing. The second group is the Independent Colleges, which are affiliated with public HEIs. Depending on whether the public institution has a private partner, this group is also further divided into the public-ownership model and the public-private partnership

model. Wang's categorization fits better with the statistical data collection custom of the Ministry of Education, which lists the independent colleges as a sub-category of minban (private) HEIs.

Spring Su briefly offers three categories of private HEIs in China: degree and diploma-granting private colleges, independent colleges and Sino-foreign cooperative colleges (2011). The private HE in China before 2000 was in a very marginalized condition. Most offered exam-preparation courses and did not have the authority to offer degrees. The appearance of independent colleges around 2000 boosted the number of private colleges eligible to offer bachelor degrees. Su's first category distinguishes the more well-established formal private HEIs from the ones offering non-degree courses, whose number greatly outnumbers the former type. The other feature different from Wang's taxonomy is the inclusion of Sino-foreign joint HEIs, which are also a recent development. In 2016 there are 69 Sino-foreign joint HEIs (Ministry of Education, 2016). The Ministry of Education treats these institutions differently from the other two and does not include them in the national HE data. However, there is a separate official website about Sino-foreign joint HEIs established for the application, quality supervision and information sharing. Therefore, the status of these institutions is well-documented and easily accessible through that online source.[4] Another thing worth mentioning here is there are much more Sino-foreign joint degree programs than joint institutions, over 300 spread out in different provinces of China. The possible reason is that the application process for joint institutions is often more tedious and rigorous. The joint programs are, on the other hand, less difficult to meet the requirements. And it costs far less financial and academic resources to open one or two programs to realize the goal of internationalization.

Therefore, Wang's taxonomy offers more insights into the complex ownership structure of private HEIs with good detailed analysis into the political and social implications of these ownership differences; however, Su sets up a more inclusive one

[4] This is the website leading to the recent developments in Sino-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools. It is basically an information platform for supervision and resource sharing. http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/

and touches on the often neglected joint institutions, which have caught more and more attention in the current internationalization of HE. The joint institutions arose after China's joining of WTO and developed quickly just like the independent colleges in the intensified massification process of China. If the joint programs are considered, they also represent a significant body of private HE in China. But their contribution stays more in diversification and internationalization of HE than in the quantitative expansion, since the joint programs' tuition, usually ten times higher than the public tuition, bars the majority of the Chinese students from even considering applying. Therefore, in the case of Chinese private HE, the traditional minban HEIs and the newly-emerged independent colleges consist of the major part of China's private HE sector, playing a key role in expanding the HE opportunities. For this study, I am going to focus on independent colleges, which take up the big responsibility of HE expansion and contribute greatly to meeting the HE demands.

Privatization in China and Role of the State

The market reform since 1978, led by the late CCP leader – Deng Xiaoping, has been described by many as a process of China shifting away from its socialist cause and embracing the Western neoliberal tide (Harvey, 2007). Private businesses are no longer stigmatized and individuals are now allowed to enter many sectors to bring in competition and dynamics so as to improve efficiency and generate wealth. In education, the number of private schools at different levels is unprecedented since 1949. Also, the state is shifting part of the funding responsibilities to individual families by charging tuition at public universities since 1997. In a word, the state seems to be withdrawing and the private sector is expanding to provide the services which were previously state-provided (Mok, 2007; Zha, 2012, 2013).

Under this circumstance, it is easy to include China as part of the world under the impact of neoliberalism (Rhoads & Torres, 2006; Rizvi, 2006). However, we should be cautious about the nature of this movement in China and also be aware of the

Chinese socio-political context. Is the Chinese state truly adopting the market to allow the autonomy of universities in financing and administration, which implies not only the shift in economic structure but in political culture? Or is the use of privatization only a pragmatic consideration with certain short term goals? Is the State truly ready to let go its dominant role in HE and allow the minban ones to take up the central historical stage? Mok, from a macro policy perspective, argues that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is now trying to bring back the role of the state to suggest a shift in policy towards a more left-leaning approach to reforms in social welfare in face of the increasing inequalities and the public complaints over education. He states, "the government seeks to retain the positive aspects of market forces, for example, by mobilizing resources and increasing access to education, while identifying and eradicating certain negative aspects; namely, the rising financial burden and growing inequalities of education, as controlling these negative aspects is critical to maintaining social harmony" (Mok, 2012, p. 238). Therefore, it seems the state is in a precarious situation, where it has to walk the wire by balancing the forces of the market with the public interest. Without refuting the impact of neoliberalism in China, Mok, nevertheless, reminds us that the state force is always there and ready to play the role of regulation and guidance when it sees necessary.

Wang (2014) takes a relatively more embedded micro perspective to look into the privatization in China. For him the authoritarian nature of the Chinese government explains the Chinese characteristics during this privatization experience. Wang points out that different from the systematic privatization in some western countries, the Chinese experience can be called the "pragmatic privatization." Using his own words, "pragmatic privatization is often an ad hoc solution for a government which does not necessarily suggest the shrinkage of the public sector" (Wang, 2014, p. 21). With the state holding its dominant control over the core aspects of higher education, including admission policies, degree award and funding opportunities, the privatization in the Chinese context is not the typical neoliberalization in the western countries, such as Australia, America and U.K., which often happen in a deeper structural level and is legitimized by the change in political culture. Also, due to the concerns about the

capitalistic implications in the shift to privatization in a socialistic state, the term privatization is often avoided. Instead, phrases such as people run (min ban 民办 or min ying 民营), socialization (she hui hua 社会化), denationalization (fei guo you hua 非国有化) and marketization (shi chang hua 市场化) are employed to describe the increase of the privateness in different sectors. Wang concludes by arguing that privatization is likely to be "a contingent strategy adopted in China's HE sector, rather than a fundamental reform suggesting a paradigm shift in university governance" and "ultimately, privatization in HE in China was concerned more with reallocation of responsibility than power" (p. 111). Indeed, the significance of the state has never been undermined in the context of China.

Independent Colleges

The rise of independent colleges, a peculiar group of private colleges owned or co-owned by public universities, is an important case to show the explicit and implicit roles of the public forces. A study of these colleges shows the complicated faces of the public HE influence in a country with strong state and market reform, two seemingly competing forces at the same time.

In the late 1990s the independent colleges were first established mostly as secondary colleges of some public HEIs to both conveniently meet the education demands in the time of HE massification and bring financial benefits for public universities, which were left to become less financially dependent while enjoying more administrative autonomy (Pan, 2004; Wen, 2005). After no more than ten years, their number has reached over 300, which was more than the number of traditional degree offering private colleges with no public affiliation. In other words, in merely seven years this group of special colleges realized the level of expansion the traditional private college could not achieve in twenty years. Independent colleges are the ones that appear at the right time and enjoy the special association with the public force. The implicit public background not only brings the favoring of the government

but also gives them stronger credibility among students and parents who are inclined to trust organizations with some government sponsoring, sometimes even nominally only.

It is widely accepted that China has a public-dominant higher education system. The private sector played mainly a peripheral role before the massification. The emergence of independent colleges is believed to have contributed to absorbing the demands and expanding the private HE (Jiang, 2012). Interestingly, in my research, I find the people from the traditional private HEIs do not consider independent colleges as fully private and independent as they are and they believe independent colleges are some kind of spin-offs of public HEIs, which has given them some unfair advantages in educational resources and public reputation. Also the people from the independent colleges think they are different in many ways and benefit somehow from the implicit public connection in comparison to other private competitors. This division shows the complexity of China's minban HE and the controversial status of the newly-emerged independent colleges. Their hybrid model is not only baffling to the outsiders but also dispute-causing for the insiders[5] (Wang 2012; Lu, 2009).

Therefore, in the case of China's privatization, the state did not fully withdraw itself; rather it relegated some power to local governments or public HEIs to allow them bigger responsibility and autonomy. This process is strategic and practical in the big context of China's entry into WTO and its long term aim of mobilizing social resources to reduce the financial burden and increase the competition to push the reform of the HE system. A careful study into the independent colleges reveals the in-between character of these institutions. The most prominent part of their privateness is fee-charging. However, the tuition in most independent colleges has not changed much since 1999 due to the state regulation device and the concern over educational equality. Besides, there are many other innate characteristics, such as personnel system, administration and program set-up, which reflect the strong

[5] Certain scholars in China called independent colleges hybrid freak due to their ambivalent nature. Whether they should be considered public or minban is extremely controversial. Their background and founding structure gives a strong indication to its public force backing. However, its tuition charging and running style can be cost-effective and even profit-considering. Therefore, the social debate is about whether it should be given the minban status or return to its public nature.

influences from the state. In one word, the force of the state exerts implicit and explicit influences in the privatization process. The minban HEIs that have enjoyed quick growth and received favorable attention in the market are still those with subtle public connections.

It is argued in this dissertation that independent colleges are the very products from the privatization with Chinese characteristics, which means a pragmatic privatization with the guidance or participation from public forces.

Limitation and Significance of Research

Independent colleges are the major study subject for this research. They are not widely known in the western scholarship on China's HE. One reason is they are relatively new and not as prominent as the well-known 985/211 project universities in China. The other is that the scholarship in the West tends to focus on the big picture of China or the rising research universities in China as they seem to represent the rising status of China in today's international arena (Rhoads, 2014; Hayhoe, 2011). However, it needs to be recognized that China's story of massification of HE was unfolded with the emergence of these new HEIs since 1999. Today almost one third of Chinese high school graduates go to these colleges with a history of less than 20 years for their undergraduate education. These colleges show us the other less known side of China's HE development, enriching our understanding about the true nature of China's HE. It is just like someone who wants to study U.S. will usually be given the advice to visit the Midwest of the country, where the majority of the ordinary folks live. Studying independent colleges helps us understand the mid-tier colleges in China. That is where most of the ordinary kids go for college and their desires and aspirations give us good insights into the lived experience of those average young students.

Furthermore, the scholarship on China's HE is largely focused on the top universities or the general trend and development in the big context of globalization and massification, such as Hayhoe's portrait of China's universities in the age of

massification, Hawkins' overview on the cultural dynamics in Asia's HE system and Mok's long term observation of China's privatization policy in HE (Hayhoe, 2013; Hawkins, 2014; Mok, 2009). There are not enough in-depth studies on China's HE transformations. Rhoads' work on China's rising research universities offers a good overview of the increasing competitiveness in research and ranking among some top elite universities in Beijing (2014). However, China's HE transformation is more complicated and fascinating than a few elite universities. The recent global shift in neoliberalism has shifted the scholarly attention to China's privatization and marketization in HE. Some good quality researches have given us good knowledge on the privatization of HE with Chinese characteristics (Su, 2011; Yan & Lin, 2010; Wang, 2013). Wang's work on the recent privatization in China's HE presents a highly analytical and insightful image of private or minban HE in China (2013). For him the state's role in this process should never be underestimated and he even compares this privatization movement to the Cultural Revolution with the state playing a pivotal role in guiding, supporting and regulating the direction of this movement. However, independent colleges as a recent episode in the privatization movement are not well-documented and there is no ethnographical case study to offer an insider's perspective on what these schools actually are, how they are connected to the market force and to what extent they are controlled by the state power. It is believed that an insider's perspective can offer more delicate and nuanced analysis on this new page of China's HE change. It is the goal of this research to give a vivid ethnographic case study on the organizational nature of this newly-emerged minban HEIs – Independent Colleges.

The main reason to choose Zhejiang province as the research site and Zhejiang University City College as the case study focus is their significance for the emergence of independent colleges. Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC) is widely known as the first independent college in China. It started to admit students in 1999, when this concept of independent college did not even exist. And Zhejiang province is famous of experimenting on new market ideas in China. Some market reforms, such as private business owners in the 1980s, all first appeared in Zhejiang. Therefore, it is

not a total surprise to see a new type of HEIs first appeared in Zhejiang. Also, the Zhejiang Model of independent colleges, popular among Chinese HE scholars, have received more favorable comments and is believed to be an exemplary model for independent colleges in other provinces to learn from (Xu, 2011). In addition, accessibility is also a practical consideration for conducting this research. With the author's work experience in Zhejiang's HE system, it is relatively easy to access the independent colleges in Zhejiang.

After almost ten years' high-speed development, in 2008 many independent colleges started to reconsider their strategies and directions. The expansion in size is not sustainable for the long run with the slowing down of entering students' number. The 2008 No. 26 Decree on Establishment and Management Methods for Independent Colleges placed strict regulations on opening and running an independent college. The shift from quantity to quality and standards has pressed all the independent colleges to find new ways to develop or even to survive. These recent developments may help us see how these independent colleges deal with new challenges in a post-massification era and how they seek their place in China's HE. An ethnographical case study in Zhejiang can offer an insider's view on this fascinating shift in an age of late or post-massification.

In terms of limitation, this study is limited in scope. If more research resources are available, it can cover the stories of independent colleges in different provinces of China. Though all the independent colleges in China are supported by certain public HEIs, there might be some regional differences. This study tries to portray the story of independent colleges in Zhejiang, which are famous for public ownership and private operation. In other provinces, the ownership structure is more complicated. For example, in Hubei province, there are more independent colleges which are co-owned by one public HEI and one private company/individual. That ownership structure can complicate the daily operation, since the two owners may have different opinions in how to run the school.

In addition, the story of China's private/minban HEIs is very complex. Independent colleges are the recently emerged supplement to this big group. As

mentioned earlier, the traditional minban HEIs and the Sino-foreign joint HEIs are integral part of the story as well. Their interactions with the state and the peculiar institutional culture they display are also important for better understanding China's privatization experience. However, this study, due to the limitation in scope, only focuses on independent colleges. The aim is to contribute to the understanding of China's privatization experience through the in-depth study of independent colleges. A more extensive study on traditional minban HEIs and Sino-foreign joint HEIs can of course yield more valuable knowledge on the full picture of China's privatization experience.

Lastly, if time allows, more interviews and fieldwork can be conducted beyond the major research site of ZUCC. I made three fieldwork visits to three other independent colleges in Zhejiang and four interviews with staff working in these colleges. It would be better if I could spend more time immersing myself in these three other independent colleges in Zhejiang. More comparison can be done to see the differences and similarities among these independent colleges.

In the following chapters, I will discuss the marketization background of China's HE and the policy evolution on independent colleges. Then, I will present the details for the ethnographic case study about one independent college in Zhejiang—Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC). Chapter 2 gives the background story about China's private education experience and the recent private or minban HE structure in the reform era. With that background knowledge, I will draw the next knowledge circle by presenting the social and policy background of the independent colleges in Chapter 3. Bearing in mind the macro-picture understanding of China's private education and the history of recent independent colleges experience, further anthropological investigation is conducted to reveal the microscopic picture of one independent college in Zhejiang in Chapter 4, 5 and 6. Building upon the Schein's research model, I conducted research to collect the "artifacts", including university prospectus, program introduction, school anniversary celebration PPT, official website documents, student recruiting data release, personnel information data and etc. The collected

information builds the foundation for Chapter 4 in exploring the physical and official face of the institution. Chapter 5 is focused on the perception of students studying in the institution. Priority is given to senior students who have been in the environment long enough to form their understanding. Chapter 6 is built upon the perception of faculty/staff who have worked there for more than 6 years. Their stories and experiences in the physical environment show the true nature of the institution with powerful testimonies. It is important to note some "assumptions" found in the research process coincide with the message the "artifacts" try to convey. However, there are also other surprising results disclosing a different facet of the independent college experience. Therefore, the study into the "assumptions" of people inside the organization offers a vivid insiders' perspective on the nature of the institution and the culture it displays. How they feel and understand is an important piece of the jigsaw.

The ethnographic case study is also supported by further fieldworks and interviews at other independent colleges in Zhejiang to deduce the shared experience among all the independent colleges in Zhejiang so that the case study is not just an exceptional one but one with representativeness. It is interesting to note that the schools do try to learn from each other, especially from the successful ones. Good models or experiences quickly spread to other institutions so they may catch up in the competition. In this sense, ZUCC, as one of the most successful independent colleges in China and the earliest one in Zhejiang, is a good place to conduct an ethnographical research in understanding independent colleges.

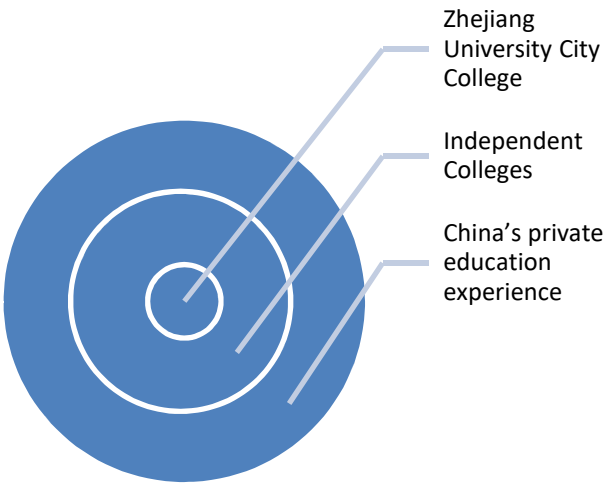


Figure 1.2 ZUCC and Its Eco-Environment

Overall the study is conducted just like operating on a human body, if we compare the subject of the ethnographical study to a human body. The general condition check of that human body is similar to the social and policy background of all independent colleges in China. The eco-environment that human body lives in is equal to China's private education experience. And the ethnographical study is a surgery operation into the specifics of that human body. The functions and adaptations of these specific organs shall be understood by learning their interactions or relations with the whole body and the environment. Therefore, it is a more holistic view on how to conduct an ethnographic case study.

Chapter 2 Minban HEIs in China

Theory of Privatization and Its Problematic Application in the Context of China

Privatization, if broadly viewed, often means attempts to increase participation of the private sector and to promote the role of market in a national socio-economic system. According to Bennett (1997), there can be three forms of privatization: divestment, delegation and displacement. The first represents the transfer of public assets to the private sectors; delegation refers to the change of managerial responsibilities into the private hands while retaining public ownership; and displacement indicates the private sector displaces the public forces through competition and deregulation.

The following continuum shows the movement away from the public provision and the increasing participation of the private sector (Wang, 2013). In the West, there is much scholarship discussing this change. The increasing emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness, the introduction of new evaluation/measuring standards to improve accountability, the advocating for public-private partnership as well as the rise of human capital theory to justify the increasing individual cost for education are all the main intellectual currents surrounding the global movement in favor of a market-oriented and choice-accentuated user-pay system (Schulz, 1961). Both Bok (2003) and Slaughter & Rhoades (2004) document the above described systematic change in the field of higher education from different perspectives. This encroachment on the concept of education as a public good is also found elsewhere in the world. Rhoads and Torres (2006) depicts how, in South America, the weakening of the state's role and the strengthening of the market impact both the autonomy of the university and its function of serving the public good. Therefore, it is fair to say that from a linear perspective privatization is a course of action for governance change from more public influences to more private involvement.

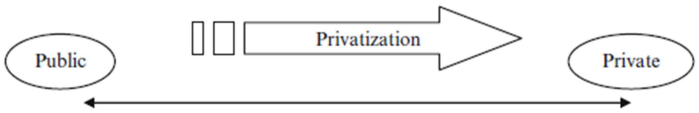


Figure 2.1 Public and Private Continuum

One important theory explaining this systemic shift is the new public management concept. Osborne and Gasebler (1992) put forward the idea of entrepreneurial spirit in the field of public management, when such countries as Britain and the U.S. experienced fiscal difficulties in the late 1980s. Facing the budgetary deficits, public sectors adopted a series of strategies to solve the problem of decreasing efficiency in an increasingly cumbersome public service system. Reducing public expenditure and improving efficiency proved to be more feasible than increasing taxation and cutting services. Managerialism began to be introduced into the public sector to develop entrepreneurial spirit in public management so as to gain better efficiency and successfully reduce public expenditure. Performance evaluation to achieve effective and efficiency became the core logic in the new public management (Dale, 1997; Codd and Harker, 1997).

This influential concept has impacted many aspects of education since the late 1980s and greatly changed the relationship between the state, the market and education. Terms, such as devolution or decentralization, have been used to describe the process and point out the restructuring of the state and education relationship (Dale, 1997; Hawkins, 2000; Mok, 2001, 2007).

In China's context, scholarship also covers the increasing popularity of the new public management concept in higher education. Lai and Lo (2007) 's ethnographic work on the lived academic experience in a regional university in China reveals the introduction of evaluation standards, the stress on efficiency and its subsequent impacts on the faculty life. With China's economic growth, the ambition to build world-class universities has driven the state to stimulate the potential of research universities and compete at the global level through national initiatives, such as Project 211 and Project 985 (Rhoads, 2014). The increasing emphasis on first-class

(Yi Liu in Chinese) has largely pushed the faculty life to be more quantitatively evaluated and efficiency-oriented.

Problematic Application in the China Context

Despite the popular rise of the new public management concept and its impact on education in China, China's own unique condition should not be ignored. China's Mao era (1949-1976), characterized by nationalization and de-privatization, and its socialist ideology does not disappear so easily and still exerts influences on the privatization experience in the reform era (Lin, 1999).

Kornei (2000) proposes a mixed system to capture the dynamic interplay between the socialist and capitalist elements in the post-socialist nations, which might be useful in understanding the China context. The term, "mixed system", is used to describe the adoption of capitalist mechanisms in a socialist regime, and under this system the socialist and capitalist features coexist to serve the political and economic structure. China's "socialist market economy" fits well in this "mixed system" model, in which capitalist market mechanisms are adopted to serve the economy in a socialist political framework. A similar and influential study on China's mixed system can be found in Huang (2008)'s work on state capitalism. From a political economy perspective, Huang explores the development of the Chinese private sector and reveals China's unique model of state-led capitalistic reform in urban areas. The most inspiring message from the book is to never underestimate the role the state plays in China's market reform and the timing the state chooses to intervene.

In this sense, the market reform and privatization, in terms of improving competition and efficiency, can be considered as a means to serve the purpose of economic and social development under the socialist political ideology and not be mistaken as a fundamental political restructuring. To further this argument, Feigenbaum et al. (1998) proposes a typology on the different purposes of privatization, which helps to reveal the nature of privatization under a socialist state.

There are three different types of privatization: tactical, systemic and pragmatic privatization. Tactical privatization, with political needs, intends to achieve short term political goals of those backing the policy, which may have a long term impact. It is often used by the party to gain political allies or win political supports from certain interest groups. Systemic privatization, however, focuses on the long term goals and pushes for the shift of power from the public sector to the private. It is the most comprehensive kind of privatization with an intention to change the political culture and shrink the role of the government. Lastly, pragmatic privatization, which I argue is most relevant to the China context, is an ad hoc solution for a state that does not necessarily suggest the shrinkage of the public role. It does not mean any political or ideological shift and is mostly a short term solution to settle an immediate problem or challenge.

In China's mixed system, the communist influence is still there and plays an ineligible role in shaping and regulating policies on privatization. The deliberate avoidance of terms, such as privatization (si you hua 私有化) and capitalism (zi ben zhuyi 资本主义), is more and less out of a fear for their undermining of the communist regime. A list of alternative terms, such as people run (min ban 民办), socialization (she huihua 社会化) and marketization (shichanghua 市场化) are employed to describe the process of privatization.

In Wang's recent study on China's privatization experience in higher education, he reminds us that "although privatization leads to increased private participation and strengthened markets, it does not necessarily shrink the overall size of the public sector. In other words, this is not a zero sum game in which the increase of the private results in immediate retreat of the public" (Wang, 2013, p.30). Therefore, one should be careful not to assume that the adoption of some privatization strategies in China's higher education experience, such as the rise of more private or minban HEIs, implies the political shift from public to private with some deep systemic impacts. Only when we take a close-up look at the Chinese experience can it be found that the increase of the private HEIs does not necessarily foresee the shrinkage of the public sector. On the contrary, it is one of the key tasks for this study to show a substantial part of the

rising private HEIs have a clear public backing. The affiliation with some public force provides some great advantages during their emergence and development for the past one and a half decade or so.

In one word, the communist infrastructure determines the direction and width of this privatization path. In the mixed system with a strong communist state, the privatization is mainly used as a useful mechanism to achieve the efficiency and resource mobilization goals for a state that is making every effort to achieve Chinese dream of wealth and power in the 21st century (Schell and Delury, 2013). It is a dream with over one hundred years of incubation, which is often characterized by struggles and chaos. With the beginning of the reform era, a series of deregulation policies have been introduced to increase competition so as to enhance the microeconomic efficiency. Also the market culture has been developed to mobilize resources from individuals to participate in different sectors of the social and economic activities. All this is for the goal of achieving modernization and improving wealth and power. Therefore, it should be noted that it is the state and the communist regime that initiates such a privatization process focusing on the goal of reform. And the state keeps a watchful eye to see when and how to intervene so as to balance the interests of different groups and keep the development on a steady-going track. This is where the Chinese case is most interesting and vastly different from the western neoliberal change, which often suggests a political purpose of structural adjustment and power shift through the denationalization of public services and the adoption of the user-pay principle.

Hence, it is suggested that the neoliberal privatization experience shall also consider the distinctive national contexts. As this study tries to unfold, China's minban higher education experience is not the simple increase of the private sector or the shift away from the public, just like the continuum showed above. In this story, the rising minban HEIs become a useful means to mobilize resources to meet the goal of increasing participation rate during the massification era. They serve the much-needed national social and economic development by providing the necessary skill-oriented human resources in China's miraculous economic boom. However, they cannot and

will not replace the dominant public sector; the competition they bring in has a very limited impact on the public HEIs, which often enjoy favorable policies in recruiting and degree program establishment. As a matter of fact, the independent colleges, which are the focus of this study, create more pressure and competition for the traditional minban HEIs, which have been existing in a peripheral level for almost two decades since the 1980s.

In the following, I will discuss the brief history of private HE in China so as to offer a background knowledge on the private experience with Chinese characteristics.

Brief History of Private Higher Education

Private schools have a long history in China. In pre-modern China, private schools, in contrast to government schools, were established, financed and run by individuals or learned societies. Since the formation in the Spring-Autumn period, private schools have existed in China for over two thousand and five hundred years. Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was often considered one of the very early private tutors who established private schools in Chinese history (Deng, 1997). The influence of the private education fluctuated with the rise and fall of dynasties. During the Song Dynasty, Shuyuan (academies) were quite influential and became the nurturing place for new social and cultural ideas, such as Neo-Confucianism (Walton, 1999; Lee, 1999). During the Republican era of China (1912-1949), China's modern private universities started to emerge with the increasing aspiration to learn from the West and modernize China (Song, 2003). That tide was interrupted when many private schools became nationalized after 1949. The socialist system wiped out the private sector until the opening up and reform in 1978. In the name of market reform and modernization, private enterprises, including schools, began to reemerge and develop, though still within the regulative framework of the socialist state. Therefore, the private education can be traced back to the Confucian tradition in history and should be viewed from a historical perspective

The Republican Era (1912-1949)

Since the Opium War in the 1840s, western style learning began to take hold in China. Around the turn of the 20th century, China's first batch of modern universities, which often combine both the Chinese and western features of learning, started to emerge (Hayhoe, 1996). China actually experienced a golden age for the development of private universities in this period.

The passion of new Chinese intellectuals to modernize China and the relatively loosely-controlled private sector in a time featuring wars and chaos provide the historical context for the emergency and development of various private universities, including missionary ones and non-governmental ones established by patriotic capitalists and overseas Chinese. As a matter of fact, many prestigious public universities in today's China originated in the tumultuous early 20th century of China, finding their roots in these early private universities. In 1938 there were 50 public HEIs and 47 private HEIs. The private HEIs included prestigious ones, such as Fu Dan University (1905), Xiamen University(1921) and Nankai University(1919). The development of private HE was supported by national capitalists, western-educated Chinese, overseas Chinese, missionaries, foreign foundations (Yale-China) as well as local government officials (Song, 2003). These pioneering efforts to build universities, combining the western and Chinese intellectual frameworks, symbolized an eager attempt to catch up and pull China out of the backward position in the world order. The weak central government, occupied with the wars, was unable to build a satisfying public HE system and left great room for the development of private HEIs.

According to Yeh (2000), roughly there were four major types of HEIs during the Republican era: state-sponsored universities created under the Qing, western (mainly American) missionary colleges, private Chinese colleges, and government-sponsored institutions supported by the Nationalist Party (Yeh, P 3-4). Chinese scholar, Song, categorizes the HEIs during this era into three categories: public, private and

missionary colleges. Though they might have minor differences in how to categorize the HEIs in this era, they both argue private HEIs had a prominent position in the HE system of that time (Song, 2003).

Private HEIs at the turn of the century were products of political protests and intellectual discontents on the part of overseas students, gentry-elites, patriotic scholars. The earliest two were China College (Zhongguo Gongxue) and Fudan College (Fudan Gongxue), which were both founded in Shanghai in 1905-1906. They were both results of massive student discontent. China College originated with the large number of Chinese students, who studied in Japan on the eve of the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. They were political active and many went to Japan in order to seek ways to revive the ailing Chinese nation. In the winter of 1905, over 1000 students left Japan for Shanghai, protesting the new regulations on Chinese students from the Japanese Ministry of Education. With the support of some gentry elites, these students rented a few buildings in the spring of 1906 and announced the birth of China College (Yeh, 2000).

Private HE during this era held a very important role in terms of HE provision and pursuit of academic autonomy and national rejuvenation. For a time, the number of private HEIs exceeded that of public ones (Song, 262). Though entering the 1930s the "partification"（党化） policy, advanced by the nationalist party to put the HEIs under their strict control, restrained the self-directed development of private HEIs and led to the rise of the nationalist party controlled public HEIs, the private HEIs had its heights during this era and produced many important intellectuals and activists connecting their self-cultivation with the radical public engagement.

The Socialist Era (1949-1978)

In 1949, the Communist regime overthrew the Nationalist government and founded the People's Republic of China. Then China experienced a period of de-privatization, which nationalizes many industries. The private schools were all

reorganized to follow the Soviet education model. From 1949 to 1978, the private education, deemed capitalistic and bourgeois, had been forbidden and the historical connection with its past was also disrupted.

In 1950, the First National Conference on Higher Education was held to establish government control over the administrative and financial activities of all private universities and colleges. All foreign-subsidized church-run universities were also converted into public ones. Following the Soviet model, many comprehensive universities were broken up into specialized colleges, such as medical colleges, agricultural colleges and engineering colleges. Many of these small colleges had no more than 1,500 students. By 1956, almost all the private HEIs had been nationalized (Lin, 1999).

With the anti-rightist campaign and the "Great Leap Forward" in the late 1950s, higher education was forced to experience a drastic expansion. In 1965, the 434 HEIs in China provided services to a student population of 670,000 (Deng, 1997). Also, many college graduates from the top universities were sent to the rural or remote regions to learn from peasants and workers. College admission requirements turned to be more political than academic. Those from "red" families were given preference over those with academic potentials. Colleges shifted the curriculum focus from theoretical instruction to instructions related to practical labor and social activities. From 1966 to 1976, the Cultural Revolution put the whole national higher education system into some chaos. The national college entrance examination was discontinued and majority of the academic instructions were replaced by class struggles and political confrontations. It was not until the end of the "Ten Year of Turmoil" in 1977 that the national education system began to gradually recover and some early "minban" colleges emerged to provide college entrance exam preparation with simple facilities and some teaching staff.

One thing to note in this era is that in the early 1950s the communist government once encouraged the different social forces, such industrial enterprises, government agencies, social organizations, rural cooperatives and urban communities, to establish and run a kind of "minban" school. In the early days of the socialist China, the nation

experienced great shortage in talents and material resources. Therefore, it was a way to mobilize social resources to help with the building of the already shattered education system. Interestingly, this logic can also be found in the Reform era, when the nation was trying to achieve the goal of development with limited resources. It is equally important to note that In the early days, despite the participation of social forces, the government required the inclusion of socialist training in all the curriculum to assert the political power over the education system.

The Reform Era (1978-Today)

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping shifted the national attention from political struggles onto economic reforms aimed at modernizing the country. In the name of "reform and opening up", a more decentralized market approach was taken to transform the economy. Education was also given great attention and believed to be the key force in reinvigorating the nation (Deng, 1997).

After Deng Xiaoping's attempt to modernize the country through reform and opening up, policy-makers began to consider the possibility to diversify the economic sector as well as the educational providers. Minban education, as a new term embodying the compromise or the combination between the socialist ideal and the market-oriented reform, came to be accepted or even promoted as a useful supplement to the public education. In 1982 the first minban (people-run) college, China Social University (ZhongHua She Hui Da Xue), opened and in the same year more than 100 minban institutions were established (Wang, 2013; Deng, 1997). Though most of these minban HEIs were adult-level education focusing on self-examination and had no authority to award degrees, it symbolized the return of private HE in the form of Minban HE.

In 1987, the State Education Commission (the predecessor of the Ministry of Education) issued a series of documents, including the *Provisional Regulations Concerning Educational Institutions Run by Social Forces and the Provisional*

Regulations on the Financing of Educational Institutions Run by Social Forces. These documents provided the legal support for the establishment of private education institutions by enterprises, democratic parties, organizations, economic collectives or individual citizens.

To affirm the reformist "open policy", the government continued to provide policy support for private education in the 1990s. In 1993, the *Provisional Stipulation on the Establishment of Private Higher Education Institutions* was passed to provide the guideline for promoting the opening of HEIs run by "social forces". In 1997, the principle of "active encouragement, unstinting support, proper guidance and administration" was clarified in the *Provisions on Running Schools with Private Resources*. Under the auspices of government policy, private institutions enjoyed a quantitative increase, though many still only provide non-degree course programs. Some grasped the opportunity to rise as medium-sized degree-awarding colleges with some specialization during this period. For example, Xian Translation and Interpretation College, established in 1987, developed into a language-translation specialized college awarding both bachelor degrees and vocational training certificates with a student population of over 10,000.

In spite of the opening up for different channels of running schools, the minban institutions were still at the margin of the education system and served mainly as "useful supplement" to the public sector. Around the turn of the 21st century, the central government set up certain supporting policies to build China's top universities into world-class ones. The *Action Plan for Revitalization of Education in the 21st Century* was passed in 1999. Also, the "211" project and "985" project were established respectively in 1995 and 1999 to provide significant financial support for the selected universities for improving the global academic competitiveness (Wang, 2013). There were about 100 key public universities/colleges included in the "211" project to upgrade these top tier universities so as to meet the 21st century requirements for HE. The "985" project further selected 39 universities to build them into "world-class" universities. These projects mostly benefited the top universities and were important measures to achieve the goal of "national rejuvenation through

science and education". Therefore, while the public HEIs, especially the top ones, competed to improve academic quality with the funding support from the central and provincial governments, the minban HEIs played the important role of serving the quantitative development of higher education through mobilizing resources from the society. It can be argued that the minban HEIs, many of which emerged in the late 1990s, significantly contributed to the massification of higher education in China. In 1999 only 37 private institutions, with an enrolment of 46,000 students, were fully recognized by the Ministry of Education to confer their own graduation diplomas. By 2008 the number of private institutions that were eligible to confer degrees and diplomas had grown to 638, including 322 independent colleges. They constituted 28 percent of all higher education institutions in China, with an enrolment of four million students, representing about one fifth of the entire enrolment in the regular higher education sector (Zha, 2011).

However, most of these institutions rely on tuition and fees to operate and they are often considered inferior in academic quality. Therefore, despite their important contribution in massification, they have never posed serious challenge to the status of public institutions. In the stratified structure of China's higher education, they often occupy the lower or middle echelon due to the policy structure and the social stereotyping. This systemic differentiation assigns different roles to public HEIs, especially the top 100, and minban HEIs, with the former focusing on research and academic competitiveness in a global scale and the latter serving the education of an expanded population of youth with application oriented knowledge. Entering the former institutions often means a subsidized tuition and better learning resources; on the contrary, enrolling into the latter often stands for tripled or quadrupled tuition and comparatively poor teaching quality.

The foregoing discussion gives the basic information about the transformation of private higher education in China. The development of private institutions only became possible after the reformist agenda came to the front. The government seemed to have adopted a decentralized policy to encourage greater market competition, improve the diversity of education provision as well as relieve itself the financial

burden. Generally, the Chinese government holds a positive attitude towards different forms of private higher education. The fore-mentioned legal support has established the private education as an important part of the education system.

In 2010, the *National Medium- and Long-term Planning Framework for Education Reform and Development* (2010 – 2020) states the importance of providing "greater support" for minban education through ensuring the equal legal status of these minban schools and the students/teachers in them as well as developing preferential policies. Therefore, it actually confirms the currently disadvantaged position of minban institutions in comparison to the well-funded and socially-recognized public institutions. The sound regulation and assessment of minban institutions are also mentioned to ensure the healthy development so as to avoid problems, such as inappropriate allocation of funds and profiteering. In the section on reforming school-running system, the *Development* (2010-2020) clearly states that while encouraging participation of different social forces and enriching school-running forms, it is equally important to maintain the dominant role of government-run schools with the whole-society participation in developing minban and public education together (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Therefore, it is important to note that the government does provide various supports, especially in legal terms, to minban higher education in the Reform Era. The market approach does greatly increase the existence and development of minban HEIs. However, there seems to be a vague boundary and the government keeps itself ready to use regulation measures when it seems necessary. And fundamentally, the public HE still and will continue to play the dominant role in the education system. Minban HE largely serves to increase diversity and market choices through more innovative school-running mechanisms.

In the following, I will discuss the types of minban HEIs existing in China.

The Three Types of Private Higher Education in the Reform Era

The current categorization mainly builds itself upon the foundation process and ownership. For example, Spring Su (2011) comes up with three categories: traditional minban HEIs capable of offering degrees and diplomas; independent colleges affiliated with some public HEIs; and the Sino-Foreign cooperative colleges. Li Wang (2014), focusing mostly on the traditional minban HEIs and independent colleges, goes further to break them into different models on the basis of the ownership structure when they were founded. Considering the impacts of globalization and Chinese universities' great interest in developing global connections, the group of Sino-foreign joint institutions should not be ignored while discussing the recent development trends of private higher education in China. Therefore, I will adopt Spring Su's typology and explain each category.

1) Traditional Minban HEIs: the "Stepchild"

The traditional minban HEIs represent the first group of minban education emerging in the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1985, the CPC issued a legal document, titled "Decision on Reform of the Education System," to encourage all social forces, including democratic parties, different organizations, and individuals to participate actively in developing minban education in various ways (Jiang, 2011; Mok, 1999). Local entities, no matter it was government affiliated or privately established, were all encouraged to engage in the provision of educational services. This is what often termed as the decentralization process. During it, private entrepreneurs, democratic parties (social political parties), educational groups, and even local government all participated in the wave of establishing Minban HEIs. For example, Zhejiang Shuren College was established by Zhejiang Political Consultative Committee members under the auspice of Zhejiang provincial government in 1984. However, Beijing Geely University was founded by the Geely Auto Group in 2000 with the support from Beijing municipal government. One interesting point from these minban HEIs is

that although the founding parties can vary much, they all receive some kind of support or consent from the local government, either favorable policy support or land granting support. Therefore, the minban HEIs have never been purely private or totally independent from government influences. Down to earth, they all have to adhere to the national and provincial policies for student admission and school-running standards.

Though enjoying some autonomy in fee charging and curriculum innovation, they have to follow the policies to recruit students after most of the public HEIs and fully reply on fees and tuitions to cover the operational cost. Most minban HEIs discover their operational autonomy to be greatly constrained when they have to follow the central ministry's guidelines closely in developing and launching academic programs, designing curricula, conferment of degrees or qualifications. A close look at the list can reveal that most of these colleges offer associate degree programs and the names indicate their vocational orientations (Pan, 2010). With a supplemental position to the public HEIs, their reputation is usually associated with poor educational quality, low-scoring students, fee-charging (or profit-making) and skill preparation. Due to the negative publicity, the lack of mobility channels and social stereotyping, both students and faculty in such institutions have a sense of inferiority, even though they consist of an important part of the HE system. Having a lower "social status", some traditional minban HEIs' principals call themselves "stepchildren" to express grievances about the unequal treatment between minban HEIs and those with public affiliations. In 2008, there were about 318 such colleges, which was almost equal to the number of independent colleges in that year. However, one interesting phenomenon is that although the two types of minban colleges shared an equal institutional number, the number of students enrolling in independent colleges exceeded that in traditional minban HEIs by almost 7 times (Ministry of Education, 2008). Considering the first appearance of independent colleges in 1999 and traditional miniban HEIs in 1982, the independent colleges have grown to surpass the traditional ones in only a few years. Some argue it is another form of unfair competition, because independent colleges are affiliated with reputed public HEIs. In the following, I will further on to discuss the

independent colleges.

2) Independent Colleges: the "Innovation" of Guo You Min Ban (Publicly Owned and Run by Social Forces)

The emergence of this type of minban HEIs embodies the reform spirit of China: groping stones while wading through the water. They first appeared in 1998 and 1999 in Zhejiang and Jiangsu, the two economically most developed provinces with a reputation of support for min ying (private) enterprises. As a matter of fact, they were the result of some institutional ingenuity developed with the cooperation between some successful enterprises with an interest in education and some reform-minded local governments seeking ways to satisfy the huge social demands for HE and make full use of the reputed educational resources of those public HEIs.

When independent colleges were first established, they were identified as the secondary colleges affiliated with public HEIs. Most of them shared the same campuses with the mother institutions and drew upon the faculty resources to teach part-time at the secondary colleges. Therefore, they had an intimate dependent relationship with the public HEIs in terms of administration, finance, curriculum design, and faculty recruitment. In Chinese, they were first called Er Ji Xue Yuan, meaning second tier colleges, which indicates their strong affiliation with the mother institutions. Later, with the deepening reforms to separate them from the more reputed public HEIs and the critiques on these colleges' unfair and relentless pursuit of benefits from their affiliation with the mother institutions, they went on the effort to establish themselves as "independent colleges." In 2003, beware of the rapid rise of "independent colleges" and the wide-spread social critiques about the social and educational status of these schools, the Ministry of Education issued *Proposals on Standardizing and Tightening up Administration over Independent Colleges Run on Trial Basis under New Mechanisms and Patterns by Higher Education Institutions* (Su, 2011, p. 29, Ministry of Education, 2003). There are two main purposes: 1)

continue the development of independent colleges to meet the social demands on higher education; 2) legally categorize them as independent colleges and give them a reform schedule to operate increasingly independently from the mother school, including conferring diplomas bearing their own names and establishing a separate campus from the mother institution (Su, 2011, p. 29). Although the regulative verdict tends to prompt these institutions to plan their long-term independent development, most independent colleges were worried about their attraction to students when they couldn't confer the diploma bearing the seal of the reputed public HEI and had to remove themselves from the physical location of the public HEI's campus, which, with its usually century long history, improves the social credibility of the independent colleges.

In the intellectual world, there are mainly two voices about this type of institutions. On the one hand, some scholars and leaders of the traditional minban HEIs hold a negative view about them, pointing to the educational chaos or even cheating under the name of independent colleges. They argue these institutions are basically the cash cows for public HEIs or some profit-oriented social enterprises with them charging high fees and receiving favorable land and loan policies from local governments. Some even go further to call them a freakish invention because of their status of being Gong You Min Ban (publicly owned and run by social forces), which puts them in a grey area blurring the boundary between the public and private education (Mok, 2008; Liu, 2012). On the other hand, those engaging in the establishment and development of independent colleges point to the contributions they have made to the expansion of HE from the elite stage to the mass stage in China. The organization of independent colleges is a public-private partnership model, which is suitable for the current public dominant HE system. Their rapid rise has proved themselves to be the new type of minban HE model fit for the Chinese national conditions. With the current short history, it still takes time to perfect these institutions and find a HE development path suitable for their long term development (Yan, 2010b).

Independent colleges are the result of a historical period characterized by the

market oriented reforms under the government regulation. With the public dominant HE system in China, the public HEIs enjoy many favorable state educational policies and the social status coming with their soft influences. Given the long time marginalized position of minban HE, it seems logical for some public HEIs to take the initiative in building a type of HEIs with a blurred public and private line. In order to make sense of this type of minban HEIs one must first understand the China's current national conditions and the history of minban education in the PRC era. Gong You Min Ban (publicly owned and privately run) is a term vividly depicting the educational reality with Chinese characteristics. Public ownership or public dominated ownership means not only more market credibility among parents and students, but also strong ties with the government and the reputed public HEI, which can bring some favorable attention from the ministry. Therefore, a further study of independent colleges may give us a more in-depth understanding about the educational realities in today's China. With the current number of about three hundred independent colleges, they have become a major part of the degree-awarding minban HEIs in China.

3) Sino-Foreign Joint Institutions: Cross-National Marriage

Sino-foreign joint institutions is another type of minban HEIs also emerging at the turn of the century with China' embrace of globalization. China's reform and opening up has stirred up the great curiosity about the outside world and the increasing interest in learning from the more advanced modernization achievements in the West. Higher education is surly one of the important areas for connection with the international standards. In September 2003, the State Council started implementing the 'Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools'. The 2003 legal document promotes transnational higher education, particularly encouraging local universities to cooperate with renowned overseas higher education institutions in launching new academic programs designed

to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to introduce excellent overseas educational resources to local institutions (State Council, 2003, Chapter 1, Article 3). Although the transnational academic cooperation and exchanges are increasing and becoming too numerous to keep a record of, the formal kind of joint programs leading to degree awarding or even joint institutions with a physical independent campus are carefully regulated by the Ministry of Education. Both sides of the joint partnership usually have to go through a long-term negotiation to reach an agreement.

The first Sino-foreign joint institution in China is the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, established in 2004. It is the result of a concerted effort of the local government of Ningbo City, Zhejiang Wanli Educational Group (a social enterprise with a public ownership starting as a vocational college) and the University of Nottingham from Britain. It is by far the most expansive and successful joint institution with over 6000 students, over 80 percent of which are Chinese, and around 600 faculty and staff (University of Nottingham, Ningbo, 2016). Since then, there are 49 Sino-foreign joint institutions nationwide with Shanghai hosting 9 such institutions. And there are about 760 Sino-foreign joint programs in China, most of which are co-sponsored by a Chinese HEI and a foreign HEI (Ministry of Education, 2017b).

This type of institutions is, to some extent, similar to the missionary universities, established in the early 20th century of China. Because they are founded and managed by foreign HEIs, they maintain a foreign identity, although they have to compromise themselves to the Chinese context, such as student recruitment through the college entrance exam and the ownership style (the president of the institution must be a Chinese person with legal abilities).6 Therefore, it is a school largely run by a foreign HEI, following the rules and regulations designed by the Chinese government. It offers an alternative model of private HE. It can be argued that their establishment has breathed new air into China's public dominated higher education system, but they are mostly considered necessary supplement to the diversification of China's HE. Some

[6] According to *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, a*dopted at the 68th Executive Meeting of the State Council on February 19, 2003, Chinese members on the board of trustees, the board of directors or of the joint managerial committee shall not be less than half of the total number.

argue it is the abundant education market that has attracted these foreign universities to establish campuses in China. The extremely high tuitions, which can amount to 80,000RMB and is about 4 times as much as that of the independent colleges, show that helping with China's educational access and equality problem is definitely not on the list of goals for these schools. Global influence and international market consideration are the probable major motivations behind these institutions.

Summary

China is in a peculiar period of history at this moment with a strong communist state governing the key educational matters, a lively education market attracting investors to knock on its door and a widely criticized problematic public education system. Borrowing the typology on higher education environment of Umakoshi (2004), Jiang (2011) argues that China has shifted from a private-peripheral to a private-complementary environment. In China's experience of higher education massification, these minban institutions have played the role of meeting the growing higher education demands and providing human capital for economic development. Different from the elite private HEIs in U.S. and Japan, the Chinese counterparts are categorized as non-elite/demand-absorbing institutions (Jiang, 2011). While meeting the increasing education needs with their limited resources and marginalized social status, private HEIs struggle with many problems, including social complaints on high tuitions, poor quality, serving low-scoring rich students and ambiguous public/private status. However, these schools reflect a lot about the current higher education conditions and the conflicts or struggles going on inside the system. To some extent, a close look at these institutions offer a microscopic perspective in understanding China's higher education ecology as well as the everyday conditions of the majority studying or working in these so-called minban HEIs.

Chapter 3 History and Development of Independent Colleges in China

Vignette

Keyi College of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University was founded by the public university, Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, and first started to admit four-year undergraduates in 2000, being one of the earliest 17 independent colleges emerging in Zhejiang around that year. In its early days, it was known as a secondary college of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, sharing the same campus and awarding the degrees of its sponsoring public institution--Zhejiang Sci-Tech University. In many ways, Keyi College has benefited from the tie with the sponsoring institution and established programs with the academic and administrative support from Zhejiang Sci-Tech University. In less than five years, its student size has grown to about 5000. Today, it has 6800 full time Bachelor degree pursuing students and a faculty size of 650 offering academic support for 26 Bachelor level programs.

However, Keyi College, just like many other independent colleges, has not only experienced fast growth in the massification of China's higher education, but also institutional relocation and adjustment in the short history of independent colleges. Its institutional fate largely pivots around two key national documents.

In 2003 the Ministry of Education passed *Opinions on Regulation and Promotion of Running Independent Colleges by Regular HEIs in New System and Model*, which required all secondary colleges run by public HEIs under the cost-recovery model to become "independent" with separate campuses and administrative systems. Therefore, Keyi College adjusted and moved to a new temporary campus at the outskirt of the Hangzhou city, which was rented from a local real estate company. This can be called its first step towards becoming "independent." In 2008 the Ministry issued another document *Measures for Establishment and Management of Independent Colleges* to further regulate the newly-emerged independent colleges and shift from quantitative

increase to quality improvement. According to this document, all independent colleges must achieve independence in campus location, teaching organization, degree awarding, student recruiting, legal responsibility and etc. To take the further step in becoming independent, Keyi College started to award its own degrees in 2012 and established a cooperative partnership with the Shangyu District Government of Shaoxing City, which offered a land grant and campus construction support, to build a new permanent campus in the Binghai New Town Development Zone in 2015. Starting in fall of 2017, first year students started their college experience on the new campus.

Fast and under-regulated growth in early years, institutional normalization with the passing of two regulation documents and settling on a new "independent" path in recent years, this institutional experience might summarize the emergence and development of this new group of four year HEIs in China. Keyi College's experience may not represent the whole group, but surly reflect the transformation many have had to go through to become "independent." Instead of turning "private", it has taken a path to become more public-like by integrating itself into the local sub-regional development and establishing ties with a supportive local government. Though they are still named minban HEIs in the formal categorization, the path many independent colleges in Zhejiang have chosen is leaning actually towards public.

In this section, I will discuss the status of independent colleges in China and offer a summary view of independent colleges in Zhejiang Province, which is the main research focus of the dissertation.

What Are Independent Colleges?

Independent colleges are largely a product of China's higher education expansion and did not officially exist until 2003, though it first appeared around 1998, when

Soochow University and Kaida Real Estate Development Company cofounded the Wenzheng College of Soochow University as a secondary college affiliated with Soochow University and running under the minban cost-recovery mechanism[7] (Liu, 2009). In one sentence definition, independent colleges are the four year Bachelor degree-offering HEIs founded and run by regular public HEIs with a cooperative partnership from some social organization and they operate mainly on the minban self-funded mechanism without the educational funding support from the state.

They emerged at a time, when the country embarked on a plan to substantially expand higher education and the families aspired for opportunities in colleges. With the support of the sponsoring public HEIs, their number increased from zero to over 200 within five years and formed a remarkable force of HE in terms of meeting the demands for higher education, mobilizing social resources and exploring new school-running models. In 2015, they enrolled 2.6 million students and constitute a group of 275 institutions, which is twice as many as the number of traditional minban degree offering HEIs (Ministry of Education). About one fifth of China's degree offering HEIs are independent colleges. They provide learning opportunities for one tenth of China's 27 million regular HEI enrolled students.

And most importantly, its running model bordering between the public and the minban (private) has attracted a lot of controversies in China and created some problems. It is not even certain today how to describe its new HEI model under the current public or minban HEI structure. But what might be telling about the new hybrid model is that the founding institutions are public key HEIs and independent colleges are largely built under the public ownership structure. In the following, I will discuss the emergence, regulation and transformation periods of independent colleges so as to offer a relatively complete background for these institutions.

[7]Wenzheng College of Soochow University was ratified by the Jiangsu Education Committee to be the first publicly owned and privately run secondary college in China with Kaida Company being a founding partner. In 2007 Kaida divested from the board and Soochow University Education Development Foundation took its place to be the social partner. This partnership change returned the administrative rights to the main founding institution, Soochow University, and ensured its full public ownership. The founding mother institution using its fully-owned alumni or education investment company to be a running partner is a common practice among quite many independent colleges to both fulfill the requirement of having a non-state social partner in the 2008 document and maintain the control under the sponsoring public HEI.

Emergence: 1998-2003

The turn of the 21st century was destined to be a historically critical time in the history of China's reform and development. China's social and economic development was experiencing some difficulty due to the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. The call for transformation into a market oriented economy was prevalent with a policy of decentralization taking the central role and the domestic market increasingly opening up for private and foreign owned enterprises. The country was eager to embrace the world and seek opportunities for development in the global economy. In November, 2011, after 15 years of negotiation with numerous countries, China finally was accepted into the World Trade Organization, which meant both great opportunities for the export-oriented economy and challenges for local industries who were previously protected under the state-regulated collective ownership running model.

In the field of education, there were two major problems which were closely related to the China's economic and social development. One is the urgency to develop higher education to both build up the quality and quantity of human resources to meet the needs of economic development as well as to satisfy the aspiration of ordinary families for college. In 1998 there were only about 7.8 million enrolled college students and the higher education participation rate was at 9.8% with the OECD's average rate at 48% (Liu, 2012; Zha, 2012). With the concept of human capital becoming popular in the world, the Chinese government also realized the importance of developing higher education if the economic development was expected to continue the momentum. Also, the Confucian tradition of placing the whole family's fate/wealth upon the education of a son or a daughter under the one child policy played a key role in unleashing the great potential of the higher education market. In 1998 entering a college was still very difficult and deemed fate-changing by many families. Among all the students taking the national college entrance exam,

only a little more than one third would be eventually admitted into one.

The second problem is the lack of fiscal resources for developing higher education. In 1998, the total fiscal support for education was about 17 billion US dollars, which was about two percent of GDP (Mok, 2002). This funding provided education for 230 million full time school students, which was about one fifth of the school educated population in the world in that year. It shall be noted the compulsory nine year school education has long been considered one with priority; therefore, about 60 percent of the fiscal resources were put into improving and maintaining the primary and middle school education level. And in higher education, due to the continuous lack of funding and years of disconnection with the global academic world, many Chinese universities desperately needed upgrades in infrastructure, faculty quality and quantity as well as administrative approaches. One measure was to focus resources on building China's world class universities so as to meet the needs for further modernization of the country. In May, 1998, the "985" project was announced to select a small group of top universities and build them into "first-class" ones. In 1999, the *Action Plan for Revitalization of Education in the 21st Century* was passed to put the project into the enforcement stage with 34 institutions selected in the first batch. Besides the increasing funding support, institutional merging to pull together resources from several specialized regional colleges to build one "comprehensive" university was greatly encouraged. This helped not only to quickly build up the academic competitive universities but also reduced the total number of HEIs in China. In 1998 there were 1022 regular HEIs. In 2000 there were still 1041 regular HEIs with only a slight increase despite the sudden emergence of independent colleges since 1999 (Mok, 2002, 2005; Zha, 2012).

Therefore, the national policy was mainly focused on the top institutions and it was about putting limited resources on the most hopeful ones in the process of modernizing and upgrading China's universities.

In this context, mobilizing resources from the society and encouraging the development of the minban sector became a reasonable result. Due to the long-term underdevelopment of the traditional minban HEIs and the dominant role of the public

HEIs, it seemed plausible to have the public HEIs seek social partners to develop the kind of private-public partnership so as to solve the funding difficulty. Also, many public HEIs had experience in running adult continuing education colleges, which provided fee-charging degree exam preparation courses. Running a secondary college, which charged a full tuition and offered similar undergraduate courses, would not be too much different from the adult education colleges (Yan, 2010b, Wang, 2012).

Seeing the huge market potential, many public HEIs embraced the idea of opening such secondary colleges. With the big enticement of receiving the same well-known public HEIs' degree, many students flocked to these secondary colleges as their ideal second choice and parents were happy to pay the cost. To some extent, it was also deemed an indirect way to increase the admission capacity for these public HEIs with the burden of cost on the side of students. However, the suddenly improved access to degrees from these well-recognized institutions also led to some chaotic situations. Some secondary colleges admitted less qualified students on the same campus in return for higher tuition—income for the public HEIs. The learning environment for these secondary college enrolled students, sometimes, was inadequate and the line between the secondary college students and the home public university students was blurry. Despite the huge differences in entering scores, they eventually received the same degree papers. Therefore, the social critics accused the home public universities of their commercial impulses and negligence for educational equality and fairness.

In 1998, Soochow University partnered with Kaida Company to found Wenzheng College of Soochow University, which was the first to utilize the educational resources of the public HEI to attract social funding and establish a secondary college running under the minban mechanism within the sponsoring public HEI. Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Hubei were the provinces particularly enthusiastic about this new model of school building, because these provinces have traditionally been the ones with huge student base and great desire for colleges. Zhejiang and Jiangsu were particularly developed in terms of minban or people-run/non-state economy. In 1999, Zhejiang's first group of 13 secondary colleges began to enroll new students, among which only

Zhejiang University City College had an independent still-under-construction campus and the rest used the campuses of the sponsoring public institutions, which resulted in controversial discussions about the nature and purpose of such secondary colleges.

From 1998 to 2003, these predecessors of independent colleges enjoyed a honey-moon like development period with little regulation and great policy toleration. In 2003 there were about 644 bachelor degree offering HEIs, among which only 9 were the traditional minban HEIs (Ministry of Education, 2003).[8] Therefore, the rise of this new type of HEIs, inheriting the reputation of the sponsoring public HEIs, greatly contributed to the booming expansion of minban HEIs and was somehow believed to be a significant new force in the development of the minban education.

All in all, in a time when the state and public HEIs did not have enough resources to quickly improve the capacity of HE and there was this urgency to develop HE in order to both lay the human capital foundation for economic growth and to meet the educational demands of the society, these secondary colleges or rather the sponsoring public HEIs grasped the historical opportunity and took full advantage of the available resources to build schools running under the cost-recovery minban mechanism. Despite all the problems and controversies, especially in terms of equality and unfair competition, the biggest contribution of these institutions was to achieve the goal of HE expansion without much input from the government. Plus, it is also important to note their role in the potential stimulation for the economy through mobilizing the family funds and the alleviation of the social employment pressure in the post 1997 Asia financial crisis era through absorbing large numbers of 18 or 19 year old young men.

Regulation: 2003-2008

In 2003, five years after the birth of the first group of secondary colleges, there

[8] In 2003 there were 182 minban HEIs in China. Among them there were only 9 qualified to award Bachelor degrees and the rest 173 were largely vocational colleges awarding 2-3 year associate degrees. Therefore, it is evident that before the rise of independent colleges the traditional minban HEIs were quite peripheral and did not hold any power to compete with majority of the public HEIs, though it is debatable whether these independent colleges are truly minban with their hybrid running model.

were already about 250 such HEIs in China, enrolling over half a million students. This is when the Ministry of Education saw it necessary to regulate the operation and establishment of them. And this is the beginning of the so-called independent colleges. *Opinions on regulation and promotion of running independent colleges by regular HEIs in new system and model*, passed in April of 2003, was the first document to point the direction for these emerging colleges. The primary purpose was to confirm the positive role these colleges played in expanding higher education and to bring them into the formal system of China's higher education. According to the 2003 document, independent colleges were defined as "the secondary colleges offering bachelor degrees and founded by the regular four year public HEIs under the new mechanism and new model" (Ministry of Education, 2003). The two "new" here indicated that the Ministry recognized the method of combining public HEIs' educational resources with social funding under no fiscal support from the state. The emphasis on their bachelor degree offering showed the high starting point of these institutions in comparison to the traditional minban HEIs, most of which were mainly two or three year vocational colleges.

Announcing the basic attitude of "active support," the 2003 document gave two guiding suggestions about running independent colleges: one was to take full advantage of the available high quality higher education resources; the other was to benefit the expansion of higher education opportunities. The former confirmed the role of high quality public universities in founding and running such institutions, because they were deemed more experienced in running HEIs and, therefore, less likely to cause social problems with wide impacts. The later praised the significant role these colleges had played and would continue to play in massification of HE.

In terms of regulation, the 2003 document explained the meaning of "independent" with eight aspects of independence and made clear about the minimum requirements for establishing such institutions.

The eight aspects of independence included 1) campus and basic infrastructure, 2) relatively independent teaching organization and management, 3) student admission, 4) degree and certificate awarding, 5) financial statement, 6) independent institutional

legal person, 7) full ability in taking civil legal responsibility and 8) independent reporting in higher education statistical information gathering. Among these eight aspects, independent campus and degree awarding became the most impactful policies forcing many colleges to undergo significant transformations, because it meant they had to move out of the current "loaned" campus and stopped relying on the academic prestige of the mother public HEIs.

In terms of ensuring school operation quality and qualifications, the document indicated any independent college planning to establish must have a running campus size of at least 150 mu (approximately 25 acres) and a planning campus size of at least 300 mu (approximately 50 acres). And there were some other requirements on the occupying space of teaching buildings, library books, and full time faculty number. However, the one deemed most difficult to meet and easiest to supervise was the campus size. It was mainly targeted at the controversial phenomenon of "school-within-school," which meant the existence of two schools running under two different models on the same campus. Interestingly, it was quite similar to China's "one country, two systems" policy on Hong Kong. The innovation lies in using an innovative, also controversial, policy to achieve a pending goal.

The 2003 document in reality served more like a guiding policy document clarifying some key definitions and issues with no information on how to penalize the ones not meeting the requirements. And the founders and their partners chose to pay more attention to the "active support" side than the "regulation" part in the high days of China's massification. Therefore, the "school-within-school" problem still existed in many already operating institutions; or the sponsoring public universities found a way to get around, such as carving a piece out of the current campus to report in the document as the independent campus. And awarding independent degrees did not happen until 2008, when another document was issued to shift the focus from "active support" mainly to "regulation and quality control" in order to achieve "healthy development."

Transformation: 2008-Today

The year of 2008 became the turning point for independent colleges, largely because of this second document giving more detailed guidance on setting, running and ending independent colleges and outlining the punishing standards for those not meeting the annual check. This is also probably one of the main reasons for the slowdown of the independent college establishment movement. The quantitative expansion was no longer the priority and the fast increase in enrollment began to slow down. In 2008 the number of independent colleges reached 322 and in 2010 it came to the historical zenith at 323. And the number of enrolled students in these colleges grew from 690 thousand in 2004 to 2.15 million in 2008, an increase of three folds in four years. The enrollment stabilized around 2.5 million after 2009 (Ministry of Education, 2016). Therefore, the year of 2008 was probably the peak point for China's rapid massification since 1999. And the strategic focus started to shift from quantity to quality around 2008, when the social complaints about the side effects of massification, such as diploma inflation, college graduates employment pressure and mismatch of education and skill, were also increasing.

In the 2008 *Measures for Establishment and Management of Independent Colleges*, independent colleges were defined as "higher education institutions offering bachelor level degree education, running with no state fiscal support and founded through a partnership between regular HEIs capable to offer bachelor level or above education and non-state social organizations or individuals." (Ministry of Education, 2008) If the 2003 document's definition implies some kind of encouragement for the exploration of the "new model," the 2008 definition clarifies the minban part, which, according to the document, means no state fiscal support and partnership with non-state entities. However, in reality my research in Zhejiang finds that most of the non-state social partners are either investment enterprises with government backgrounds or education investment enterprises controlled by the founding public HEIs. In another word, many independent colleges find their ways to get around the policy and maintain the public connection/control.

In terms of founding new independent colleges, the 2008 document set the bar at a higher level. It specified for the first time that the sponsoring HEI should "normally have the right to award doctoral degrees" and the social partner should "have at least 0.3 billion RMB worth of asset." And it indicated that the qualified HEIs shall "normally establish only one independent college." In addition, the campus size shall be "at least 500 mu (82 acres)." These very specific requirements made it harder for the new independent colleges to be set up. In 2008 there were two new independent colleges established by Tongji University and Shanghai University of Finance and Economics in the Zhejiang Province. Since then there has not been any new independent colleges established, probably because of the more strict policy and the slowdown of higher education expansion.

In terms of school operation, the 2008 document again stated the graduated students shall be awarded with the certificates bearing the stamps of independent colleges. This item finally triggered the key separation between the independent college and the sponsoring public university, though many independent colleges were initially worried about the possible negative impact on student recruitment. The drawing power of a key national university degree certificate for lower-scoring students was usually irresistible. Therefore, from 2008 on, independent colleges started to openly inform the prospective students that they would be awarded the degrees bearing the stamps of independent colleges. That transition went better than expected with no big setbacks for recruiting students.

The 2008 document, in addition, added chapters on how to supervise the regulation and what consequences may be incurred if schools cannot abide by. The provincial level education administrative department was given the power and obligation to supervise and guide the independent colleges to establish and operate according to the regulations. Also the annual check would also be conducted by the local education department to achieve quality control. Most importantly, a five year limit was set to require all independent colleges to meet all the requirements and pass the acceptance check at both the provincial education department level and the state level. If the institution failed in the check, it might receive the relevant penalization

with ceasing admission being the most serious punishment.

Besides the choice of complying with all the requirements and continuing with the path of becoming an independent college, there were two other options given out in the 2008 document. One was transformation; the other termination or merging. Under the first option, independent colleges could apply for transformation into a traditional minban HEI, which meant the withdrawal of the sponsoring public HEI and the full ownership by the non-state social organization. In this case, the non-state social organization was usually a private company with no government backgrounds. This has become the choice of quite a few independent colleges, mainly those with a private investing company as a founding partner. The differences in how to run the school between the public HEI and the partnering private company might cause some incoherent policy making and eventually parting of partnership. With the more strict regulations, it has become harder to rely on the public HEIs' resources to attract students. Therefore, some chose to transform into a pure minban HEI and stop living in the grey area between minban and public. According to the Ministry of Education, the number of independent colleges decreased from 323 in 2010 to 266 in 2016, which meant there were about 57 colleges breaking away from the sponsoring public HEIs and turning into a pure minban HEI. This is about one fifth of the total number (China Youth Daily, 2016).[9] Therefore, the transformation is going on at a significant extent. So far, there are no independent colleges choosing the other option of termination or merging.

One important point relating to the ambiguous identity of independent colleges is that the 2008 document, on the one hand, states independent colleges belong to the "public welfare establishments," which probably meant profit-making should not be the goal. On the other hand, it states that independent colleges are an important part of

[9]Hubei, Jiangsu and Zhejiang are the top three provinces with the most amount of independent colleges. Since 2008, 14 independent colleges in Hubei have transformed into traditional minban HEIs. In Jiangsu, only one was transformed in 2011. In Zhejiang, Wenzhou University City College was transformed into Wenzhou Business College in 2016. The reason for the high number of transforming in provinces like Hubei is that quite a number of these independent colleges have private partners, who are more willing to choose transforming so as to gain the full ownership of the institution and fundamentally solve the management disputes with the public university partner. In the case of provinces, such as Zhejiang and Jiangsu, the majority of the independent colleges are, in fact, fully owned by the public HEIs, who are more likely to maintain the tie and treat the independent college as an affiliated education entity.

the minban higher education sector and the investor should be allowed to receive "reasonable return" after deducting the operation cost, the development funds and the other necessary costs. This contradiction can also be found in the Law of Promoting Minban (non-state/privately run) Education. To this day, the ambiguous phrase of "reasonable return" is still an unsolved debatable issue among scholars in China. Should the minban education sector be allowed to treat education as a kind of investment and receive returns at a rate reasonable for investors? Or should the minban education development be fundamentally seen as an education endeavor with great implications for public good? Probably the precondition for "reasonable return" is to carry on the normal operation and development of education within the institution. But how to make the call about the extent of normal operation and development can lead to some differences in understanding.

Aftermath of the 2008 Document

In the case of independent colleges, the state taking the lead in regulation and guidance and the public HEIs keeping their roles in managing and operating the school seem to direct the reform towards the public side with a goal to serve the needs of the general public and assist the regional economic development. Therefore, like the "one country, two systems" policy, as long as the independent colleges contribute to the strategic goal of higher education expansion under the guidance of the state regulations, the nature of being public or minban might not matter much or can be at least put behind the paramount strategic goal. The policy logic is pragmatic and serves the overall strategy of the nation.

Based on the 2008 document, many independent colleges have been seeking a feasible path for their survival and development with the policy document pushing them to comply with the rules. From Table 3.1, it can be found from 2010 on the number of independent colleges has been decreasing and the traditional minban bachelor degree HEIs has increased from 48 to 148. Actually, 57 of the 100

newly-established minban HEIs are the ones transformed from former independent colleges. They chose to go on a full private ownership path by breaking all the ties with the public HEIs. However, many have chosen to continue the path of being an independent college. Jiang Su (24 ICs in 2018) and Zhejiang (21 ICs in 2018) are the two major provinces maintaining the development path of independent colleges. Many of them keep implicit, if not explicit, ties with the sponsoring public HEIs and they find ways to partner up with local governments to meet the requirements for campus size and upgrade their institutional competitiveness. And despite the decrease in the number of independent colleges since 2010, the number of enrolled students in independent colleges climbed a little bit and has stabilized about 2.6 million, which is about 40 percent of all minban HEI enrolled students and 10 percent of all college enrolled students in 2016. Therefore, while the transformation period has raised the bar for founding and running independent colleges, they are still a significant part of China's higher education and their continued development tells a lot about the privatization experience with Chinese characteristics, featuring **pragmatism, hybridization, and state guidance**.

The data in the following offers a broad chronologically comparative view of the changing HE structure in China. What is obvious here is the increasing HE participation rate (closing to 50%) and the expanding college enrolled students (the world's largest body of college enrolled students). Overall speaking, the expansion of HE is still continuing. The enrolled degree awarding college students number has reached 27.53 million, which is more than two times as many as the number of college enrolled students in U.S. However, a careful study at the minban HEIs and their students' number shows their marginal position in the whole HE system. Only 161 traditional minban HEIs can award Bachelor degrees, if independent colleges are counted separately.

When we take a look at the independent colleges, its total number has almost peaked in the year of 2008, which is the year the 2008 regulation document was issued. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that the regulation document has had a significant impact on the growth of independent colleges. The total number has been

decreasing since 2010 and some independent colleges in the past 8 or 9 years have decided to transform into traditional minban HEIs through decoupling with the founding public HEIs. Therefore, a big part of the increase in the number of traditional minban HEIs can be attributed to this transformation phenomenon (the number increases from 47 in 2008 to 161 in 2017). It is fair to say the past decade for independent colleges has been an uneasy one characterized by regulation, seeking development paths fitting the regulations and diligently maintaining the status quo achieved in the first 10 years. For many, when facing the dilemma of going total minban or keeping the public ownership, it is somehow instinctive to maintain the public gene, given the origin of most independent colleges and the public dominant nature of China's HE system.

Table 3.1 Minban HEIs Data in China

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
No. of IC enrolled students (unit: million)	0.69	1.07	1.47	1.87	2.15	2.45	2.6	2.67
No. of minban HEIs enrolled students (unit: million)			2.8	3.49	4.01	4.46	4.77	5.05
No. of IC	249	295	318	318	322	322	323	309
No. of Minban Bachelor Degree HEIs(excluding IC)	9	27	29	30	47	48	48	79
Total No. of Bachelor Degree HEIs	684	701	720	740	1079	1090	1112	1129
Total No. of college enrolled students (unit: million)	13.33	15.61	17.39	18.84	20.21	21.44	22.31	23.08
Higher Education Participation Rate	19%	21%	22%	23%	23.3%	24.20%	26.5%	26.9%

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of IC enrolled students (unit: million)	2.78	2.76	2.69	2.59	N/A	N/A
No. of minban HEIs enrolled students (unit: million)	5.33	5.57	5.87	6.1	6.12	6.28
No. of IC	303	292	283	275	266	265
No. of Minban Bachelor Degree HEIs(excluding IC)	87	100	137	148	158	161
Total No. of Bachelor Degree HEIs	1145	1170	1202	1219	1237	1243
Total No. of college enrolled students (unit: million)	23.9	24.7	25.47	26.25	26.96	27.53
Higher Education Participation Rate	30%	34.5%	37.5%	40%	42.7%	45.7%

Note: Independent Colleges began to be officially included as a Bachelor Degree awarding HEI in statistics since 2008 because this is the beginning year when many ICs started to award degrees bearing their own college names, instead of those of the sponsoring public HEIs. Here the number of Bachelor Degree HEIs from 2004 to 2007 does not include ICs; it includes ICs from 2008 to 2017. The sudden increase of the number of bachelor degree HEIs is due to the inclusion of ICs in the statistical information by the Ministry of Education. Also the number for the minban HEIs enrolled students includes both 4 year bachelor degree and 2-3 year associate degree college students. The number of college enrolled students includes those enrolled in both 4 year HEIs and 2-3 year associate degree college students and does not include those enrolled in exam preparation adult education institutions. Data was collected from Ministry of Education Statistics.

Data Retrieved from Ministry of Education Online
http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A03/moe_560/jytjsj_2016/

Figure 3.1 Map of Independent Colleges in China

Note: Distribution of Independent Colleges in China (total number: 275 in 2015)

Data Retrieved from China Independent Colleges Online

http://www.cicol.cn/shownews.asp?id=4029 on January 17, 2016.

After narrating the historical development path of independent colleges, in the following, I will explain the two major running models among independent colleges, which shall be important for understanding the true nature of these institutions.

Two Types of Running Models: Public Type and Minban (Private) Type

The 2003 and 2008 documents seem to have pointed the minban direction for independent colleges and the Ministry also include them as a form of minban HEIs in the statistical reports. However, due to the important role played by the founding public universities, most of them are quite different from traditional minban HEIs and they form a unique group with their distinctive history and development.

In explaining the running models of these independent colleges, Li Wang gives

two models: public-owned model and public-private collaboration model (Wang, 2014). The former has a full public ownership and no participation from private partners. The latter has private partners being one of the founders and the ownership structure is more complicated with possibility to incur disputes in management. I call the former one public-type independent colleges and the latter minban (private)-type independent colleges. And I further divide them into four different partnership models, as showed in the following typography.

1. Partnership model for public-type independent colleges
   Public HEI
   Public HEI + other public forces
2. Partnership model for minban (private)-type independent colleges
   Public HEI + private enterprise
   Public HEI + local government + private enterprise

The public-type are the ones initially founded solely by a public university or by a public university and a public partner. The public partner can be a local government or a public-owned enterprise with local government backgrounds. For example, Zhejiang University City College was founded mainly by Zhejiang University and Hangzhou municipal government with another local public-owned telecom enterprise being the third partner. Although it has three partners, the Hangzhou government and the local telecom enterprise are both local public partners. For the full public university ownership model, Keyi College of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University was initially founded by the sponsoring public university. Because the 2008 regulation requires a non-state social organization as a partner, Zhejiang Sci-Tech University set up a non-operational education investment company fully owned by itself and signed the company as a non-state partner. Those independent colleges, first founded by only the public university itself before 2008, commonly used this method to fulfill the requirement indicated in the 2008 document. They are, de facto, fully owned by the sponsoring public HEIs.

Also, before 2008 there were independent colleges founded by the partnership

between a public university and a local government. In this case, the local government provided land, facilities and even funding to attract the prestigious public university to set up a secondary college in the city. It was deemed a partnership between two strong public partners, beneficial for the long term development of the city. In another word, they are publicly owned institutions running under the minban mechanism (fee charging and cost-recovery). In Zhejiang, the two independent colleges affiliated with Zhejiang University are such examples. Nankai University Binghai College in Tianjin and Beijing Normal University Zhuhai in Guangdong are the examples in other parts of China. In order to fulfill the requirement in the 2008 document, some had the local government set up or ask a public-owned urban investment company to sign into the partnership and the initial partnership between the public HEI and the local government was protected in such a way.

The minban (private)-type are the ones joined by a private partner. In this kind of partnership model, the public HEI invests with invisible assets, such as academic and administrative management as well as social reputation. The private enterprise invests with visible assets, such as land, cash and facilities. Because of the participation of a private partner, the institution has a stronger drive to seek "reasonable returns." The public university and the private enterprise could have disagreements about the distribution of educational income. There were instances in which the private enterprise expressed grievances about the 30 percent cut from the income as an annual fee for administrative cost. Almost all transformed former independent colleges belonged to this type. The private partner made the decision to break the partnership and transform into a traditional minban HEI with a full private ownership. Therefore, the minban-type independent colleges can be less stable. Their social reputation and future development can be undermined because of the disputes between partners and the excessive impulse for "returns." After the 2008 document, these institutions have been experiencing some real difficulties. A few private enterprises sold their shares to the public university to withdraw and the institutions turned to be fully owned by the public university.

Wenzhou University City College was transformed into Wenzhou Business

College, a traditional minban HEI, in 2016. The private partner, Wenzhou Wenbo Investment Company, stopped the partnership with Wenzhou University and applied for the transformation with the Ministry. This is the only transformed independent college in Zhejiang. In 2016, besides Wenzhou University City College, there were eight other independent colleges ratified to transform into traditional minban HEIs. There were three from Hubei and three from Henan (Ministry of Education, 2016).

The partnership model with the joining of both local government and a private enterprise is not common, since this might cause bigger difficulty for coordination and agreement among the three partners. In Zhejiang, Tongji University Zhejiang College is the only one founded by Tongji University, Jiaxing municipal government and Hongda Group Co. in 2008. So far, there is no sign of any change with the current partnership structure.

In the following, I will narrow down our focus on the independent colleges in Zhejiang Province. Zhejiang model, which falls into the first category—the public type independent colleges, is considered as the one receiving more positive nodding and enjoying better stability among all the independent colleges in China. Therefore, it is likely the future of independent colleges can be found in the study of those in Zhejiang.

Independent Colleges in Zhejiang

Regional Background and Rise of Independent Colleges in Zhejiang

Zhejiang Province is located in the East Coast of China and is a key province in the Shanghai-centered economic circle of the Yangtze River Delta, which is believed to be the most developed region in China and has the most active private economy. In 2015 Zhejiang's GDP grew about 8 percent to 4.28 trillion RMB (approximately 625 billion USD), ranked fourth nationally after Guangdong, Jiangsu and Shandong. In terms of per capita income, Zhejiang stood at 38,529 RMB (approximately 5,600 USD) in 2016, ranked only after Shanghai and Beijing (National Bureau of Statistics,

2016; Zhejiang Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Therefore, people in Zhejiang are relatively more receptive to non-state social and economic innovations and they are more likely to afford the high tuition charged by minban institutions (approximately between 18,000 and 24,000 RMB/year).

In addition, Zhejiang, similar to provinces, such as Jiangsu and Hubei, has limited higher education resources. There is only one nationally prestigious public university, included in the national 985 and 211 project. Before 1999 there were only about 30 Bachelor level HEIs, which were providing college opportunities for a province with a population of over 40 million (Zhejiang Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2000). Therefore, the economic, social and educational conditions in Zhejiang provided the soil for the rise of independent colleges in Zhejiang.

Between 1999 and 2003 there were 18 independent colleges established in Zhejiang. And the average institutional enrollment grew from a few hundred at the first year to about 10 thousand within one decade. In 2015, independent colleges in Zhejiang admitted 43 thousand students, making up 28% of the total admission of Bachelor level HEIs in Zhejiang. The number of total enrolled students in independent colleges reached 173 thousand, making up 29% of the total enrolled students among Bachelor level HEIs in Zhejiang. Also, independent colleges constituted 90% of the minban Bachelor level HEIs in Zhejiang, while majority of the minban HEIs still operate at the vocational college level, offering two-three years college learning experiences (Zhejiang Bureau of Education, 2015). Therefore, independent colleges have not only contributed greatly to the massification experience, but constituted a significant force in four year Bachelor level education in Zhejiang Province. Many ordinary students and their families have been able to realize their college dreams because of these independent colleges, though the tuition cost is about three times as much as that of public universities.

Table 3.2 2015 Minban HEIs Data in Zhejiang Province

	No. of Institutions	**No. of Graduating Students**	**No. of Enrolled Students**	**No. of Faculty and Staff**
Independent Colleges	22	41285	173,557	11,207
Total Minban Bachelor level HEIs (including Independent Colleges)	25	57238	248,036	16,056
Total Regular Bachelor Degree HEIs	58	140,318	608,378	64,372
Total HEIs (including vocational colleges) 108263,981991,14988,744				

Retrieved from Zhejiang Bureau of Education http://www.zjedu.gov.cn/type/394.html

Zhejiang Model

Zhejiang's independent colleges and their total number grew quickly from 1999 to 2003 and remained relatively stable since 2008, though the impact of the 2008 document has forced many colleges to undergo changes to meet the requirements. Wenzhou University City College is the only one transformed into traditional minban HEI. Therefore, the "Zhejiang model" has been considered a successful one, which can be studied and copied in other provinces.

They key character of the Zhejiang model is being publicly owned and privately run. They fall into the public-type independent colleges. Among the 22 independent colleges, 16 were initially founded solely by the public HEIs, which allowed the colleges to use the same campuses and got paid for using the facilities. With the 2003 and 2008 documents, they have started to look for other public partner possibilities (local government preferably in Zhejiang's case) or set up an education investment company under the public HEI to meet the requirement. Fundamentally, these colleges are still public owned and key decisions are made by the public HEIs. One

proof is that the independent college president is usually selected by the public university and affiliated with the personnel structure of the public university, though the appointment must also be approved by the board (Wang, 2012; Xu, 2011; Zhang, 2009).

There are several advantages with the Zhejiang model. One is to ensure that the college serves the public good and profit-making is not the priority. Especially after 2008, the fiscal independence and independent campus are required. The public university has stopped charging fees for using the facilities on campus, when the independent colleges gradually moved out of the public university campus. Therefore, almost all the tuition income can be used for the educational development of the college. However, in the minban (private)-type independent colleges, disputes over distribution of income can become a problem hindering the long term sustainable development of the institution.

Secondly, the educational quality can be better safeguarded when the public HEIs are the main decision makers in how to run the college. Without a private partner trying to insert its own agendas, the independent colleges benefit more directly from sharing the educational resources (faculty, research capacity, administrative experience, etc.) of the public HEIs. In Zhejiang, the two independent colleges under Zhejiang University and the one under Zhejiang University of Technology have long kept themselves among the top 5 of the 300 or so independent colleges. In addition, 15 out of the 22 independent colleges in Zhejiang are listed among the top 100 independent colleges in China (Zhejiang Provincial Education Department, 2016). The overall academic performances of independent colleges in Zhejiang surpass the others.

Zhejiang model also has its demerits. One is the controversy over the public ownership. There are voices in public questioning the public ownership for a minban HEI. Is the public HEI trying to earn extra income through independent colleges running under the minban mechanism? Does it mean unfair competition for other minban HEIs? The 2008 document seems to require the participation of a non-state social organization to count independent colleges as minban HEIs. However, it is hard

to make changes to the ownership structure and many find ways to circumvent the requirement. The other barriers include over-reliance on the public HEI and lack of ability to develop an educational path with its own characters. The over-reliance can lead to the problem of fake independence, which is contrary to the purpose of the 2003 and 2008 documents. Currently, many independent colleges still rely on the academic and administrative resources of the public HEIs to set up or upgrade academic programs and to design administrative rules. In the long run it is restraining the independent colleges from taking innovative steps and finding a path suitable for themselves.

All in all, the Zhejiang model, being publicly owned and privately run, is a relatively successful approach to establishing and running independent colleges. The public type independent colleges are becoming the main force among the 266 independent colleges in China, when the private type ones are taking the path of transforming into traditional minban HEIs with a full private ownership. This trend, to some extent, establishes the dominant role of public ownership among independent colleges. In the following, I will talk about the relocation movement, which seems to solidify the public ownership through partnering up with different lower-level local governments.

Moving Out of Hangzhou

This campus relocation movement was also triggered by the 2008 document, in which a hard requirement asks all independent colleges to meet the campus size requirement of 500 mu. In 2008, most of these colleges shared campuses with the sponsoring public HEIs. To survive as an independent college, they must find new space. Considering the limited land resources in the provincial capital of Hangzhou, neighboring towns or counties have become the possible places to find new campuses in order to pass the document requirement hurdle.

Since 2008, there are 6 independent colleges having planned or already moved

into the new campuses. Keyi College of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University is such an example. It received the land support from Shangyu District Government of Shaoxing City in 2015 and embarked on a new development journey on the brand new campus in 2017. The new campus is located in a local new economic development zone and is about one hour drive from Hangzhou. Many of these relocation plans have to fit into the local zoning or development plan for a university town or a new economic development zone. They also fit well into the provincial plan of optimizing the distribution of higher education resources in the province, which is purported to extend the HE resources into local economic zones to both achieve the fairer distribution and strengthen the HE's support to local economic development(Zhejiang Provincial Education Department, 2016). Therefore, this relocation movement is desirable for both the independent colleges and local governments.

It is important to note that one result of this relocation movement is the strengthening of the public ownership. In 1999 Zhejiang University established two independent colleges through partnering with Hangzhou and Ningbo governments. Recently, it seems history is repeating itself. The moving-out independent colleges have established partnership, one way or another, with different levels of local governments. These independent colleges have received support in policy, land and facilities. In the future, this partnership is only going to grow stronger, since one original purpose for the relocation is to connect with local governments and benefit the lower-level local economic development. Another possibility is the growing independence. With the new campus and new partnership with local governments, these independent colleges might have opportunities to think of academic and administrative improvements to better fit into their new roles. Therefore, finding a path suitable for its own is a possible outcome.

The moving out is a sign that independent colleges are turning "independent" and the transformation process is going to be a continuous one. To February of 2016 there are already 12 independent colleges in process of moving out to meet the requirement. Three have completed the relocation; eight new campuses are under construction and one has just reached the campus moving agreement (Zhejiang Education Daily, 2016).

Although in the 2008 document there are eight aspects of independence specified and there is a five year time limit to reach the goal of independence, finding an appropriate new campus and undergoing partnership changes are surly not that easy. Until 2016 nationally only 43 realized the independence requirements in the 2008 document and passed the regulation check. Majority are still in the process of adjustment. In Zhejiang, *Opinions on Supporting Development of Independent Colleges in Zhejiang* was passed in May, 2016 to push the regulation process based on the 2008 national document and offer policy and funding support on the basis of minban HEI standards to independent colleges passing the regulation check. On the one hand, the provincial document asks all the independent colleges to speed up the "independence" process by following the eight aspects of independence; on the other hand, it offers encouraging policy support for those successfully passing the check, including 1) fiscal subsidies; 2) tax deduction and 3) greater flexibility in setting tuition and fee charging standards. So far there are only four colleges in Zhejiang that have passed the check, including 1) Zhejiang University City College, 2) Ningbo Institute of Technology, Zhejiang University, 3) Zhijiang College, Zhejiang University of Technology and 4) Jiyang Collage of Zhejiang A&F University (Zhejiang Provincial Education Department, 2016).

Therefore, eight years after the 2008 document, the moving out process starting after 2008 is still ongoing, which demonstrates the painful and overdue process of achieving independence. More independent colleges are seeking government support or even partnership to complete the process, since relying on itself and the sponsoring public HEI is almost impossible to achieve the goal of expanding campus size and improving education facilities. Through this process, independent colleges begin to reduce their reliance on the mother public HEIs. However, the separation in visible aspects is much easier than the separation in invisible aspects, which can take a much longer time and much more adjustments than moving to a new campus, if not impossible. As will be discussed in the following two chapters, especially the chapter on the faculty's perception on independent colleges, the implicit ties between independent colleges and their parent public HEIs are more influential in the soft

areas, such as personnel structure, program setup or running, administrative details and so on.

Table 3.3 Independent Colleges Establishing School-Building Cooperative Partnership Ties with Local Governments in Zhejiang

	Name of Independent Colleges (IC)	**School-Building Cooperative Partners (In Addition to the Sponsoring Mother Institution)**
1	Zhejiang University City College	Hangzhou Municipal Government (1999)
2	Ningbo Institute of Technology, Zhejiang University	Ningbo Municipal Government (1999)
3	College of Science & Technology, Ningbo University	Cixi Municipal Government (2016)
4	Bingjiang College of Zhejiang Chinese Medical University	Fuyang District Government (2009)
5	China JiliangUniversity, College of Modern Science and Technology	Tonglu County Government (2016)
6	Zhejiang Gongshang University, Hangzhou College of Commerce	Tonglu County Government (2012)
7	Zhijiang College, Zhejiang University of Technology	ShaoxingKeqiao District Government (2012)
8	Keyi College of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University	ShaoxingShangyu District Government (2015)
9	Shanghai University of Finance & Economics, Zhejiang College	Zhezhong Education Investment CO. (a Jinhua municipal government owned corporation) (2009)
10	QiuZhen School of Huzhou Teachers College	Huzhou City Construction Investment Group Co. (a Huzhou municipal government owned corporation) (2011)
11	TongjiUniversity, Zhejiang College	Jiangxing Municipal Government; Hongda Stockholding Group Co. (2008)
12	Wenzhou University, City College transferred into Wenzhou Business College in 2016, divesting from Wenzhou University.	Zhejiang Wenbo Investment Development Co. (1999)

Note: According to the 2008 regulation, independent colleges must have a non-public "social force" partner to qualify as a minban institution. The above colleges usually signed the partnership agreement with the state-owned corporation under the local government, which meets the requirement in paper and gains favorable policy/land support from the local government. The local government benefits by having a HEI supporting local economic and cultural development.

Summary

As showed above, independent colleges are a key product of China's higher education massification. Emerging at the beginning year (1999) of the college admission jump-rise, they experienced a golden age of development from 1999 to 2008, accompanied by under-regulation and social controversies. Their growth slowed down when the state intervened to set up stricter requirements in order to guide them onto a path of "independence." Since then, independent colleges have been adjusting and restructuring to ensure their continuous survival and development.

The contribution of these colleges to China's quick massification at a time of limited public resources should not be understated. The combination of the active role of public HEIs, in some cases with the participation of local governments, and the market-oriented fee charging mechanism not only proves to be a practical model but also tells a lot about the privatization experience with Chinese characteristics.

Today, they have become an important part of China's higher education that cannot be ignored. In less than 20 years, they have consisted of over half of the minban Bachelor level HEIs. With an advantageous birth background, they stay in the middle of China's higher education hierarchy with the traditional minban HEIs at the bottom and the key public universities on the top. Most of them have been trying to find a way to develop a path of their own by focusing on practical-application-oriented teaching and grounding their programs to meet the social and economic needs. A path of their own can also set their programs apart from the research-oriented programs offered at the key public HEIs.

Zhejiang, being a province with a strong private economy, has witnessed a relatively successful development of independent colleges since 1999. The public ownership model, though having its demerits and controversies, has proved to be a practical and stable endeavor. It is very likely that the remaining independent colleges will probably turn to be more public if the public HEIs continue to own and de facto

run these colleges. In the next chapter, I will look into the physical aspects of an independent college in Zhejiang to offer a close-up study of its institutional nature and some salient aspects of the institutional operation. The reason to choose this institution is mainly its representativeness in explaining the “Zhejiang model” -- the public type independent college model.

Chapter 4 Independent Colleges in Zhejiang: The Portrait of Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC)

Vignette: Building Zhejiang Polytechnic Institute (Polytechnic Institute of Zhejiang University）on the Campus of ZUCC

This was the spring of 2017. The northern campus of ZUCC was undergoing some construction project. A section of the undeveloped woods was bulldozed for a new parking area and a make-shift construction command center. The BeiXiu (North Elegance) Building, which had been used as a restaurant capable of holding events, such as graduation banquets, for ten years, was currently under renovation to be ready to serve as the main teaching and administration building for the Zhejiang Polytechnic Institute & the Polytechnic Institute of Zhejiang University in the coming September. Also, at the gate of a Mercedes-Benz dealer's building, which was right next to the future-to-be teaching building, a sign was put up to inform the customers about the relocation. Obviously, this section of the land, owned by ZUCC and leased to the Benz dealer, was about to be taken back to also get ready for the use of the planned polytechnic institute under Zhejiang University.

There was no public announcement on the campus to explain the bustling construction at the very north end. Many faculty and students continued to do what they were supposed to do in this college without taking much notice of the often-seen construction here and there. After all, construction seems to be a rather normal and daily thing in China, especially for a college with a history of less than 20 years. However, there were some private discussions among faculty and staff about what the construction was for and what the planned polytechnic institute actually was going to be.

During these discussions, there were several things which were clear and some concerns which were unsolved. The clear part included that 1) this was an important higher education project co-sponsored by Zhejiang University and Zhejiang provincial government; 2) as a project backed by the provincial government, the planned institute enjoyed a higher affiliation status in comparison to ZUCC, which has a municipal level affiliation; 3) it was certain that the new polytechnic institute would recruit its first group of students in September, 2017. The concerns included 1) how the two institutions would share the same campus; 2) how to understand the triangle relationship between ZUCC, Zhejiang University and the polytechnic institute; and 3) what all this was going to mean for ZUCC. Nobody could truly answer these concerns, but it was certain that ZUCC should cooperate in the possible ways it could since this new institute was a huge initiative backed by Zhejiang University and the provincial government. And it might even be of much bigger significance in the industrial transformation and manufacturing upgrading of the country.

In May of 2015, the state council of China published the *Made in China 2025* guidance paper to turn China into a manufacturing power through upgrading and innovating the manufacturing industry. Innovation, quality, green development, structural optimization and talents were the five key guiding principles in this paper. Smart manufacturing and industry 4.0 became the catchwords for media with Premier Li Keqiang's third visit to Europe in July, 2015. In March, 2016, Guang Ming Daily, a major national government newspaper, published a piece advocating that in order to push for the upgrading of "Made in China" China must accelerate the education of high-end engineering talents. Therefore, in this critical moment of China's manufacturing upgrading, it seemed very logical to follow the guidance from the top leadership to build engineering institutions to educate the badly-needed top-notch technical & engineering talents. Actually, it became very timely and politically keen-minded to build the Zhejiang Polytechnic Institute. The selection of a site and seeking the cooperation from ZUCC became only secondary to the successful establishment of an institutional project approved and sponsored by the provincial government and the ministerial level Zhejiang University, both of which have the

keen knowledge about the national strategic plan for the next ten or even twenty years.

In this section, building on Schein's organizational culture framework, I will explain the "physical" dimension of Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC). As the above vignette reveals, the public forces, such as the local government, Zhejiang University and the state policy, play a paramount role in shaping the "physical" features of the institution. The political authority hierarchy dictates the power of voice and determines the power structure. In this small story, ZUCC and the faculty working in it are very much under the influence of the powerful public forces from outside. It probably reminds us that the privatization or marketization in China is less the one kind with decentralization and devolution of power than the one kind with the guidance or leadership from the state.

Specifically, I will look into ZUCC's physical location, sponsoring institution, major configuration, tuition structure, personnel system and other featured characteristics. These salient aspects of the institution are the tangible "artifacts" embodying the institutional environment and they are also the manifestation of the "espoused value" of the institution (Schein, 1992). They appear in the recruiting brochure, on the website pages and in the institutional summary for the 15th anniversary. On the open campus day, these physical artifacts are also visible to send a strong public message about the cultural identity of the institution. These artifacts tell how the institution portrays itself and establishes the key shared cultural assumption to convey to the prospective students and visitors in order to form an institutional cultural impression on them (Spradley, 1980; Tierney, 1988, Clark, 1987). In the following, I will try to present the shared institutional portrait by exploring the "physical" characteristics in six areas, including institutional origin, geographical location, linkage to Zhejiang U, academic programs, tuition and personnel system. It is hoped that through this narrative portrait, the nature of ZUCC, or even the nature of

the public type independent colleges can be better understood for the audience.

Institutional Origin

Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC) was first established in July, 1999. The year of 1999, probably, is the demarcation line for China's massification of HE. In 1997, the number of China's higher education entering students reached 1 million, after over ten years' accumulating growth under this 1 million line. This number shot from 1.08 million in 1998 to 1.6 million in 1999. This was about a 60% percent increase in the number of college-entering students, which was unprecedented and is still the highest annual increase in terms of higher education expansion rate. ZUCC, as one of the first independent colleges in China, was called a secondary college before 2003, implying its subsidiary affiliation to the sponsoring Zhejiang University. And its establishment met the historical task of HE expansion and offered HE opportunities to the numerous college-aspiring families, who were more than willing to pay the full tuition in order to realize the college dream.

Another key background information is the merging of the four national key universities in Hangzhou in 1998 – Zhejiang University, Hangzhou University, Zhejiang Agricultural University and Zhejiang Medical University, so as to form the more academically comprehensive and competitive Zhejiang University. With China's 211 project starting in 1995 and 985 project in 1998, many top universities were keen to reform themselves and improve their academic quality to meet the national goal of "building the first class universities with international competitiveness" (Rhoads, 2014). The new Zhejiang University was one of the most prominent cases of university merging at the time. Although the merging almost immediately brought Zhejiang University to a much higher ranking among all the Chinese universities, the side effects included the disappearance of three key universities in Hangzhou and the redundancy of faculty in the new university.

To both improve the size of higher education provision for the Zhejiang Province and to divert the excessive number of faculty, Zhejiang University City College was founded under the auspices of Zhejiang University and Hangzhou Municipal Government. Zhejiang Telecomm Industry CO., as the social force (basically it was also a state-owned enterprise), co-sponsored the founding with some initial land and building assets. Therefore, Zhejiang University City College has a clear public ownership with no private individuals or enterprises sitting on the board of the school. This ownership nature explains many of the influences from and connections with the public forces. However, despite the public ownership, the college has been running as a minban HEI charging a much higher tuition than normal public universities. This is called the cost-recovery model, or the publicly owned and privately run (Gong You Min Ban) model by many experts in China (Liu, 2003; Liu, 2014; Wen, 2005). As discussed in the previous chapter, this is purported to mobilize the family funding and achieve the HE expansion with lower state funding. Zhejiang University, in this case, serves as the academic quality guardian and ensures the market attraction. In a significant way, it backs up the charging of high tuition. To no surprise, this hybrid model is considered innovative by some and unfathomably strange by others. Learning about its nature and its many manifestations will help us understand the privatization of HE with Chinese characteristics.

Growing in the massification period of China's HE, ZUCC has turned into a college covering 165 acres (1000 mu) of land and educating about thirteen thousand degree-earning students with nine academic schools ranging from computer science to media and law. From 2008 on, ZUCC has started to award bachelor degrees bearing its full college name, instead of the ones with the name of Zhejiang University, which has been part of the transformation to become increasingly independent under the 2008 Regulation Document (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Located in a Famed City– Geographic Advantage

As a college chiefly designed and established by the Hangzhou municipal government and the national key Zhejiang University, ZUCC has been proud of its both connections and used them in publicity materials to show the backing from both the local government and the well-known Zhejiang University. As a matter of fact, it has become an important development strategy to strengthen the ties with the two major founders so as to improve the institutional image among the public and gain teaching/research resources. In Chinese, it is called the strategy of Ming Chen, Ming Xiao, namely famed city, famed university. This policy emphasis has not only brought public recognition, but contributed to the fast growth in its campus size and academic programs in a short time.

The city of Hangzhou, being the capital of Zhejiang Province, has traditionally been known for its strength in tourism and cultural heritage. In recent years, high-tech or Internet industry has become a major advantage with companies, such as Alibaba, emerging and growing fast. With a population of 9 million, its GDP has surpassed one trillion RMB in 2015, ranked the 10^{th} among all the cities in China (Hangzhou Statistical Data). Therefore, it is one of the major industrial cities in the Yangtze River Delta region, and it has a strong drawing power for talents from the region to study and live. Understandably, located in Hangzhou, ZUCC enjoys a geographical advantage in recruiting students residing in Zhejiang Province and drawing high quality talents into its faculty and staff team. This geographical advantage logic also works for other major cities in China, which are usually the homes of many key universities. Beijing and Shanghai are the cities with the most 985 and 211 universities, which help to push the economic development of these cities. On the other hand, the economic and cultural status of these cities also provides the favorable growth environment for these key universities. In one word, geographic location matters.

In the case of ZUCC, Hangzhou government, being one of its founders, has offered a great deal of support for ZUCC in terms of its education/research resources.

Since 2003, thirteen programs at ZUCC have gradually been designated as the Hangzhou municipal key programs and received funding annually. Also, twelve science research labs have been named the municipal level key labs and two social science research centers have become the municipal key research bases, most of which happened after 2008. Considering there are altogether about forty degree programs and nineteen research centers at ZUCC, the support from the Hangzhou government is substantial.

One more thing to note here is that these municipal supported programs and research centers also serve to help the urban economic and cultural development. For example, the Regional Economic Development and Evolution Simulation Lab was set up in 2013 as a key lab to help with the economic and city planning of the region. The Tourism Development and Law Research Center was set up in 2011 to provide policy suggestions for this traditional tourism city. In many different occasions, ZUCC has announced its goal as educating the application and innovation oriented talents, who can match the local social needs and contribute to the regional economic development. Therefore, this support between the college and the local government goes both ways.

Supported by a Famed University – Link to Zhejiang University

Zhejiang University is the other major founder and the chief planner for the college. This salient connection is not only visible in the college name and symbol, but also observable in student academic affairs, programs, and faculty constitution.

The “pathway” policy, targeting at the entering students, offers the opportunity to transfer to Zhejiang University in the second year. The first year students have to participate in two subjects tests at the end of the each semester for the first year (math and English for humanities majors; math and physics for science majors). Also their GPA must rank above the top 10%. After an interview process, only 1% of the entering students are allowed to transfer and register with Zhejiang University. And there is a probation process when they successfully transfer, during which the selected

students will be returned to ZUCC if there is any problem in academic performance. Therefore, it is a very strictly designed transfer policy with only about a dozen students who can make the pathway. However, with China's highly pressured Gaokao culture and great aspirations for a prestigious university degree, many students are drawn to ZUCC in order to try again to enter the prestigious Zhejiang University, even though the chance is very slim. In many recruiting materials and sessions, the "pathway" policy is publicized and explained to curious students hoping to have a second chance. In fact, every year quite a few high-scoring students, whose scores allow them to go to the first tier universities charging public tuitions, still choose to enter ZUCC with the determination that if given a second chance they can earn themselves a seat in the top university.

In terms of academic programs, there are nine schools and forty degree programs at ZUCC and some of them draw teaching and faculty resources from Zhejiang University. The medical school is a very typical example. It has been very much reliant on the teaching resources from Zhejiang U, because medical programs are usually costly to set up and Zhejiang U has the most expansive medical teaching resources in the whole province. Established around 2008, the medical school has three degree programs and enrolls over 1400 students. The current dean, graduated and having worked at Zhejiang University for many years, is also a graduate advisor for PhD students at Zhejiang University. The school frequently invites professors and doctors from ZJU and the three ZJU affiliated hospitals to offer academic and practical courses. Due to the high cost of building medical labs, the school sets up cooperative teaching programs with the medical labs at ZJU's campus to send the senior students to have lab experiences there. These students study in the same lab with ZJU students. Also, every semester the nursing program openly selects students to work as interns at ZJU affiliated hospitals, which may result in formal employment at graduation.

The other schools and programs have their respective cooperation with ZJU at different degrees. If it is not as direct as students going to ZJU to use a lab there, it could be faculty attending academic forum or conferences at ZJU or inviting ZJU

faculty to do an academic lecture at ZUCC. After all, both institutions are located at Hangzhou and the physical vicinity brings the convenience for exchange and cooperation.

Another notable cooperation in academic programs is the joint programs for master students. ZUCC, as a four year undergraduate institution, does not have the authorization to accept master students. With the support from ZJU, some qualified ZUCC faculty can apply for being a tutor for master degree students at ZJU. If granted tutorship, they are allowed to take master students from ZJU through the joint programs or they can sit on the dissertation board for master students at ZJU. This broadens the academic development path for ZUCC faculty and upgrades the academic quality for ZUCC programs. In 2015, ZUCC faculty participated in the joint programs to help tutoring 90 students from ZJU. In the long run, this kind of cooperation prepares for ZUCC to develop its own master programs if the authorization policy allows in the future.

Faculty and staff constitution is another aspect to see the connection. A vague expression of "drawing upon the ZJU faculty resources" is often seen in different publicized documents to summarize the connection in faculty resources. On the top administrative leadership level, the three principals of ZUCC since 1999 have all previously worked at ZJU and transferred to ZUCC for a new job assignment. In many ways, they shall answer to the administrative leaders at ZJU. For any institutionally significant decisions, they must report to ZJU and seek approval. The current principal of ZUCC, Wu Jian, was a chemist and served as the Dean for Zhu Ke Zhen College of ZJU before she was asked to take the position at ZUCC in 2008.

At the faculty level, there are about 700 teaching faculty at ZUCC, about one third of which have some kind of background associated with ZJU. The senior faculty members are mostly transferred from ZJU during and after the merging to form the new ZJU. For various reasons they chose to leave their former positions at ZJU or other merged institutions to work at this new college. In addition, some faculty graduated from ZJU and joined ZUCC to teach and research afterwards. In some cases, they still work under their PhD tutor, who holds positions at both ZJU and

ZUCC. But one important thing to notice is that at the early stage of ZUCC, those faculty members who transferred from ZJU played an important role in jump-starting academic programs and teaching courses. They used to be the major force in faculty constitution. With stabilization of faculty structure after the merging and restructuring at ZJU, fewer faculty at ZJU chose to transfer to ZUCC. And ZUCC has been increasing its recruiting efforts for young teaching faculty in order to build its own energetic teaching force. Therefore, the size of those senior faculty members with ZJU background is shrinking. But still in the administrative level, the ZJU affiliated faculty members dominate the leadership and are responsible for major institutional decisions.

First-Tier Programs in a Third-Tier College

Before talking about these first-tier programs at ZUCC, it is necessary to understand China's tiered or hierarchical HE system and the related admission policies.

Because of the Gaokao mechanism and the centralized education policy, the HEIs in China do not enjoy the freedom of designing their own admission standards in a market-based HE system, such as the U.S. In each province, all the HEIs and the majors they offer are ranked into several tiers according to the evaluation from the provincial or national academic evaluation office. The tiered ranking strictly limits the lower tier universities to have access to high-scoring students. This is argued by some to be a rigid and unfair hierarchical system, which benefits the high-ranking public HEIs and creates barrier for the low-ranking minban HEIs to compete openly and fairly on the same level in recruiting students.

For example, ZUCC, just like the rest 21 independent colleges in Zhejiang Province, is currently categorized as a HEI to start the recruiting process after the first tier public universities complete the process. In Zhejiang Province, starting from 2013, the previously four tier recruiting system, in which ZUCC was a third tier college in

the recruiting process, has been changed to three tier system, in which ZUCC became a second tier college. According to the Zhejiang reform plan, in 2017 there would be no such distinction and all undergraduate level universities could recruit students from the same pool of students at the same time (Zhejiang Provincial Department of Education, 2014). However, this has not been put into practice at the moment of this writing. Nonetheless, the direction of reform across China is to gradually remove the unequal recruiting system and provide a level ground for both public institutions and minban ones to compete for good students. Also it is a way to gradually eradicate the deeply rooted prejudiced concept about different tiers of colleges and universities, in which minban ones are often stereotyped as having poor education quality and low-achieving students (Ministry of Education, 2015).

However, it is important to note the tiered system has been existing in China since the restoration of Gaokao in 1978. The concepts of "first tier", "second tier" and "third tier" have become so embedded in mind that people in the system habitually use them to tell the quality differences among all the HEIs. The common understanding is that first tier universities are all national key universities charging public tuition, which are obviously most desirable and therefore the most competitive ones. The second tier ones are also public universities, which are less prestigious and usually more regionally known. The third tier ones are those charging high minban tuition and having poor public images. These are the stereotyped images of the three tiers of HEIs, which serve as the reputation guide for students and their parents and create the rigid higher education recruiting system in China. This system and the stereotyping have a lasting influence on students and faculty in the "third tier" minban HEIs.

Table 4.1 Some Exemplary Major Programs Offered at ZUCC and Their Tuitions

Some Major Programs	Tuition
asset evaluation (1st tier)	5300
computer science(1st tier)	6000
civil engineering(1st tier)	6000
Statistics (3rd tier)	17000
Information management (3rd tier)	17000
Architecture (3rd tier)	25000
Finance (3rd tier)	23000
International business (3rd tier)	23000

Note: Information derives from the 2016 ZUCC Student Recruiting Prospectus

Therefore, despite the current policy reform efforts and the institutional background, ZUCC, like many other independent colleges charging high minban tuition, is stereotyped as a "third tier" college by the general public. To a great extent, it seems to confine the institution in a certain level of competition and create a glass ceiling for many minban institutions. This is probably why the administrative leaders of ZUCC try the best to distinguish itself from other third tier independent college and seek any opportunity that can give the institution a level-breaking pull.

Thus, the establishment of some first-tier programs allows ZUCC to recruit students in the first batch together with other national key universities and charge the same subsidized public tuition. It has become its rational choice to find its way out of the third tier and break into the higher tier where it can have access to more talented students and enjoy a refined public image. In a way, the independent colleges offering first tier programs are, to a great extent, leaning towards the public HEIs, because these programs charge public university tuitions, which is less than one third of

minban tuition, and they can recruit high scoring students in the first tier batch.[10] In another word, these are attempts to shorten the gap between the public and minban HEIs and break the stereotype for "third tier" colleges.

In ZUCC's case, there were three first-tier programs being established in 2016. They were asset evaluation, civil engineering and computer science, which altogether recruited 180 students in 2016. This is a number much smaller than the annual student recruiting figure of about 3400. But the college makes great efforts to climb up the hierarchical ladder in order to attract high scoring students and change the stereotypical image. These programs have a symbolic significance in raising the public image of ZUCC and breaking the glass ceiling for "third tier" independent colleges. In 2018, the first-tier programs at ZUCC have expanded to about twenty suddenly after passing the program evaluation of the provincial educational department. It means these programs can all start charging public tuitions and they can recruit students in the first tier batch. This exciting news has given the development path example for other independent colleges. Though the future is uncertain, it is likely more of these colleges in Zhejiang will seek strong public support and break away from the poor image of minban HEIs as third tier colleges.

Cost-based Tuition Charging

Tuition is often used to tell the difference between a public and a minban HEI. ZUCC, like many other independent colleges in China, charges a much higher tuition than the one by a public institution. It is argued that this high tuition creates a barrier for many college-aspiring students to receive higher education and creates the problem for equality (Zha, 2012; Liu, 2012). It is certainly true for many low income families if we take a quick look at the tuition at ZUCC (See Table 4.1).

[10]Currently, among the 22 independent colleges in Zhejiang Province there are three having first-tier programs, two of which are the independent colleges affiliated to Zhejiang University. This shows the importance of having a strong public university as the sponsoring institution for independent colleges. The academic and faculty resource support from Zhejiang University is clearly stated in recruiting materials and provides the foundation for the first-tier programs in the two ZJU-affiliated independent colleges.

As mentioned above, there are three first-tier programs at ZUCC, which charge a tuition from 5300 RMB to 6000 RMB. This is currently the standard tuition for many public universities. According to People's Daily, the average government allocation support for each college student is about 12000 RMB (2016). Therefore, if admitted into public tuition programs, students take up one third of the cost for education and the public funding covers the rest. For the first tier programs at ZUCC, students can enjoy the much lower tuition cost with the government allocation funding. However, in 2016 considering the small number of 160 students these programs recruited, this government funding only amounted to less than 2 million RMB annually.

So for majority of the programs at ZUCC, it charges the minban tuition, which is between 17000 RMB and 23000 RMB. If we do the math, it can be found that this tuition is almost equal to the combined figure of the public tuition (5000RMB) and government allocation support (12000RMB). This probably means the students and their family have to pay up more to cover the average cost for educating a college student. And this number is about three times more than the tuition in a public institution. This is clearly the most salient way to see how a minban college is different from a public one. In my many interviews, students point this out as the most important reason to categorize ZUCC as a minban college. It is through the same tuition lens that the general public identify the difference between public and minban institutions.

Let's take a more macro perspective to explore the tuition question. From 2014 to 2016, ZUCC publicized its revenue and spending (See Table 4.2). The first thing to note is that the tuition has made up a big part of its revenue, which is about 80 percent. This corresponds to the minban character of this college that it mainly draws upon its own funding source to run the school. So in terms of the financial structure, it does run on a minban model and depends mainly on non-public funding.

Table 4.2 Revenue Sources for ZUCC

Unit: million RMB

Year	2014	2015	2016
Public Funding	45	51	56
Tuition	274	269	274
Total	**319**	**320**	**330**

Source: Zhejiang University City College Annual Budget & Spending
http://www.zucc.edu.cn/uploadfile/2016/0315/20160315050323484.pdf

However, one more thing to note here is that ZUCC does receive some funding from the local government. In 2016, this figure has reached 13% of its total revenue. This is greatly a result of its cooperative relationship with the Hangzhou municipal government. Designed as a regional college to serve the regional economic development, ZUCC has developed a close partnership with the local government. From the very beginning, it received the land allocation for its campus site. Now, its public funding enjoys an annual growth since 2013. All this can be attributed to the local Hangzhou government being a sponsoring party. The publicly owned and privately run model explains a certain level of government preference and the annual growth in public funding.

During the interviews, the term of "cost-based tuition charging" or "cost-recovery model" came up quite frequently. It is often used by the interviewees to explain the core feature of the publicly owned and privately run model of ZUCC. Charging the minban tuition to cover the cost is considered a key feature for ZUCC-- the privately run mechanism. It provides the important funding support to the daily operation of the institution. This model, widely adopted in quite many independent colleges, greatly mobilizes the family financial sources and saves the government billions in higher education provision. On the one hand, it does create barrier and pressure for individual families in achieving the college-going dream. On the other hand, it also

allows China's higher education system to upgrade the HE participation rate from 19% in 2004 to 40% in 2015 in one decade or so. Part of this China speed in massification of HE can be attributed to the rise of these independent colleges and the full tuition charging mechanism.

One last thing worth noting is that the full minban tuition has remained at one level since the founding of independent colleges. For ZUCC, the tuition has remained the same since 1999. Considering the inflation and economic growth since 1999, 20000 RMB—the full tuition for most programs, would mean a big fortune in 1999, when the GDP per capita was only about 7,000 RMB. However, in 2016 China's GDP per capita has reached 50,000 RMB. Therefore, it is important to see that the actual tuition adjusted by inflation is decreasing. More and more families are able to pay for this tuition with the economic growth and the increase in family income. And this tuition freezing may be partially a result of the centralized system and the cautious policy making in social welfare aspects so as not to stir up public discontent. Education has been a social welfare field attracting an increasing amount of attention in recent years. Keeping the tuition at a stable level may have some important stabilizing effect for the whole social and economic development.

BianZhi—Public Affiliated Personnel System

In this section, I will discuss the BianZhi concept and the related personnel system at ZUCC. This personnel system has a lot to do with China's past history of public ownership and socialist collective system (Perry and Lu, 1997). To some extent, it is the heritage of the socialist collective period and its reform has been going on for over two decades.

BianZhi (编制) is a term that has been repeatedly mentioned in the interviews with faculty and administrators at ZUCC. In Chinese, literally it means organizing institution. In the context of work units, it is a personnel affiliation with the institution a person works in. As a cultural heritage of the collective ownership period or the

pre-reform and opening era, BianZhi still exerts an important impact on individuals making career choices and institutions recruiting the needed talents, because an affiliation with certain work unit, especially the public one, means stability and security, often deemed desirable for many individuals.

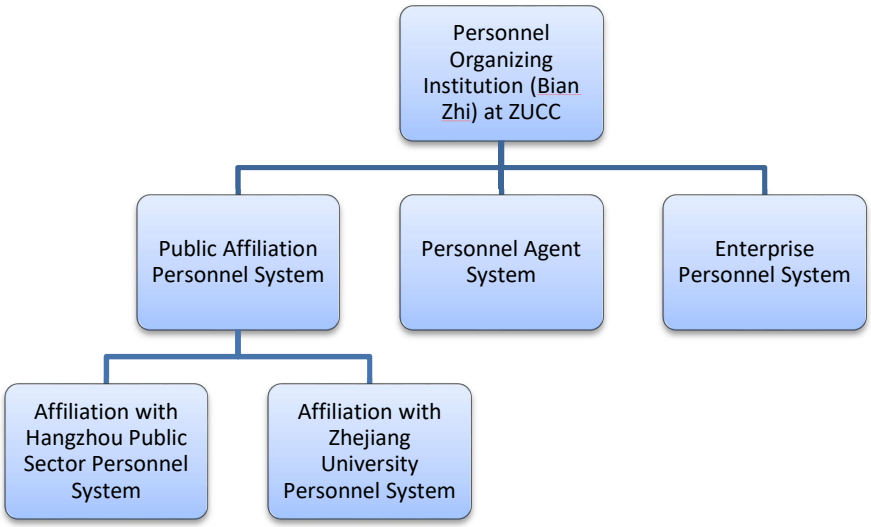
In the case of ZUCC, it has three kinds of BianZhi in terms of its affiliation with the public sector. They are in a hierarchical order. The first and best one is the BianZhi affiliated with the Hangzhou public sector personnel system. Employees in this category are most close to civil servants under the Hangzhou government personnel system. They enjoy high job security and may transfer among positions in the Hangzhou government personnel system. It means the faculty or administrators of ZUCC can also transfer to the different departments under the Hangzhou municipal government, though it can be rare. These employees are fundamentally similar to the ones working in public HEIs. So far, there are about 700 employees in this personnel category, most of which are faculty and key administrators. In addition, similar to this BianZhi is the one under Zhejiang University personnel system. This affiliation is a result of the transfer of many faculty and administrators from ZJU to ZUCC after the merging of four institutions to establish the new ZJU in 1998. They were promised that their affiliation with the giant ZJU would be always protected and their social welfare would go along with the ZJU personnel system when they transferred to ZUCC. This settled the worry about benefit reduction after transferring from a public HEI to a minban one. Basically they have been guaranteed with the social welfare package under the previous public institution. In a nutshell, in this first and most desirable category of Bianzhi, the strong public affiliation is a key factor; and there are two sub categories, depending on the personnel affiliation with Hangzhou government or ZJU. And today majority of the faculty and administrators belong to this category.

The second category is the employees under the so-called personnel agent system. These people are affiliated neither under the Hangzhou public personnel system nor with the ZJU personnel system. They are employed by ZUCC and have signed a contract with ZUCC. They enjoy the similar benefit standards as the ones employed

under the Hangzhou public personnel system, but in registration they do not count as one affiliated with the Hangzhou public system. Basically, they are purely employees of ZUCC and do not enjoy the security and transferability within the Hangzhou public personnel system. Due to the current public sector personnel system reform and the public personnel quota limit, almost all the recently recruited administrative level personnel belong to the personnel agent system. In fact, the reason to set up this category is to narrow the benefit gap between the public personnel system and the non public personnel system at the best. So there can be less complaint from employees and less inequality resulted from the personnel affiliation difference.

The last category is usually the least desirable, since it is under the enterprise personnel system, which is similar to the system of many private enterprises. This system not only has less job security, but offers reduced social benefits. Simply, these employees make far less than the others with public personnel system affiliation, even though they often work as much. With the consideration of personnel quota and cost control, an increasing number of lower administrative level personnel are under this category. But overall they still occupy a small section of all the personnel at ZUCC. They belong to the rather marginalized group of employees in the institution. There is some mobility opportunities in this group and some might find an opportunity to upgrade into the second group.

Figure 4.1 Personnel Organizing Institution and Its Categorization



Although being officially categorized as a minban institution according to the Ministry of Education, ZUCC, like many other independent colleges, displays some characters that are quite public. The personnel system shows many of the faculty and administrators are actually public sector employees, though a small number are the enterprise Bianzhi and some are between the public and the enterprise BianZhi. This provides an advantage in talent recruiting, since many job seekers still value the public personnel affiliation, especially the one with good security. For other independent colleges in Zhejiang Province, some have recently relocated to the neighboring small towns mainly due to the campus size requirement set up by the Ministry in 2008 (the 2008 Regulation). From another perspective, this strategy is also attempted to build up the tie with the local government force, because the strong government tie can lead to the public personnel affiliation quota and other potential public funding benefits. This is usually considered beneficial for the long term survival and development of these independent colleges with a short history. In a HE system with a strong existence of the state, the gravitational pull of the government force is often irresistibly strong. The personnel structure reflects the deep HR foundation of an institution, which partially reveals the true nature of these

institutions and the direction they are heading to.

Therefore, this public affiliated personnel system, or Bianzhi, is an important character for many independent colleges, especially the ones in Zhejiang Province. To some extent, it has helped these institutions to earn its credibility among the public, especially for those who value stability and security. After all, the employees in the institution are public employees who should answer to the regulations of the local government and put the public interest as their top priority.

Summary

In this chapter, specific attention has been given to the physical location, sponsoring institution, degree program configuration, tuition structure, BianZhi personnel system of ZUCC. ZUCC, founded by ZJU and Hangzhou government, is an independent college partially designed to serve the regional social and economic development. It shows quite a few characteristics that point to its public ownership. Its affiliation with two public founders seems to draw this institution closer to the public side. Backed by the strong public institution and supported by the local government, ZUCC now enjoys three first tier programs charging public tuition and is likely to expand these public tuition charging first tier programs in the near future. Its personnel system reveals its HR affiliation with both ZJU and Hangzhou municipal government. Obviously, ZUCC takes full advantage of its affiliation with the two public forces, which works in its favor when attracting high quality faculty. The minban side is more or less explained in terms of the tuition structure and its revenue structure. And it tells about its pragmatic consideration when it comes to fund raising. The minban mechanism is a good way to mobilize financial resources from the society to achieve a bigger public goal.

Just as the anecdote in the beginning of the chapter tries to reveal, the institution is probably more public than minban/private in making key decisions with long term institutional impacts, largely due to its affiliation with both Zhejiang University and

the local government. Clearly, its fast growth in the past two decades should be largely attributed to the support from these two public forces. However, in interviews some faculty and administrators also point to the downside for the strong public affiliation. Somehow, it also compromises its independence and the ability to innovate. The public support can be a great advantage in running a college in China's public dominant HE system, on the one hand; on the other hand, it can also restrain the institutional innovation it can take. Isomorphism, or the so called iron cage, as explained by the neo-institutionalism perspective, will turn these originally innovative institutions to be more similar to the old ones (DiMaggio, 1983; Pedersen & Dobbin, 2006). In this case, they started on an innovative path and gradually turned to be like the shrunken version of public universities.

Chapter 5 Students' Perception of ZUCC

Vignette

Zhen was a fourth year female student majoring in English, which is not one of those majors at ZUCC receiving a great deal of academic support from ZJU, the mother institution.[11] Her long braided hair and radiating smile were the most characteristic of her personality. She was the running chairman for the Toastmaster Club (TMC) at ZUCC when she was in her third year. She invited me to participate in the club activities a couple of times and that's how I started to learn more about her.

Being genuinely interested in practicing her English, she attended almost all the TMC events on the campus and reached out to other TMC activities in other parts of the city. At this moment of writing, she had become the district assistant director for the TMC-Hangzhou District and was pretty active in updating her personal weibo and wechat accounts with her weekly participation at different TMC locations in Hangzhou. She told me in several occasions that she was interested in pursuing a further education abroad, preferably U.S., because that was more challenging. While discussing what she might want to study abroad, she mentioned she was interested in becoming a teacher and the different educational experiments, particularly the fun and humanistic approach, attract her attention most. She believed she might discover a less pains-taking study approach for her future students.

In one of our conversations, she told me that one of the reasons for her to prepare herself for further study was to prove she could be better with a diploma from a better institution. Coming from the well-known small commodity exporting town, Yiwu of Zhejiang Province, she left me the impression of a confident and out-going college student with a strong interest in learning from others. TMC was not the only place where she could learn things outside the classroom. She also had internship

[11] Being an institution associated with Zhejiang University, Zhejiang University City College enjoys various kinds of support from the mother institution. These supports are mainly academic and faculty wise. However, science programs, particularly the medical program (undergraduate level), receive a lot of teaching resource support, since it is expensive to start a medical program from scratch and sharing the lab facilities and faculty from Zhejiang University can not only cut down the cost but raise the whole standard of the program at ZJU City College.

experiences at several children's English teaching centers and currently she was working as a teaching assistant for an IELTS teaching center, which according to her paid her better and helped her learn how to prepare for studying abroad. Despite her impressive social practice resume, she, just like most of her fellow students, suffered from a kind of "independent college syndrome", which could be characterized as a sense of inferiority or self-humbling perception when compared to some top tier universities, mainly the 985 or 211 universities. In China, independent colleges are often unofficially referred to as "San-Ben" institutions, which means third tier colleges. Charging three to four folds of the public college tuition, having a college name with the mother institution brand name and an add-on part become the most visible features for the "San-Ben" institutions. The mother institution brand name may give the students some pride, but it can also cause confusion and even become a permanent reminder of their inferiority. After all, they are different and believed to be hardly able to match the ability of those favored ones entering the true top tier universities.

When first entering ZUCC, Zhen, like many other high-aspiring freshmen, tried her luck at the cross-collegiate pathway test, which allows the ZUCC students to compete for a very small number of seats at the mother institution—ZJU. The graduate study, for her, is yet another opportunity to prove herself and relieve herself from the "independent college syndrome". As a matter of a fact, about 20 percent of the ZUCC students seek opportunities for further education either in China or abroad. Most students who enter the job market upon graduation face the fierce employment competition and bear the brunt of being a "San-Ben" student.

Zhen told me her participation in TMC not only helped her improve English but broadened her social connection and experience, which could come handy when the time came for her to look for job opportunities. Actually, she had used her TMC connection to help one of her friends obtain an interview opportunity at a big transnational enterprise. For a 21 year old college student, that was quite resourceful and strategic. Surly she understood the importance of both academic ability and social skills.

If Zhen's active participation in TMC is rare among the students, her passion to prove herself and resourcefulness may not be unique to herself. As a student group often associated with the "San-Ben" institution but longing for a better one, they share some common characters and experiences when they study at ZUCC and enter the society with that label after graduation.

In the following section, I will try to portray the implications of studying at ZUCC and how students perceive their experiences in the institution. Hence, it will give us some clue about the nature of independent colleges from students' perspective.

Students are an important part of the school community. When Gaztambide-Fernandez did his cultural study on American elite boarding schools, he chose to focus on the student group through uncovering the entering, living, studying and graduating experiences so as to expose the formation of a grueling elite culture in school (2009). His interesting study shows how students' experiences and their views are an indispensable part of what the institution is. When prospective students choose to enter certain schools, they and their family weigh the pros and cons of an institution and ponder over its social and academic value. Hence, they come to some sense about what they may expect when entering the institution, though that expectation or perception changes with their growing experience in the institution. When students join the school community, they shape and are shaped by the culture of the school. That interaction between the student group and the institution reveals not only the diversified student experiences but also certain characters about the institution. When they graduate and enter the society, students compete for jobs with the brand mark of the institution and they come to see what the institution has brought to them and how these characters they inherit from the institution are received by the wider society.

Therefore, it is argued that a study of students' perception of the institution can help to reveal the cultural and social identity of the institution. Their understanding of

the institution can be different from the official image of the institution and is believed to represent a kind of more grassroots-based perspective. According to Schein's (1992) organizational culture framework, students' perception offers the knowledge on the participants' assumption about the reality in the organization, which can come into conflict with the "espoused image" or the officially portrayed version. The study is intended to give a more complex and multi-faceted portrait of independent colleges so as to come as close as possible to their true nature.

One problem with representing the student body is the issue of representation. In the case of ZUCC, there is a body of over 10 thousand students associated with nine different schools. It is certainly impossible to interview all the students. However, the difficulty in accounting for the quantity is compensated by digging in depth and careful selection in the interview population. As an insider, who can engage with students in various occasions, I had the advantage to observe and question when I felt necessary. During the one and a half years' period doing the study, I have contacts with all kinds of students under various occasions. I have ever been to the freshmen's counseling meetings, internship advising programs, opening and commencement ceremonies, on-campus job fairs and students' extracurricular clubs. My participation as a faculty advisor in the EDPC (English Debating and Public Speaking Center) turned out to be particularly helpful, because I got to reach those students with an interest in sharing their opinions and speaking openly and they come from different backgrounds. And their continued involvement in the EDPC also offers me the opportunity to learn more about these students and how they think about the institution. Furthermore, in selecting the interviewees, I made the attempt to cover almost all the nine schools and particularly focused on the fourth year students, who had gone through most of their academic studies at ZUCC and were in the process of seeking employment. From my fieldwork experience, I found the fourth year students were at a critical moment of their time at the institution – the conclusion of a college experience and the beginning of a career path. This is the time when they feel most comfortable to reflect upon their college experiences and evaluate what their identity as graduates of ZUCC means in the society. Therefore, they provide a very realistic

and ground-based perspective about the nature of ZUCC, including its relationship with ZJU, the complex identity of ZUCC and the social stereotyping of the institution. In a word, I argue the in-depth fieldwork and selective interviews help to provide a human experience oriented portrait and lay an important foundation for my qualitative study. A quantitative research may provide a general survey of the student body and their views, but it cannot reveal their frustrations, social prejudices and values.

Public or Private?

During the various interviews and communications with students, many point out that this institution has characteristics of both private and public institutions. And it is hard for them to give a certain answer about the ownership nature. However, there are two main observations that can be identified here. One is that the high tuition comes out to be the main reason to consider ZUCC as a private or minban HEI for students. The other is the tendency to see ZUCC as one leaning toward a public HEI. Students tell their understandings from the setup of curriculum, faculty quality, academic atmosphere and other educational factors. It is interesting to note that majority of students share this internalized idea that public HEIs are usually more superior to private ones in academic quality and social recognition, which is in line with China's public dominated HE system (Jiang, 2011). Minban HEIs occupy a quite peripheral position in the whole system and therefore, have a relatively lower recognition in the society. Students tend to link minban HEIs with poor teaching quality, high tuition, management problems and instability. In this case, students at ZUCC tend to identify the institution as a private one when it comes to tuition and as an increasingly public one when it comes to other educational aspects.

High tuition and lack of other government subsidies for students become the most obvious reason to see ZUCC as a private one. A student from the engineering school mentions:

> For me tuition is the way to distinguish the different colleges. The first tier and second tier colleges are all public ones because they charge lower tuitions. ZUCC charges a third tier private college tuition just like many other private HEIs. It is much more than the tuition charged by public colleges. I think many people share this understanding and therefore, usually agree on the private nature of ZUCC. (Student Interview No.3)

Similar to this student citing the high tuition, another student from the business school makes a comparison between her experience at ZUCC and her friends at other public colleges,

> I have some high school classmates now studying at public colleges. They not only enjoy a much lower tuition, but receive some tuition returns, which is about several hundred Yuan per semester. Also I know their dinning services are much cheaper and provide more varieties. As far as I know, they got some kind of food subsidies from the government. This is why their dining hall provides better food at a lower price. There are some other differences. Obviously, we have to pay more and may not get the same kind of quality experiences as my friends at public colleges. (Student Interview No.5)

Most students I interviewed agree that ZUCC does not enjoy the kind of resources or subsidies other public colleges might have. The public colleges receive funding based on the number of students they enroll annually and some have better chances to receive national or provincial level funding support. Therefore, despite the government efforts to open state-supported scholarships to both public and private institution students with the overall policy for equal treatment, private HEIs lag still far behind in terms of receiving financial supports from the government. ZUCC, like many other independent colleges, still largely rely on the tuition for the running cost

every year. This is also why some students, particularly the science students, complain about the limited lab resources or library electronic data services. As one interviewee mentions,

> It is really not very convenient to do our research at the library. The electronic journal we need cannot be found in the library data services and many of my classmates have to go and purchase the access ourselves. Also many of our current electronic journal services are provided by or linked to Zhejiang University. It is not very stable. One time I was researching for the final paper, the service was out of its capacity limit and was down for a whole night. And this kind of temporary breakdown is not rare. So I really wish the school can put more money into upgrading our library electronic data services. (Student Interview No.9)

The heavy reliance on student tuition makes it difficult to distribute the limited resources in an all-considerate manner. ZUCC has mainly spent the budget expanding teaching facilities and constructing the campus in its first 15 years. It should be mentioned that ZUCC, like many other independent colleges, spent only about 15 years expanding from a couple of hundred students to over thirteen thousand. Many of the budgets went into developing the teaching capacity so as to satisfy the basic educational needs for this increasingly large student body. Dinning services and library electronic data services are the ones that are likely to be given less priorities in comparison to hiring more teachers and building more lecture rooms.

Besides the high tuition and limited resources, there seems to be no further reason for the students to identify ZUCC as a private one. On the other hand, many consider it to be more public-like when talking of the relatively better teaching quality, faculty quality, administrative style and institutional background. In the eyes of these students, the public HEIs in China usually have better academic quality and more educational resources than the private ones.

When discussing the faculty quality, one student from the computer science department presents her view that,

> I think our teachers are better than the ones in some private colleges. Our department hires some teachers from some good research institutions and some from Zhejiang University. They have great experience and teach us something really useful. Also they put a lot of efforts into helping us. (Student Interview No.11)

Another student from the business school shares this observation by saying,

> Our courses are strictly organized and we have to follow a set of standards to earn enough credits in order to graduate. For example, our school requires every student to attend at least 10 open lectures to earn the 'secondary class' credits. Also we have to fulfill the volunteer hours to meet the graduation requirement. Our teachers are quite strict and serious about these standards. I don't think it is easy to just cheat on it. I feel some of these requirements are like the ones at Zhejiang University and this is why it is a college more like a public one. Some private colleges have loose rules and teachers are not that strict on academic standards. (Student Interview No.2)

In a public dominated HE system, it is understandable for people to form the stereotype of "good public" and "bad private" colleges. Although ZUCC charges a "private" tuition, the academic and faculty quality seem to distinguish itself from the other private colleges and make students feel it is in reality more like public colleges.

During the interview process, there are also some students who are better aware of the history of the college and point out the two major founding partners: Zhejiang University and Hangzhou Municipal Government. One is a public institution under the National Department of Education and the other is a local government. One student from the business school interestingly compares ZUCC to state-owned enterprises:

> We have two strong mountain-like supporters on our back. This is just like some state-owned enterprises, which can enjoy some favorable policies from the government and win a competitive edge

> in market competition. ZUCC often models itself on ZJU and receives some kind of support from the Hangzhou government. The private part is just for more flexibility in market competition. Fundamentally, we are an institution with the public forces playing a leading role. If anything happens, the government is going to intervene and provide help. Therefore, ZUCC, unlike some private schools, does not have to worry about school shutting down. This is like state-owned enterprises, which usually do not worry about going bankrupt. (Student Interview No.8)

This student's observation on the connection between ZUCC and other public forces is actually repeated by many other interviewees. And this is an important character for almost all the independent colleges, which emerged as some kind of secondary colleges of the public HEIs. Some had a local government or state-owned enterprise partner; other had private enterprise partners from outside. This is probably the main reason many students give more credibility to these institutions with good support from public forces. They are confident that their needs can be better served and their rights can be better protected with the potential government force underpinning the institution.

In addition, there are a few students pointing out the increasing bureaucratization of ZUCC as a sign for its public identity. Since the administrative structure at ZUCC follows the main frame of ZJU, this newly-emerged institution gradually develops the problem of a burdensome bureaucratic system. This has caused some students to complain the centralized management style without giving enough attention to individual needs. Therefore, it is likely that ZUCC, with its increasing size, is slowly losing its flexibility in management style and turning into a more public-like institution burdened with an increasing number of rules and standards. This is a point I will come back to in the part on the faculty's perception of ZUCC.

Relationship with ZJU

Zhejiang University, as one of the key founders for ZUCC, exerts its influences on the institution in many different ways. From the most apparent name of the institution to the faculty composition, ZJU plays a key role for the rise and development of ZUCC as one of the earliest independent colleges in China. During the interviews and interactions, many students point to this "mother" institution as one of the big drawing reasons to choose ZUCC. The reputation and social recognition enjoyed by ZJU are passed on to ZUCC in some way and become one of the main reasons for students to swarm into such a newly established college.

It is found in the interviews that there are more benefits resulting from this relationship, although some students have expressed some concerns in faculty quality and students in different majors seem to benefit at different extents.

1）Social Reputation

Social reputation is one key standard when students and their parents choose where to go for college education. "Brand name" is a key concept that came out quite often when the interviewees were asked about the benefits from association with Zhejiang University. Students feel this brand name gives some promises about the teaching quality, employment/internship opportunities and recognition.

One interviewee mentions:

> When I tell interviewers or working partners in the society that I come from City College, most people don't have the clear clue where it is. Then, I add its full name is Zhejiang University City College. Suddenly, they come to see what I am talking about and they repeat the first part, Zhejiang University, with an understanding nod. At that moment, I know they are making a misunderstanding, but I usually don't correct them because I feel they have accepted me. This is a good sign for me. (Student Interview No.1)

Another student puts it in a more straightforward manner,

> I probably wouldn't have chosen this college if its name did not have Zhejiang University on it. Think about it. Hangzhou City College is obviously not as attractive as Zhejiang University City College. Its association with Zhejiang University means a privilege or power, which can make some things easy for students when we go to compete in the society. (Student Interview No.9)

There is another student planning to study abroad, who reminds the interviewer of the international importance of this social reputation.

> I feel lucky to be in this college. I got a few high school classmates who were admitted into one tier-two public college, called Zhoushan Maritime College. Our academic ability is quite on the same level. But when they applied for overseas education, they got more rejections than acceptances. I feel our college has a great advantage when it comes to applying for study-abroad. Zhejiang University is much more well-known than many other universities or colleges in Zhejiang. I think some foreign universities might just think we are also Zhejiang University students. (Student Interview No.5)

Putting aside the actual benefits from this association with ZJU, the intangible social benefit is already enormous and it is especially true in the early stage of ZUCC, since this social reputation helps it recruit students and win the trust from the students and their families. It is also easy for the graduates of ZUCC to win the recognition and thereafter opportunities when applying for jobs or further education.

Considering the immense difficulty in founding a brand new university in today's world, leaning on the established reputation of a well-known university is surly a smart way to boost the construction and development of a new college. The importance of reputation should not be underestimated at any time for any university, considering the popularity of reputation ranking among the top universities in the

world. The ranking system has become an important guide for prospective students to choose where they want to go for education. Here with the social benefits they can gain, the ZUCC students are no exception in this reputation-oriented university status system.

2) Faculty and Academic Resources

As a flagship university, ZJU has the rich academic and learning resources that can be exploited by ZUCC. And students at ZUCC obviously expect to enjoy some and quite a few students point to the different kinds of resources resulting from the association, though it is more so for students majoring in science, engineering and medicine.

Quite a few students point out the faculty advantage. Since at ZUCC there are quite many faculty who either worked previously at ZJU or recently graduated from ZJU, the faculty quality is often cited as an advantage. One student from computer science tells,

> I feel it is good to have ZJU teachers here to help us. I have been in a group led by a ZJU graduated teacher since my second year. He graduated from ZJU with one master degree in information science and another in management about ten years ago. He is the leading teacher for our lab and many ZJU graduate students even come to work in the lab with us. We can apply to participate in the lab work and enjoy the resources in this cooperative lab. It is a great learning experience to work with faculty and students from ZJU. (Student Interview No.2)

Another student from pharmacy shares the same observation,

> Our program has almost one third of the faculty borrowed from ZJU. Many of them are quite experienced and they have great knowledge background in our field. Also, we can go to ZJU to do some lab research in one semester and use the equipment there.

> And because of the connection with ZJU and the ZJU affiliated hospitals, our program can send us to do internship in these key hospitals. This is a big advantage in comparison with similar programs in other schools. (Student Interview No.7)

The school of medicine at ZUCC is probably the one that benefits the most from the association, since ZJU has one of the top medical facilities and faculty in China. Sharing some of the resources not only improves the quality of the programs in the school of medicine but saves a large sum of money for establishing and maintaining the medicine-related programs.

In addition, those students who have an interest in pursuing graduate education in China seem to agree that they might have some advantages over other non-ZJU-related schools if they decide to go for graduate programs at ZJU.

> I got some advice from my teacher, whose PhD advisor is at ZJU, about how to prepare for the ZJU graduate program entrance exam. This is helpful. I was referred to this ZJU teacher by my teacher here. If I can pass the entrance exam, this can be important for me to prepare for the interview. (Student Interview No.13)

Because of the interconnected relations, many teachers at ZUCC either worked or graduated from ZJU, which becomes an advantage for some ZUCC students when it comes to academic exchange or resources sharing. ZUCC teachers with ZJU backgrounds are more likely to recommend their students to better academic programs at ZJU and these students stand a better chance to be accepted.

Zhejiang University, being one of the founding institutions for ZUCC, provided important faculty resources, managerial experience and social reputation to the fledgling college at its beginning stage. However, it is also noted that the connection with ZJU does not always bring positive things. While the brand name of ZJU boosts the credibility and social reputation, which successfully attract many prospective students, this father-son type of relationship plants the seed for an unequal relationship, which students at ZUCC sometimes feel in daily academic life. While it is acknowledged that the connection with ZJU comes with some high-end academic

resources, particularly from the faculty side, the faculty quality and diversity may not be always guaranteed because of the cost-consideration and possible inbreeding.

The medical student mentioned before revealed the unequal treatment they experienced at the ZJU campus when they did their one semester lab work there. It is an example to see the unequal relationship.

> In the second semester of our third year, we went to study at Huajiachi (one of the four campuses of ZJU in Hangzhou). But we are not allowed to use many of the facilities there. We cannot access the library service there and our meal card has to be remade. I feel good to use the lab there, but we are constantly reminded of our true identity (not a ZJU student) with all the restraints. I don't like the feeling. (Student Interview No.8)

A number of students recalled their unpleasant classroom experience when some ZJU professors came to teach at ZUCC. One says,

> We had one ZJU teacher teaching us hydromechanics. He only came to call the roster and deliver the contents. After that, he'd leave without any communication with us. Sometimes, he just read from the PPT. There was no communication and he didn't care about us. I feel he might have some bias against us. You know, we are only ZUCC students, not as good as those at ZJU. (Student Interview No.9)

A few students also point to the fact that some of the ZJU current graduate students come to teach at ZUCC and their lack of teaching experience can cause some problem for the teaching effectiveness.

In general, many students at ZUCC benefit from the association with ZJU, tangibly or intangibly. The pathway program between ZUCC and ZJU offers the ZUCC students a second chance to compete for a very limited number of slots to enter ZJU, which many students I interviewed mention as one of the reasons to consider ZUCC when filling out the gaokao zhiyuan (the programs they apply and expect to be admitted into after the entrance exam). Also the faculty and other academic resources

resulting from this association are mainly considered positive by the students. Some programs, such as computer science and medicine, benefit greatly from sharing the academic resources with ZJU, because these are the traditionally strong and nationally top-ranked programs of ZJU. On the other hand, some see the unequal side of this relationship, which makes some students feel frustrated or unfairly treated. Considering the "father-son" type of relationship and the huge gap in academic capacity, maintaining an equal exchange for ZJU and ZUCC is unlikely. When this relationship is embodied in student experiences, it tends to create an emotional gap and a hierarchical top-down separation. Therefore, students at ZUCC might suffer a kind of lower-status psychological deficit, which I call "San Ben Qing Jie" or "third tier complex".

In the following section, I will move on to explain further about this third tier complex, which touches on the frustration and inferiority felt by many studying at ZUCC. While the first part of the institution name (Zhejiang University) brings mostly benefits, the second part (City College) creates a huge invisible shadow to distinguish the students at ZUCC from the ones at ZJU and puts on them a label they feel difficult to get rid of.

A Stereotyped Image of ZUCC as a San Ben Institution (Third-Tier College)

Since China reestablished its higher education admission system in the reform and opening era, the admission policy has always been in the hands of the education authority departments at the state or provincial level. The stratification of HEIs is a key element in the after-Gaokao recruiting and admission. This has caused the problem of unequal access to high scoring students among the top tier and the lower tier universities/colleges, since the system allows the first tier institutions to undergo the recruiting and admission process in the first round and the ones designated into the lower tiers are mostly barred from reaching the higher-scoring students.

One side effect of this policy is the social stereotyping on different tiers of HEIs

in the society. Students and their parents look to the tiered categories to decide what universities are more reputed and better in quality; and the recruiting companies also sometimes refer to this stratification system to help them find the preferred job candidates. As a matter of fact, in recent years there are already social outcries and slow reforms to change the tiered system (Bie, 2016; Xiong, 2016). Some provinces or municipal cities, such as Shanghai, have simplified the tiered system and organized the recruiting& admission process in two batches, reducing the number of the once highly hierarchical system into two tiers. Though universities in the first tier are still well-protected and compete only in their small circle, majority of the ordinary HEIs can play on a relatively level field and access the same pool of students during recruiting and admission. Many lower tier private colleges and vocational colleges now can have access to some high scoring students and compete with the non-first-tier public colleges in the same recruiting process. However, the change of public opinion and this culture of university stratification prove to be far more difficult than the policy reform. Many students in lower tier colleges are subject to the popularized label of "San Ben colleges" (third-tier colleges), and they feel and experience the social biases resulting from this stereotyped image of San Ben. Although ZUCC is in a relatively more advantaged position among the so-called San Ben colleges with its well-regulated teaching management and association with ZJU, many students there still share the frustration and prejudice when seeking employment or further education. Some of these stereotyped images are so deep that the prejudice may even come from faculty teaching at ZUCC.

During the interviews and casual conversations with students, the prejudice is most strongly felt in the fourth year, when many of them either enter the job market or compete in the graduate school entrance exams. Numerous fourth year students share this same experience of being excluded from competing for job positions because of the San Ben (third tier) nature of the institution they are graduating from.

One student shares,

> I have been to some job fairs recently, but many companies put it clear in the job requirements that they only receive resumes from

> 985/211 universities. Some recruiting personnel told me that they didn't consider applicants from independent colleges. I don't feel good about this. The hierarchical classification is out there to remind you who you are and what you can do. (Student Interview No.6)

Another student points to the importance of that piece of paper (diploma paper),

> The paper we hold may be ok in Hangzhou or Zhejiang, but its recognition is usually limited in Zhejiang. One of my classmates comes from Sichuan. He now wants to find a job in Hangzhou, because it appears the diploma paper is not well-accepted in his home province. It will not be easy for him to find a good job back at home. For people outside Zhejiang, we are just a regional third tier college. Or if you are lucky, people mistake you for a graduate from Zhejiang University. But it doesn't always work. (Student Interview No.4)

The piece of paper they hold when entering the job market determines what opportunities can be open to them. The social perception of a third tier college forms a tacit understanding about the students from this type of colleges, which works like a glass ceiling in a job market. Some other students mention the same kind of prejudice during their internship applications. And it seems the barrier is especially strong among the big private companies or state owned enterprises, which are relatively popular and more selective in seeking employees. Associating with Zhejiang University provides some kind of cushion for seeking employment in Zhejiang, since the brand name of ZJU provides some assurance for the quality of education. However, the social perception of an independent college is still relatively negative and the students entering these colleges are often considered lower-scoring and less qualified. The appended part (City College) provides no added value but reveals the tier level of this institution and "predicts" the qualification of students there.

The invisible barrier is not only felt by students in the job market, but in pursuing further education. Several students I interviewed attended the graduate school

entrance exams and reported the similar bias against the San Ben students, especially during the interview process.

> During the interview, some teachers tend to view us from a different lens. My score got me into the interview stage for a graduate school in Shanghai. But the first question I was asked of was whether my graduating college is a San Ben college. I think outside Zhejiang there is some prejudice against us. This is like an iron mark for who you are. Later, I didn't get into this school and was adjusted to enter another one. The interview process makes up 40% of the total performance, so it really affects me. (Student Interview No.3)

What's worth noting is this inferiority complex, as a result of education system, social policy and social stereotyping, has shaped students' perception of this institution and to some extent what is possible for them after graduation. One student gives his understanding of ZUCC with a focus on the hierarchical order:

> ZUCC is in fact a San Ben (third tier) institution because it is minban and charges minban tuition. But its admission scores are high, even higher than some second tier public institutions. And this is an application oriented institution, not that much of an academic-oriented one. So it cannot rank with other first tier key public institutions. I guess this is who we are. (Student Interview No.9)

It is a little sad to see how students self impose these public images or social stereotyping resulting from the gao kao admission policy. This obviously limits what they think they can do. But from the realistic point of view, it is what they faced when they experienced the process of filling up the gao kao college admission choices. And these images are strengthened or solidified when they go out to compete for job positions in job affairs or to apply for further education in China. This probably shows us what an institutionalized bias can do to individuals and the choices available to individuals.

However, there is also a bright side to what these students may think and act on their own. The diploma and public image of San Ben may leave them in a disadvantaged position. Working hard to show their capability and improve their qualifications is the answer many students have chosen to give to the adversity they all have to deal with. Just like Zhen in the beginning story, some choose to prove what they can do by seeking further education opportunities abroad or in China. Some choose other ways to dig into their potentials to show what they can truly achieve.

Prove by Developing Ability

While realizing the social bias on the diploma, some students point to the upside for themselves. It is a positive attitude and a belief in what they can do to change the unfavorable condition and prove what they can do through developing potentials.

> Our advantage is flexibility; disadvantage is diploma. In China, the society tends to pay too much attention to diploma. It is kind of diploma-ism. If I hold a Zhejiang University diploma, I am considered excellent or top-notch. If I have a City College diploma, I am considered non-comparable to the top-notch. I think our advantage is we can develop our abilities to settle this question. So if our fellow students can be determined to pursue our goals, our potentials are no less than anyone. I believe we can even exert greater flexibility and potential. (Student Interview No.10)

This is an example to show how these lovely students give themselves encouragement when facing the diploma barrier. It is like a pep talk they give to themselves so that they can work harder and seek opportunities to improve their qualifications. Of course, this is for those students who choose a positive attitude in dealing with the San Ben stereotyping.

Some relate this psychological deficit to confidence and they believe there are different ways they can do to improve their confidence.

> Many friends around me feel the diploma is not that ideal. So they look for ways to grow their competiveness. I think this is why City College has many students who plan to study abroad. Because furthering education abroad can help them win a better diploma. With that golden glaze, they develop their confidence. When they return to China, they can use that diploma to apply for better jobs. So maybe it is about confidence. (Student Interview No.3)

Studying abroad is one of the popular choices some students I interviewed have chosen for their development path. But this is only for less than 10% of the graduating students at ZUCC who can afford the top expenses to study abroad. There are others who choose to prepare for China's graduate school entrance exam, which is no less competitive than the well-known Gao Kao (college entrance exam). Majority of the students there will still enter the job market after graduation and the way they choose to develop ability is to go through various certificate tests to collect skill certificates. For example, for many English majors I know, they start considering all kinds of certificates tests since the junior year. The list of certificates on their calendar may include Interpreter Certificate, CATTI Certificate (Translation Proficiency level), Teacher (Primary & Secondary Education) Certificate, Foreign Trade Documentation Specialist Certificate, BEC Certificate (Business English), TESOL Certificate (Teaching of English), TEM 8 Certificate (Language Certificate for English Majors) and etc. It is just amazing to see how hard some of these students work in order to gain as many certificates as possible. So it may allow them to compete at an equal platform. And most importantly, it might ease their anxiety and lack of confidence because of their inferior diploma. Of course, this is only for some students who are particularly motivated and ambitious, and willing to prove themselves again. Many may naturally fall into this San Ben stereotyping, believing they are fundamentally less intelligent than those earning Zhejiang University degrees only because they can't score higher in Gao Kao.

Besides developing the academic ability to improve competitiveness, some point out the advantage in communication ability. This may put ZUCC students in an

advantaged position in the long run, especially when they join the company.

> I feel our students are more flexible than those nerdy high scoring students. My friends around me are all talkative and good at communication. And we have many club or social activities for us to develop communication skills. This can be an advantage when you go to an interview. I have been to several interviews and I feel good about what I did. And they all had some good impressions about me, because I got job offers right away. (Student Interview No.12)

It is interesting to note that in China usually the top scoring students are stereotyped as wearing glasses with a stiff smile and hard to have a non-technical conversation with. Some students at ZUCC are particularly outgoing and interested in meeting new people and attending social events. They may spend less time on academic learning, but they try to break out of the academically inferior image by developing an alternative ability—social skills. ZUCC is somehow well-known for the number of students who experimented on opening their own small businesses. On the campus, there is a small street with an established sign, which says “College Student Entrepreneurship Street”. This street is lined with some stores selling cell phone cases, textile products and interior ornaments. Recently, because of the rise of social media tools, some entrepreneurial students opened WeChat shops selling all kinds of products, ranging from hometown specialties to second-hand luxury bags. They surly know how to take advantage of their social connections (friend circle) to target the right customers.

Therefore, there is another layer to the San Ben students. Beyond the negative stereotype derived from the institution of Gao Kao and Diploma, there are some positive reactions to turn around the adverse tide. Zhen, the student in the vignette, is just one of the thirteen thousand students at ZUCC, but the psychological burden she has to shoulder is common among those enrolled at ZUCC. The San Ben stereotyping is not easy to get over, since it is socially established and internalized among students and teachers. Even before they enter college, at the moment the Gao Kao scores are

rated and the rankings for those who participated in the exam are determined, students come to form this view of themselves and set themselves on a ranking chart, which can implicitly determine many aspects of their future lives, from academic experience to job seeking. Zhen is probably one of the optimistic ones who devotes her passion into an English speech organization—TMC, to resist that negative stereotyping and find confidence.

Summary

In this section, I have portrayed ZUCC students' perception on the institutional nature of ZUCC and their experiences as ZUCC students living under the burden of San Ben. The former is revealed through looking into the public or private identity of the institution and its connected but separate relationship with ZJU, the mother institution. The later is discussed by focusing on the San Ben stereotyping burden and the resistances from the students. The portrait is based on the students' testimonies and the observations of students' experiences. In general, it seems students build up their perception by comparing ZUCC to a standard they hold internally, which is minban/private implying lower academic level and poor quality and public meaning the opposite. This is a standard fitting with the public image of the two types of HEIs in the public-dominated HE system—minban HEIs and public HEIs. While the ZJU connection and the relatively good quality academic level give students the impression of a public institution, some daily experiences remind students of the minban/private aspect of the institution. Therefore, the students offer an ambiguous understanding on the nature of the institution. In addition, they are more sensitive to the disadvantages that come with the title or diploma of ZUCC. Despite the reputational heritage they may enjoy from the association with ZJU, the San Ben stereotyping is an institutionalized hurdle difficult to jump over.

Since ZUCC's model of public ownership and private running mechanism is a prevalent one in Zhejiang, Jiangsu and some other provinces, the portrait of students'

perception and their experiences may also provide insights into the understanding of similar independent colleges across China. Especially the San Ben stereotyping, this is an institutionalized bias among several million lower tier students. The psychological deficit they have to go through is a common phenomenon.

Chapter 6 Faculty Perception of ZUCC

Vignette

Gu is a veteran at ZUCC. He came to this college first as a student in 2000, when in his words "there were only two buildings and no sports facility on campus." After graduation, he stayed to work in the student affairs office. This was a job that required him to be a head teacher for an entering class and provide counseling in academic, career and even emotional affairs. Most of the time, he has a good smile and is willing to listen, that helps him win the reputation as a nice teacher among students.

Gu shares with two other colleagues in the student affairs office for the engineering college. In China, the students affairs office is in charge of many aspects of students' life on campus, such as dorm life, student organizations, campus theme activities, student employment information, freshman college adaptation, sophomore military training, class attendance monitoring, student psychological status monitoring, alumni information, class head teacher management and student CPC party member organization. There could be other work I fail to include here. And three of them have to oversee over 800 students in this college. As the most experienced student affairs worker in the office, Gu often stays after working hours to sort out the convoluted student-related matters. The biggest concern he and his colleagues share is the safety of students, including personal life safety and possession safety. In recent years, the psychological stability of students comes up on top. I often feel sympathetic for Gu and his colleagues to have to provide care for so many students, which is probably common among student affairs workers in many colleges. Gu sometimes jokes to say he is a babysitter, because he has to take care of so many aspects of students' life on campus.

It is no doubt that the main reason for Gu to take up this hard job is his ability to identify with students, with the help of his four year study experience at ZUCC. Another reason for his career choice has something to do with the government and

ZJU backing of ZUCC--the same reason for him to choose ZUCC, a one year old school at the time, for his undergraduate study. When getting the job, Gu was able to be included in the Hangzhou Public Personnel System, which is close to a government position job with stability and public welfare, because around 2004 when Gu joined workforce ZUCC was under rapid expansion and the school needed a lot of new teachers and student affairs workers. Of course, graduates like Gu were ideal for handling student affairs.

One thing I later learned from Gu about personnel affiliation in his office is that one of his two colleagues in the office has an enterprise personnel affiliation, that means less pay for same work and risk of being laid off first. Gu told me that was a bit unfair for her, but she was waiting for an opening in the public personnel system. With her working experience, she would be the first one to be considered, if there could be an extra place. But what I learned from other sources was public personnel affiliation would be only available for newly recruited teaching faculty.

As a young worker at ZUCC, Gu has been looking for opportunities to upgrade himself. He has been taking classes from ZJU and participated in some student affairs training programs organized at ZJU. Recently he enrolled in the part-time MPA program at ZJU after passing the entrance exams. That program is not only suitable for his background, but will provide a boost for his future career at ZUCC.

As a student affairs officer, he has a good knowledge of students at ZUCC. What he has trained himself to do better is to listen and connect, though it is increasingly difficult for him because of the generation gap he started to feel between him and incoming students. But certainly he knows what it means to study and work at ZUCC and what advantage and bias this title of ZUCC can bring to him and his students. Because of his study experience at ZUCC, he knows better about being a ZUCCer, that gives him a great advantage in helping his students find a path through the college years and maybe even for the future life.

Faculty and staff make up a key part of the institution. By studying the faculty perceptions, we can peek into not only the internal workings of an institution, but also the nature of that institution. Because they are the ones passing knowledge/understanding about the institution to the students every day and able to stay in it long enough to be fully aware of the pros and cons about the internal workings.

Poole's ethnographic case on Japanese professors in a private university in urban Tokyo reveals how Japanese professors perceive and face the conflict between the traditions and the neoliberal western style reforms in a time of Japan's HE structural changes (Poole, 2010). This ethnography on faculty group in a private university in Japan provides insights about how to conduct a participant observation research with a focus on revealing the understanding of faculty on its institution as well as the institutional change. Building the research in the context of Japan's higher education and the structural reform, Poole connects the faculty group cultural dynamics to the big picture of HE reform.

In this study, faculty's experiences and their perceptions on ZUCC and its internal working provide key knowledge about the development path, institutional nature and barriers of ZUCC. Through the case of ZUCC, the nature and experience of similar institutions can also be learned. Therefore, the study of ZUCC's faculty gives us a good glimpse into the independent colleges belonging to the public ownership type, which are particularly representative in Zhejiang and Jiangsu. In order to conduct this ethnographic case study, I interviewed 20 teachers, 15 college faculty/administrators from ZUCC and 5 teachers working in 4 other independent colleges in Zhejiang. These interviews help me establish a good understanding of institutional history, internal structure, relationship with government, relationship with mother public HEI, and its position within the HE system. The interviews with teachers from other ICs in Zhejiang help me confirm the structural similarities and status differences, due to differences in their mother institutions, between ZUCC and other independent colleges (ICs) in Zhejiang.

Moreover, the faculty/staff based interviews give another important facet of the

narrative on ICs, since these carefully chosen faculty and staff have all worked in the institution for at least 5 years and they know more about the daily functioning of the school. Their genuine experiences tell us more on the true nature and challenges of ICs, possibly even the future destiny of time-produced ICs in China.

In the following, I will explore six major areas which are the repeatedly discussed topics in the interviews with faculty/staff at ZUCC. The knowledge revealed in these areas contributes to the improved understanding of what type of HEI ZUCC is, what the Zhejiang model of ICs looks like and how the public-leaning ICs run.

A Necessary Birth at the Age of Economic Boom and HE Massification

ZUCC, as one of the earliest ICs in China, is an important creation under several different forces, including expanding of HE, economic boom, restructuring of top universities and privatization of HE in China. However, the particularly strong public support or ownership at the beginning is what distinguishes ZUCC from other ICs founded around the 2000.

MinCheng MinXiao BanXue or running school under the partnership of a famous city and a famous university is a key feature mentioned in most interviews. This special partnership has laid the foundation for this public ownership and formed a big draw for recruiting both students and faculty.

> ZJU is a big brandname; ZUCC is a new thing I have never heard of. When I interviewed for the job, they told me they can offer me a Hangzhou Bianzhi (public personnel institution). This is the main reason for me to come ZUCC. I thought even if it was new, the founding institutions were big and trustworthy. (Faculty Interview No. 18)

This is a representative answer from various faculty members I interviewed when asked why they have chosen to join ZUCC. In the interview with one of the senior administrative official at ZUCC, MinCheng MinXiao was explained as a kind of

strategy to raise the institutional starting bar and set a good beginning for its future development.

> MinCheng MinXiao is a good label for us. Hangzhou City provides policies and lands; ZJU offers faculty and teaching/administrative resources. This is a very high starting point for us. This is why we are confident about the quality and development of our school. (Faculty Interview No. 5)

In this strong partnership, one is the provincial capital of an economically powerful province at the Yangtze River Delta region and the other is a 985/211 project top university in China. Both are public forces and well-recognized brands, which provide strong credibility for the new-born college. It partially explains why it can develop so fast. Within 6-7 years, ZUCC has reached the size of a ten thousand student campus.

One interesting story told by one interviewee captures how the new school started as a shabby one and transformed into a decent-sized college in only 6-7 years.

> When I entered ZUCC in 2000, there was no library and no sports field. We had to go to the sports field in the neighboring school for PE classes. It was just not like a college at all. You had to walk through a small alley to find the school gate. There were only two teaching buildings, which belonged to the Zhejiang Postal School (ZUCC was built on the physical location of the former Zhejiang Postal School). The Science & Technology Building (a 15-floor building, tallest on campus) was still under construction. Back then, if we wanted to do experiments or search for some academic information, we would have to take buses to go to the ZJU campus, which was very inconvenient. Two years later, a small library was set up in the second floor of the Science & Technology Building. This library was relocated to the northern campus library site (a 4-floor building) in 2006. (Faculty Interview No. 5)

Lack of normal educational facilities at the beginning and developing at almost a

light speed are the key aspects for ZUCC's early days. This may tell how urgent it was to establish such a school to meet the fast-increasing family demands for HE and the demands for well-educated talents in the wider society. Even the facilities are not fully ready, but the school has already started recruiting.

The birth of ZUCC was also a necessity at the right time. 5 of the interviewees actually worked at ZJU before they moved to ZUCC as teaching faculty. All of them first taught part-time at ZUCC and later transferred to ZUCC out of some careful calculations. The strong public ownership and the transfer of ZJU senior administrators to support the start of ZUCC provide them some confidence in this new school.

> Quite a number of the ZJU-transferred faculty asked for the transfer as I did. Back then, the merging of four high-quality HEIs in Hangzhou to make the new comprehensive ZJU caused some frictions in management as well as redundancy in faculty and staff. The economics department I worked at was just one of many. Moreover, ZUCC's pay and benefits were better. I was told that if I transferred to ZUCC, the overall development prospect was no worse than that of staying at ZJU. And I was better at teaching than at researching. So I came. (Faculty Interview No. 12)

The merging of four campuses mentioned here is an important HE reform movement in the late 1990s, when the state sets up a series of projects to build China's world-class universities, including the well-known 211 project and 985 project. The short path is to merge several local universities into one big comprehensive and competitive one with high volumes of research output and large numbers of students/faculty. In Zhejiang province, old ZJU, Zhejiang College of Medicine, Zhejiang University of Agriculture and Hangzhou University merged together to form a new ZJU with a huge new campus built at Zijingang and old campuses serving as branch campuses. This has resulted in four campuses of ZJU in one city and further restructuring was needed to deal with the redundancy in human resources. During the interviews, it is found that in the early days many part-time

teachers at ZUCC came from different campuses of ZJU and these teachers could fulfill their teaching load requirement by teaching to a certain load at ZUCC, although they were still in the personnel system of ZJU. This was believed to be a way to encourage ZJU faculty to participate in educational duties at ZUCC, which helped to provide important faculty resources for the expanding new college, control the running cost and divert the redundancy of ZJU. So it was considered not only necessary, but smart creative mechanism to achieve several benefits in terms of management.

The eagerness for good-quality higher education was also one important aspect for the birth of ZUCC. This was also one of the reasons for China's expanding HE since 1998. Education was widely believed to be the way to change a person and a family's fate. With the one Child policy, many families were willing to put most of the financial resources on the education of their children.

> This is the influence of Chinese traditional thought. All the Chinese families, no matter how hard their life is, hope to send their children to college. Even for a janitor, he or she will work hard to save money to pay for the child's college education. So there are not enough colleges available. (Faculty Interview No. 7)

That traditional thinking, combined with the economic opportunities at the new age, provides a lot of impulses for HE. Satisfying the social demands for better education and serving the economic development are mutually supportive and dependent. With the economic boom, especially in the east coast provinces such as Zhejiang, more parents are capable of affording high tuition and are more than willing to pay for it. Therefore, it became a timely policy move to allow already-established public HEIs to find necessary resources or partnerships to open new institutions for those who could pay but whose scores were not competitive enough to get them into well-established public HEIs.

Just as ZUCC's shabby and poorly-equipped campus shows, the early stages of ICs were quite imperfect. In the interviews with faculty/staff from other ICs in Zhejiang, the early days were usually depicted as chaotic or abnormal.

> The independent college of Zhejiang University of Technology was on the same campus of ZUT. Both institutions shared educational resources, including buildings, classrooms, libraries and etc. Students at the Independent College were basically enjoying everything students at ZUT had, only they paying more tuition. And even when they graduated they received the same diploma. Xiao Zhong Xiao (school within a school) was the common running model for many ICs in the early days. (Faculty Interview No. 15)

By doing this, the ICs saved the founding institution a lot of running costs and the high tuition brings income to stimulate those established public institutions to push the size expansion. In the case of ZUCC, Xiao Zhong Xiao model was not adopted because the Hangzhou government, as a founding partner, provided the precious land, which many other ICs in Zhejiang did not enjoy. However, ZUCC did enjoy the sharing of faculty and administrative resources from ZJU, which not only lowered the running costs but maintained a good educational quality and reputation for a new-born school. Similarly, all the ICs in the early days awarded the founding public HEIs' diploma, which was criticized as a sign for the chaotic and unfair situation then.

As discussed in previous chapters, the birth and fast-track development of ZUCC coincided with the stories of many other ICs in China. It is commonly understood that China's HE massification era happened around 2000 (Mok, 2008) and the state adopted some "privatization" policies to draw financial resources from families so as to afford the more than 15 percent increase of HE admission every year between 1999 and 2008. ZUCC, born in an economically developed province, was supported by both the provincial capital government and the top university, which are powerful and significant public forces with big reputation, and followed a flexible mechanism to quickly start the running of a new school. Even though the early days were characterized as "unstandardized" and "chaotic", its appearance met the demands and needs from various sides, including the government, the public and the top public universities. Therefore, it can be deemed a necessary result of the time.

A Product of Public Forces to Meet the Demands

What is IC and whether ZUCC is an exemplary IC are important questions frequently raised in interviews. Many interviewees at ZUCC have no problem explaining the original shareholding structure of the school. ZUCC was often referred to as a result of the partnership between the local government and the key public university or Min Cheng Min Xiao. Although generally ZUCC was considered by the faculty and staff to be a standard model, enjoying quite a big amount of "independence", some senior administrators were reluctant to categorize ZUCC in the group of ICs due to the bad reputation ICs have had in the media. Therefore, the goal is to break away from this socially-controversial group of colleges and get on a track to create a new type of HEI with good quality and high reputation.

The origin shareholding structure was mentioned whenever the issue of public ownership was raised.

> ZUCC was financial sponsored by Zhejiang Telecom Industry Co. with land appropriated by the city government. It was originally the site for the Zhejiang Postal School. This was a source of government support, since the land costed about tens of thousands RMB per mu. The other funding from the government was limited, only 15 million RMB in 3 years. We were mostly dependent on the tuition fees, 18000-20000 per student. Later, it was found that the school was in heavy debt because of the campus construction, so the city government helped to exempt us from paying the loan interests. So we have been paying back the 800 million bank loan debt with no interest... ZJU provided the personnel (administration), government gave policy support and the telecom industry Co. gave money. The partnership of these three sides worked to found ZUCC. Of course, now the supporting efforts from the government are increasing. (Faculty

Interview No. 9)

Here, Zhejiang Telecom was a state-owned enterprise, which probably participated in this partnership under the government suggestion. Therefore, the original and today's shareholding structure of ZUCC is heavily public. The fate of this school has been the concern of the local government since its beginning and its development is assured under the cooperation of several public forces.

> ZJU belongs to the state; Hangzhou city is the government and Telecom Industry is state-owned. These public ownership institutions founded ZUCC, but its running mechanism is people-run (minban), self-dependent revenue and expenditure. This is our model of public ownership and people-run mechanism… The joined work of ZJU and Hangzhou government made this school to reach a high level in a short period of time. What's more, the public forces improved the social recognition of ZUCC. This is the characteristic of Chinese society. If you run education, you need the participation of a public force. The government backed forces are always more trustworthy, and therefore, more attractive for the society. (Faculty Interview No. 6)

Told by a senior administrator, this is the basic definition of the so-called hybrid model. If ZUCC were a child, she was born into a good family. That good birth gave it an important advantage over other minban institutions. The trust it enjoys due to the strong public mother and father makes it possible for its quick growth.

The Zhejiang model, occasionally mentioned in the interviews, refers to the type of ICs founded mostly by public forces. Public HEI plus local government is key to their success. Some ICs in Zhejiang actually started with the total control and ownership of the mother public HEIs. Their beginning years were less independent because they shared campus, teachers and department settings with the mother HEIs. But that independency has been increasing because of the No. 26 Decree from the Ministry of Education, which requires all ICs to improve their independency in 7 areas, including campus facilities, teaching organization and administration, recruitment, diploma, fiscal budgeting, legal status and civil responsibilities. (No. 26

Decree of Chinese Ministry of Education)

> Presently, the ICs in Zhejiang still maintain their original institutional structure and are turning more standardized. Diploma, campus and finance are increasingly independent. Starting from 2013, many ICs in Hangzhou, which shared the campuses of the mother universities, have been on a process to relocate out of Hangzhou to set up their independent campuses. In this respect, ZUCC has been a standard since beginning. (Faculty Interview No. 9)

As a matter of fact, the Zhejiang model has been leaning more towards the public side since 2013. Many ICs, when moving out of Hangzhou and choosing a new campus site, seek the support and cooperation with the local governments, mostly county-level ones. The county-level governments offered lands, policies and even loans to permanently settle in the area, since this could be a boost for the local economy and beneficial for the long-term development of the area. For example, Zhejiang University of Technology Zhijiang College moved to Shaoxing in 2017 and is now helping Shaoxing government devise industrial & economic development plans. In return, ZUT Zhejiang College could get financial and policy supports, such as public personnel institution quota and land appropriation. The public HEI plus local government model, exemplified by ZUCC, is actually becoming more prevalent in Zhejiang. It seems that in order to successfully establish and run a HEI in a state-dominant country like China, the support from the public forces is of great importance. That natural gravitation is, explicitly or implicitly, turning all the ICs in Zhejiang to the side of public ownership, rather than a minban mechanism trying to disrupt the public-dominant HE system.

However, there is also another legitimate reason for these ICs to lean towards its public side. The social reputation of ICs, especially the public media coverage, is often associated with a negative image. In a public-dominant HE system, minban often means low quality and high fees. And in early days, many ICs awarded the mother HEIs' diplomas, which were even touted as a student-recruiting advertisement. The participation of some private real-estate companies was portrayed

as a way to occupy public lands and turn them into profit-making real-estate projects. In reality, many private partners did have a bigger concern for the short-term investment returns. Thus, the public view these newly-born HEIs with a dubious eye. The public or direct government force participation can give more credibility to these ICs. This partially explains why many ICs, in Zhejiang at least, have been trying to seek local government partners.

The unfavorable public media image is a concern for some of the senior administrators interviewed at ZUCC. They are aware of the problems associated with some ICs in China, though they consider the ones in Zhejiang are generally more standard and contributing to the right cause of education. The negative image of ICs has caused them to break away from the stereotyping of IC and call ZUCC "new model HEI".

> From the beginning we hold high standard and quality in running the school. We've been independent since the beginning. We had an independent campus, while other ICs carved a piece from the mother institution's campus and started recruiting students with only one or two teaching builds. They did not have independent financial power and the power to decide on some important affairs. We've had independent property rights, personnel system independence and campus independence since beginning. So we think our standard is higher and our leadership group doesn't think we are just like other ICs. Particularly, we are very different from the ICs in Hubei, which are more chaotic and profit-oriented. We belong to the top group in China with very standardized school administration and independent campus, such as Beijing Normal University Zhuhai College, ZJU-Ningbo College of Technology. To be Honest, the schools with high running standards are not willing to be called ICs and call themselves 'new-model HEIs'. This is trying to distinguish from other ICs. (Faculty Interview No. 12)

Here the ICs in Hubei mentioned by this interviewee are mostly started with the

participation of some private entrepreneurs who invested financially to form a partnership with the public HEI. Because these private investors considered more for return or fiscal balance, they were more eager to expand the student body, sometimes even that expansion exceeding the capacity of school facilities, which could cause many complaints and negative feedbacks from students and their parents.[12] In recent years, some of these ICs with private partners were turning themselves into full minban HEIs so they could raise their tuition to make up for the deficiency in school-operation funding.[13]

Social reputation is a huge concern for all the ICs, because they are all young colleges with no historical fame to rely upon. How they are perceived by the society heavily influence the number and quality of students applying for these colleges. And their public image can also affect the employment prospects of their graduates. For faculty, the social reputation can subtly affect the grant or project application success. Therefore, it is understandable to see some ICs try to keep them away from the unfavorable media image of ICs, though fundamentally these schools are similar in terms of historical background and growth process.

In another interview, the administrator interestingly categorized the ICs in China into three levels.

> The first top level is the ICs with pure public force participation. They have independent campuses and independent fiscal power. These schools do not ask for return and the public founders keep investing in the aim to improve school quality and development. Their quality is no worse than some second-tier public HEIs. ZUCC is one of these. The second level is the ICS with also the participation of mainly public forces and they also run on minban mechanism. Most ICs in Zhejiang belong to this group. Their independence level is not as high as ours.

[12] http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2003-09-18/1001773742s.shtml. This is a piece of news from Xinhua News Agency about the sub-standard quality problems with ICs in Hubei and three ICs were banned from recruiting students.
[13] http://wh.bendibao.com/news/2014530/56755.shtm. This is a piece of local news from Hubei on 7 ICs turning into traditional minban HEIs and raising their tuitions. It is mentioned if they kept their IC status, it is difficult or more complicated to raise tuitions because of the participation of public HEIs. Turning into full minban gives them the freedom to decide on tuition issues more freely. And the operational cost gap is a serious fiscal problem driving these ICs to turn full minban.

> Some do not have independent campuses and rely more upon the educational resources from the mother HEIs. Although their independence is not that high, their investment is continuous with no requirement for profit or return. The last batch is mostly the private individual invested and formed under the partnership between public HEIs and private investors. Therefore, these bosses pay more attention to investment returns, which cause all kinds of problems. (Faculty Interview No. 14)

The criterion in this categorization theory is based upon the level of public participation and return-demands. The more public forces participate in school operation, the less likely they demand for returns, and the higher education standards they can maintain. This may give us some idea why the society actually favors the ones with strong public backings more.

As a matter of fact, many ICs in China are undergoing some kind of transformation to find a suitable path for development according to their respective realities. In Zhejiang, there were 22 ICs before 2016. Wenzhou University City College transfigured into a traditional minban college in 2016 and called itself Wenzhou Business College, cutting its ties with the mother public HEI, Wenzhou University.[14] The rest 21 ICs have been working to improve their independence with 12 of them relocating to a new site for an independent and new campus, which was usually carefully coordinated under the support of some local governments. This is a sign to show the "Zhejiang Model" is turning increasingly public, since these relocating colleges are increasingly dependent upon the policy and land support from the local governments. And they hold their ties with the mother public HEIs tightly, evidenced by them keeping the title. Therefore, for many ICs in Zhejiang, the example set by ZUCC is actually what they all hope to follow. With the strong public force support, the benefits are evident in the context of a public-dominant HEI system.

[14] http://news.66wz.com/system/2016/05/10/104823073.shtml. This is a piece of news on Wenzhou Net about the transformation of Wenzhou University City College into a traditional minban college in 2016.

Running under Minban Mechanism--Unorthodox but Flexible

Besides the public ownership, running under a minban mechanism is also a distinct feature of ICs. How does the minban mechanism manifest itself? How is it perceived by the people working under such a mechanism? Generally speaking, the minban mechanism is not a characteristic as outstanding as its public ownership among the ICs in Zhejiang, which this research mainly focuses upon. In all of the interviews, at the end I gave a question to ask the interviewees to give a score on the rating of how much minban (private) the institution is. On the spectrum of 1 to 10, 1 means full minban; 10 means full public. Majority will give the score of 6, meaning it is more public-leaning. This is a result reflecting the public leaning feature of the Zhejiang model with no private investors joining the school board. Even when there is a requirement for the joining of a non-government social force, many ICs in Zhejiang have their fully-owned educational enterprises to sit in the board as a dummy so as to fulfill the legal requirement. However, there are some salient aspects repeatedly occurring in interviews that help to show how the minban mechanism works and what minban is understood by the Chinese administrators and faculty.

There is one important element mentioned by every interviewee to demonstrate ZUCC is actually running under a minban mechanism--the high tuition it charges.

> In 1999, ZUCC's tuition was 15 to 16 thousand RMB. Back around 2000, you have to understand how much 16 thousand is. Most people in Hangzhou made about 2000 RMB per month. The housing price was Hangzhou is about 3000 per square meter. Four years tuition could almost allow you to buy a small apartment in the city. So only those whose family economic conditions were really good could afford a four year college at ZUCC. Back then, some of our students were sons and daughters of business owners. Today (2017) our tuition is still around 18 thousand. The change is not big and now many family in the

city can afford this price." (Faculty Interview No.15)

The issue of tuition is a complicated story here. As it was set in the founding days, tuition played a key role in building and operating the institution. As was mentioned by another interviewee, "self-dependent revenue and expenditure" is a key feature for the minban mechanism. From the perspective of economic development level, 16 thousand was quite intimidating for many families in 2000. The self-dependent element was evident. ICs needed the tuition very much to start building and running the schools. Today, many ICs still charge around 18 thousand per year, three times higher than most public universities. That can be understood as a key feature of the minban mechanism. But the dissatisfaction about the inability to increase tuition at a reasonable level among faculty and administrators I interviewed shows the constraints many ICs running under the minban mechanism faces.

> ICs like ZUCC faces a big difficulty, that is the administrative constraint. For example, tuition. In many countries, the universities adjust tuition according to CPI changes. We are not doing this. For one, the bureau of education keeps a close eye on the tuition hikes. Any adjustment in tuition must go through some censorship for approval. They are very careful about the cost rise in people-livelihood related aspects, such as education. For another, the school is also reluctant to do so, because this might affect our student recruitment. The ICs in Zhejiang all maintain the same level of tuition. But if we could adjust it accordingly, it might help to improve our quality and standards. If our faculty recruited at a higher level, this could improve our competitiveness. Many universities abroad can attract top talents because they can afford high salaries for faculty. (Faculty Interview No. 8)

So the tuition, on the hand, sets ZUCC in a different category from public colleges. The almost freezing tuition for 18 years, on the other hand, shows the

[15] The price of housing in Hangzhou today is around 20,000 RMB per square meter in average; however, in 2000 it is only around 3000 RMB per square meter. The inflation is substantial, but the tuition of ICs has not been adjusted on the inflation rate. Therefore, more family can afford this tuition today.

complex story behind the minban mechanism. It is running under a minban mechanism, but that is one under the censorship of a local educational bureau. The increase of tuition could be deemed a potential cause for social dissatisfaction. To maintain higher education at a reasonable price is a key concern for the government. One side story on adjusting the tuition for a China-Australian (ZUCC-USQ) joint degree program at ZUCC offers some insight in the inflexibility of tuition. The Australian university has been demanding on the increase of tuition for quite a few years. It is said that the frustration the Australian side had with the rising cost and stagnant tuition has become one of the main reasons to end the joint program.

In addition to tuition, another feature indicative of the minban mechanism is the shareholding board system of the school. This is the second most referred to explicit character when I asked the interviewees about the minban mechanism. The board system in China usually exists among companies, especially the market-listed ones. It is often viewed as a modern system to bring enterprises or organizations closer to the influence of the market force. Therefore, in the reform and opening era of China, it has become a standard reform to inject dynamic forces into a rigid system.

> The board system was a great innovative attempt when ZUCC was founded. It formed a more dynamic structure for decision-making. From the stockholding perspective, ZJU and Hangzhou government have been main holders, who collectively make all the big decisions. In the past 15 years or so I haven't seen any really innovative new changes to the current HE models. From the perspective of commercial enterprises, the board is vital and decides on the directional changes of the organization. However, in our case, it seems very difficult to make real new changes, since the individuals sitting in the board are only representatives and their personal interests are not involved. Behind them are state-owned organizations. (Faculty Interview No. 5)

The introduction of the board system, from the start, seems to learn from the market force, hoping the modern enterprise system can bring vitality to the education experiment. However, as explained by this teacher from the business school, the IC

model has faced the challenge of running an innovative mechanism. How to charter the unknown water during development is even more difficult than starting a new school. In the case of ICs, many have been gravitated towards the public force during their development path. ZUCC has been heavily influenced by ZJU in terms of organizational structure and rules-setting. The faculty evaluation criteria are modeled on the ones from ZJU and student manuals also learn from ZJU. After all, it is much safer and easier to copy and adapt. Drawing upon the existing resources is a quick way to set up an institution in a short time. The board system allows multiple valuable contributors to join forces and share burdens. If it is not innovative enough, it is absolutely practical and useful.

Besides the tangible aspects for minban mechanism, there are some intangible ones showing its minban characteristics. They generally have something to do with a cultural perception. Some of the interviewees have been working at ZUCC since its very early days and they have witnessed the passion common among start-up businesses and the flexibility of the administrative office for benefiting students in early years. And they lamented the loss of these vitality elements associated with a minban experiment and the return of a menacingly cold old-day bureaucratic system.

> The ZUCC leaders in early days were more accessible, close to us. There were more communication channels between teachers and leaders. Leaders cared more about the needs of teachers. The atmosphere was very good. Principal Lu Shijie often came among us to learn our voices and listen to students' needs. I give you one example. In 2004, One of my students were doing an intern in Gansu and had to stay there for one more month, which caused a conflict with some of the important classes. I referred this student to Principal Lu for special case consideration. He took on this matter and sincerely helped to coordinate. In the end, the system didn't allow this and it didn't work out for the student. But the direct involvement of Principal Lu made us see he really cared the growth of our students. The spiritual support was touching. In these days, Principal Lu and other important leaders (Shu Ji, meaning party

> secretaries) always left their doors open. You could call them on their cell phones to frankly open a conversation. Now, if you want to see a leader, you have to go through a secretary. I can't even figure out which leader works in which office. So the message is clear. There is a line of separation. (Faculty Interview No. 1)

The early passion and flexibility in a start-up college and the increasing bureaucratization are a repeatedly mentioned topic among quite a few veteran teachers at ZUCC. When they entered ZUCC, a new college built on a minban mechanism, they had expectations for something new and dynamic. Some of these teachers were actually transferred from the old ZJU campuses, where things always followed a old development path. It was at ZUCC that they saw the passion and devotion only seen in a start-up business. They felt this was a minban experiment and they were creating something new from scratch. Such a thought excited them and they had a lot of motivation to push for its success. This is what I see as the implicit aspects for a minban mechanism. In China, minying (people-run) enterprises are often seen as more highly motivated, passionate and quick responsive to change than state-owned enterprises. That helps with the competitiveness of these minying enterprises in the market. For them, it is a game of either developing or dying. Not like the state-owned enterprises, they can't enjoy any preferential policies or subsidies in hard times. It is the same for minban HEIs, such as ICs. In the interviews, many teachers mentioned the importance of teaching quality and students' satisfaction. ZUCC once made teaching as the primary task for teachers and teaching quality as the life line of the school. Because as a HEI dependent upon the student tuition, the satisfaction rate of these customers and its reputation among parents are of paramount importance. Just like a company, the products shall bring customers what they need so as to attract more customers. ZUCC finds itself in a similar position, as good teaching quality can bring more students to join ZUCC.

However, in recent years, the key focus of ZUCC has gradually shifted to many other tasks. Research has been increasingly stressed as it is a key factor in building a high-rating college and it brings prestige in a way different from teaching quality.

Internationalization and entrepreneurship are also frequent buzzwords appearing in documents, as they are part of the social trends brought onto agenda by many colleges. The cultural value of a minban institution is fading. People started to refer to the negative stereotype associated minban in China, which is high tuition and poor quality. Gradually, the path is turning to look more like a standardized public institution, which ZUCC has a lot to learn from ZJU. If not learning everything, the rich institutional and academic resources at ZJU should help ZUCC find a suitable path agreed by both of the two key public shareholders in the board. (Path dependence, student-suitable)

Backing from Local Government

As a public owned IC, ZUCC's relationship with government is clear from its beginning. The Hangzhou government provided numerous supports to ensure its good start, including land appropriation, bank loan arrangement, public personnel policy support and shareholding structure participation. Almost all the interviewees refer to the participation of a government as a benign sign beneficial to the educational cause in the long run. They see the more ZUCC can win the support from government, the better it can develop and prosper.

Firstly, the participation of government is demonstrated in the shareholding structure, legal person choice and key leadership appointment.

> Strictly speaking, from the shareholding structure perspective, almost all the HEIs in China are government-owned. Colleges, like us, are similar to reformed state-owned enterprises, to some extent. Our educational products charge fees based on the market value, but our management is fully state-owned enterprise style. From shareholding to key personnel appointment, it is all following the model of state-owned enterprises. Our principal is never publicly recruited, approved by the board. He or she is appointed from the government force above and the management officials have administrative titles equal to that of deputy

provincial department level officials. They report to the higher level officials and are subject to the supervision. And ZUCC's legal person is the vice mayor of Hangzhou. (Faculty Interview No. 5)

This is a frank statement about the high level management structure of ZUCC. To a great extent, the management administrators are treated as government officials, in terms of evaluation and welfare benefits. Therefore, the development path of such colleges will answer to the needs of local governments, rather than to some individual who is intent on undergoing some educational experiment or creating some new model of education. Interestingly, the market mechanism is partially utilized to achieve a public goal under the approval and guidance of local government forces. This is actually one major reason I argue that neoliberalism argument for the "privatization" of China's HE is problematic. On the surface it is charging fee and shifting the burden of cost to families and students; fundamentally, the public force is always in control and decides the extent and scale of that "privatization" (Mok, Harvey). This is only a practical solution to solve an urgent problem under certain historical period and should not be considered a fundamental institutional restructuring, as it happened in the educational system of U.K. and U.S.

Secondly, in terms of the whole personnel system, ZUCC has won the strong policy support from the Hangzhou government since beginning, which makes it easier to attract top talents and gives ZUCC a big advantage over traditional minban HEIs.

When I first entered ZUCC, I knew I was in the Hangzhou public personnel system. There was a certain number of public personnel quota appropriated to ZUCC as both a policy support and a way to attract good talents. I am not sure about the exact number, maybe about 1000 quota. This explains a lot about our public ownership. It is because of the participation of Hangzhou government that we can enjoy such a public personnel policy. Among all the ICs at that time, it was rare. Only schools like ZUCC, or ZJU-Ningbo College of Technology, were so strongly supported by the government force. The other ICs in Zhejiang (which are also mostly public owned with the mother

institution holding majority or full of its ownership), also tried to refer our case to the local government, asking for policy support and acquiring some public personnel quota. This personnel quota is very helpful for recruiting talents. (Faculty Interview No. 10)

The public personnel system among public universities is a key characteristic showing the strong connection between public universities and government institutions. Despite the recent attempts to reform the administrative structure and de-administrate (Qu Xing Zhen Hua) HEIs, many universities and colleges in China are actually public affair units, which mean they are more dependent on government support in finance, personnel system and administration. This is something seldom noticed by the scholars in the West. The high level leaders of these universities are basically equal to the government officials at relative levels. The teachers are, to some extent, equal to the civil workers in terms of the welfare benefits they can enjoy and retirement plans. And it is commonly believed that the positions within the public personnel system are more stable and beneficial in the long-run. Therefore, it becomes a big attraction for many job applicants.

In the case of ZUCC, the job advertisement usually shows the personnel affiliation. An ad showing the Hangzhou public personnel affiliation(Hangzhou Shi Ye Bian Zhi 杭州事业编) can attract more potential applicants then one showing company personnel affiliation (Gong Si Qi Ye Bian Zhi 公司企业编制), which provides only half of the benefits and does not guarantee a long term employment position. At ZUCC there is a third category of personnel affiliation, between public and company. That is called personnel agent (Ren Shi Dai Li 人事代理), meaning the employee can enjoy the benefits equal to that of Hangzhou public personnel but not in actuality a Hangzhou personnel affiliation. The welfare gap here is covered by self-raised funding of ZUCC. Basically, it is the best possible solution if the employee can't make it into the public personnel system. Because there is a certain quota with the public system, when the personnel quota is full personnel agent is a smart way to keep the competitiveness in personnel recruitment and bypass the quota issue. Of course, the school has to come up with that funding to equalize the benefits.

> We had an agreement with Hangzhou government when ZUCC was founded. They offered us a certain number of public personnel quota, which was about 700 (there is some discrepancy between the interviewees about the actual number). At the beginning, there were quite many empty seats; but with the time passing, these seats were quickly filled up. Now the public personnel affiliation is quite limited and we have to be careful to reserve these seats for teaching and researching faculty. There are already none available for administrative staff. (Faculty Interview No. 17)

The value of these personnel quota is obvious from the words of both interviewees and it has been considered as a policy boon advantageous for ICs, such as ZUCC. In my interviews with faculty from other ICs in Zhejiang, the Bian Zhi (personnel affiliation) also turned up frequently. In other cases, they provide the public personnel affiliation under the mother HEIs as a recruiting gold card. For example, Zhejiang University of Technology-Zhijiang College recruits faculty by promising to offer ZUT's personnel affiliation, which is the public university affiliation. Therefore, in these ICs with public ownership, most faculty and staff, especially the core teaching and research faculty have some kind of public personnel affiliation, similar to those of civil workers. Put it simply, ownership structure determines the personnel structure.

With the recent relocation movement of many ICs in Zhejiang, these ICs have been actively seeking stronger partnership with local governments. The Hangzhou neighboring areas, such as Shaoxing (绍兴), Shangyu(上虞), Fuyang (富阳) and Jiande (建德), have all become the new homes for these relocated ICs and the policy support from the local governments is shown in providing public personnel quota.

Personnel system, as a key aspect of an organization, tells a lot about what this organization is and who it serves. Obviously, for these ICs, university autonomy they can enjoy is limited by its ownership structure and personnel system. Ultimately, it is closer to an extension of government bureaucracy than an independent institution capable of setting its own development course.

Thirdly, from the perspective of student recruitment, we can also discover the increasingly strong connection with the public force. Some background knowledge should first be introduced to make sense of this aspect. In China the application and recruitment of prospective college students is a semi-planned process. Each HEI has their degree programs assigned into different tiers for student recruitment after these programs and the overall academic capacity of a college are evaluated and approved by either the Ministry of Education or the local bureau of education, depending on the supervision affiliation of these colleges. In addition, the number of students for each degree program is reported up to the Ministry or local bureaus and approved there. Every a few years, the degree program's academic capacity and student recruitment number are evaluated, so the program can continue. In this semi-planned system, to which tier a college is categorized into or in what batch of student admission process a degree program can start recruiting after Gaokao is key to what kind of students the college or the program can have access to. According to the post-Gaokao recruitment condition in 2018, there were about 200 first tier HEIs in China, including 112 Project 211 HEIs and 39 Project 985 HEIs.[16] These are the top tier HEIs in China, all public ones, and their programs can start recruiting in the first batch of admission process, which means the high-scoring students usually go to these programs and the lower tier HEIs have to wait for the turn in the admission process. Of course, many of these top tier HEIs have high academic reputation and proud history. Even if they are not given the advantageous position in admission process, they are probably going to be favored by many. However, the admission process means there is no pressure at all from the bottom to challenge their positions and they always enjoy picking the best batch of students into their baskets. Therefore, it is always the goal for the lower tier HEIs to enter the first tier and start recruiting in the first batch. Because admitting the best students makes it more likely to produce the best graduates.

So in the case of ZUCC, since its beginning, as an IC it has to recruit students in

[16] Project 985 and Project 211 are gradually phasing out and now replaced by a new and more fluid list of "Double First Class" (Shuang Yi Liu 双一流) HEIs according to the Ministry of Education. However, among parents and students, they are still used to the former way of rating HEIs. They still refer to these two projects to decide whether the HEI they want to be admitted into is top class.

the third batch together with all the high fee charging minban HEIs. That means in order to charge high tuition, it can only have access to the “left-over” students after all the good one have admitted the relatively high scoring students. For a long period of time, at ZUCC how to adjust the educational methods to suit the needs of these lower scoring students with less motivation for learning is a problem causing headache and debates. Therefore, it is believed even with the good educational resources ZUCC can provide, if it can have no access to high scoring talents the educational turnout can be less fruitful. When the time comes, seeking the opportunity to upgrade the college into the first tier and admitting students in the first batch is a strategically significant move.

Under this backdrop, in 2015 there were three degree programs first starting admitting in the first batch, and the recruiting quota is 180, which is a small number in comparison to the total recruiting quota of over 3000. So this was the first time to test the water to find out how the students and parents react. In the following years, the recruiting quota is steadily increasing and the degree programs admitting in the first batch are also expanding. In 2017 there were five degree programs recruiting in the first batch and charging public tuition, which is only a third or even less of that charged by most other programs on that same year. These are important early signs to show ZUCC is gradually upgrading or leaning towards a public HEI. The most sensational news came in 2018 that ZUCC started to open almost all the programs for recruiting in the first batch on the public HEI tuition standard, except for several newly established majors. That means it can now have access to the high scoring students in the first round of recruitment, just like other top public HEIs, and the tuitions it charges are fully public, from 3000 to 6000, with the rest of the tuition cost paid by the government.

Table 6.1 Student Recruiting Data for ZUCC

Recruiting programs	Recruiting number of students	Tuition (RMB)	Remarks
Computer Science	87	6000	Recruiting on the public HEI tuition standards
Civil Engineering	58	6000	
Finance	80	5300	
Asset Appraisal	67	5300	
Clinical Medicine	120	6000	

Source: 2017 Recruiting Plan for Zhejiang University City College.

http://www.gx211.com/news/20170711/n14997644824992.html

Table 6.2 Provincial Recruiting Plan for ZUCC

Province	Recruiting Number	Recruiting Batch	Remarks
Zhejiang	2016	First Batch	These are all degree programs charging on the public HEI tuition standards. Liaoning, Jiangsu and Guangdong are the provinces adopting a reformed admission process with three batches, including special advanced batch, bachelor degree batch and associate degree batch. Here the bachelor degree batch is a combination of the first and second batch recruiting, which means all the bachelor degree awarding HEIs can have access to all the students at the same time and compete at the same level.
Hebei	45	Second Batch	
Liaoning	19	Bachelor Degree Batch	
Jiangsu	80	Bachelor Degree Batch	
Anhui	50	Second Batch	
Fujian	50	Second Batch	
Shandong	50	Second Batch	
Henan	100	First Batch	
Hubei	20	Second Batch	
Guangdong	45	Bachelor Degree Batch	
Guangxi	20	Second Batch	
Sichuan	50	Second Batch	
Guizhou	20	Second Batch	
Yunnan	10	Second Batch	
Xinjiang	10	Second Batch	
Total	2723		

Source: 2018 Recruiting Plan for Zhejiang University City College.

http://zs.zucc.edu.cn/baokao_1_show.aspx?id=1044

It is right that ZUCC is turning public with the increasing public subsidies; however, it is still an independent college, or called by many as “one of the first ICs to recruit in the first batch”. Probably this is pointing a possible development path for the many ICs with public ownership. And all the upgrading is most considered as the result of both its excellent educational quality and the strong tie with the Hangzhou government.

> It is important to have government support if you really want to run a school well. At ZUCC, the situation is becoming better and the support from the government is also increasing. In 2015 we had three degree programs recruiting in the first batch. These majors charged public tuition. The tuition is about 5000, and the government subsidy is about 10 million. Not every IC can enjoy such a subsidy. These first batch programs are important for our development. In the future, hopefully there could be more. (Faculty Interview No. 11)

Here great importance is attached to the government support. The first three programs recruiting in the first batch and charging public tuitions are a proud thing for many working at ZUCC, showing the affirmative acknowledge to the educational progress of ZUCC and a good sign for its future upgrading.

Another interviewee gives the explanation for the upgrading.

> It depends on the popularity of ZUCC among students for each year's admission process. It means whether students think of us positively or not is key. So we chose our best programs with the best faculty force and high social popularity to be the first group of programs to recruit in the first batch. The recruitment qualification in the first batch is first examined by Zhejiang Provincial Bureau of Education. Then, after approved, it is up to the society to see whether you are truly recognized. If parents and students disagree, the qualification is meaningless. So now we can upgrade some programs to the first batch recruitment successfully, meaning the wide social recognition to our school. This is a good sign to tell us our quality has improved to a good level…Because of our brand name and the good birth background, we have done it in 15 years. Our graduates are suitable for the economic development demands of Zhejiang as well as the Yangtze River Delta Region. So the local government is willing to give you more support. (Faculty Interview No. 13)

He was very proud of the progress made so far and pointed to the support from the government as an important factor in the progress. The tie to the public force plays an indispensible role in the quick development of ZUCC.

Another interviewee summarizes the advantages the ICs with public ownership have over the ICs with more private capital involvement.

> In comparison to those with private investment, we have relatively big advantages. One is no profit-making requirements. The public partners care very little about this and usually have more long term plans. In those ICs with strong profit-seeking intentions, they have more strict rules on faculty spending, such as cost for attending academic activities. And a certain percentage of tuition revenue is carved out as investment returns. The other advantage is the faculty personnel affiliation. That personnel affiliation is also related to professional rank promotion. The ICs with no government support or less public participation have difficulties attracting young talents because these schools cannot offer secure public personnel affiliation and the related benefits with that affiliation. (Faculty Interview No. 4)

Basically, minban HEIs generally face more challenges for development, in not only seeking talented faculty but also recruiting high-scoring students. Mostly, they are limited by the lack of continuous fund injection and the public-favoring policy system. Simply put, the better welfare promises in public ownership ICs draw more attention from job-seeking young talents; the lower public tuition attracts more students and family. The intangible benefits, such as bank loan and subsidized program projects, are also giving some edge to the ones with public support. So in the long run, the ICs with public ownership are sure to outrun the ones without.

However, there is also another side to the public participation, which is mentioned by several interviewees as a hindrance to the development of schools, such as ZUCC. It has something to do with stifling bureaucratization and excessive administrative force.

> Our principle and the party secretary of our school are all government officials with administrative titles. They report to the government bureaus and it is their duty to align the school policies to the higher ones from the education bureau. Therefore, there is this issue of autonomy or liberty degree. Even though we are considered a minban by many parents and students, I feel we are leaning toward public HEIs. It is highly likely for us to be reorganized. If our leaders were not appointed, there might be other possibilities. But now ZUCC is just more like another administrative organization in the system. (Faculty Interview No. 15)

China's HE system is one with a long history of state control and planning. In recent years, with the economic liberalization the government has opened the policy window for schools run by non-government forces. However, the HE is still far from enjoying autonomy. Any careful look into the inner structure of university organization or the curriculum plan can show the influence of the state (Pan, 2009). On the one hand, the state force gives credibility and boost-start to these schools. On the other hand, it limits the rise of alternative educational models. As told by a faculty teaching in the Sino-Australian joint program at ZUCC, the conflict between the program-relevant core courses and the compulsory Marxist thought courses is a big headache for them. For them, the only solution seems to have students take 11-12 courses a semester in order to fulfill the requirements from both sides. This leaves little time and space for faculty and students to experiment anything new. Despite the big call for creativity and innovation in society, the current stagnant curriculum system does not allow the true spirit for creativity to take root in colleges.

Inextricable Ties to ZJU—Good and Bad

The inextricable ties to ZJU are discernible in many aspects of ZUCC since its

beginning days, including leadership group, faculty, program and curriculum design, academic standards and bureaucratic setup. And these ties seem contradictory to the name—Independent Colleges as well as to the government decree issued in 2008 to standardize the "Independence" of ICs. However, from another perspective, again this is just another practical move to solve educational challenges in reality. After all, it is the quickest possible way to model on what has been established and draw upon the available existing resources if the goal is to massively expand the size of HE in a short span of time.

In terms of leadership group, key figures, such as principal and party secretary, are always appointed by ZJU and approved by the board. So far, all the key leadership positions have been held by ZJU personnel transferred to the key position at ZUCC, who usually held mid-level leadership positions when at ZJU, such as dean positions at relevant colleges.

> The ZUCC school-level leaders are all sent from ZJU. They belong to the personnel system at ZJU and are evaluated at ZJU annually or quadrennially. ZUCC's first principal was Lu Shijie, who used to be the provost of ZJU (Vice President rank of ZJU). Wu Jian, the current principal, used to be Dean of Zhu Ke Zhen College (a key college attracting top-scoring students), ZJU. Basically, ZJU has a strong control over the future of ZUCC. Of course, the support is equally significant. (Faculty Interview No. 10)

These high-level leaders are veterans in the field of HE and have a lot of experiences working in the public-dominated system. Therefore, they are usually good at winning resources for the development of ZUCC. Today almost all the ICs in Zhejiang have their top leadership group appointed by the mother public HEIs. Fundamentally, these ICs are part of the big educational scheme of the public HEIs and they mean important contributions to the HE cause in Zhejiang, which can be turned into credits or bargaining chips for funds or policies in the future. Therefore, the ties are beneficial in both ways.

Faculty is another aspect to show the strong ties. However, the impact from ZJU faculty is decreasing in recent years with the increase of ZUCC self-recruited faculty and the retirement of old ZJU faculty.

> In the early days, the size of ZUCC was not big. Many courses were taught by faculty from ZJU, who came here to teach part-time or to fulfill their teaching hour requirements. Some of these early teachers were really good with their teaching experiences. Around 2003 or 2004, there is a big restructuring at ZJU. Suddenly, there was a big influx of faculty at ZUCC. Back then, about one third of the faculty force was former ZJU faculty. After that, the proportion has been decreasing with the entry of new faculty from the public recruitment efforts. (Faculty Interview No. 3)

The support of ZJU faculty for teaching was a big attraction for applying students. “The first-tier faculty for the second-tier students” is a saying raised up by quite a few interviewees, referring to the experienced and highly qualified teaching faculty to give lectures to low-scoring students with some learning motivation problems. Consider, even though your score couldn’t get you into the top universities to enjoy the top-notch professors’ lectures at ZJU, ZUCC could still offer you a second chance to have access to the top educational resources with more tuition. Many students were attracted by this promise of first class teaching resources.

Program design is another aspect to see the connection. In the programs, such as engineering, computer science and medicine, the reliance on ZJU resources is especially evident and strong.

> In early days, most of our faculty was part-time. And they came from ZJU, ZJU affiliated hospitals. Almost two third of the courses were taught by them…Today we still have quite a few ZJU teachers helping with teaching core courses, but we have more ZUCC teachers involving in the core course teaching. In clinical medicine, there are about 14 part-time teachers from ZJU or ZJU hospitals helping with the courses. In the senior year, students will go to ZJU-Hua Jia Chi Campus

> and spend the whole year there with the ZJU faculty group for lab work and thesis. So for the three majors we have, clinical medicine is the one heavily dependent on the ZJU faculty force; pharmacy used to the same situation and now it is almost independent with only one or two ZJU faculty helping; nursing is the one with still many faculty from ZJU and ZJU hospitals and the core curriculum are taught by teachers from the ZJU system. (Faculty Interview No. 8)

The interviewees from civil engineering and computer science also revealed similar situations. They could share labs at ZJU to allow some top ZUCC students to work there or have ZJU teachers or graduates from ZJU doctoral programs to teach some of the core courses. As a matter of fact, many newly recruited faculty at these two programs were graduated from ZJU, which made it easy for them to maintain the connection for research and lab work. It is not an exaggeration to say the ZUCC programs in civil engineering, computer science and medicine are kind of offspring from ZJU. This condition also exists in other programs at ZUCC, in varying extent.

Before 2005, most academic quality insurance was done with the participation of ZJU. For example, final examination papers had to be sent to ZJU for approval and degree related core courses had to be approved by ZJU. When applying for government grants or key discipline points, it was usually ZJU professors leading the application team. These supports helped to keep the standards in check while experiencing quick growth. Therefore, they were widely considered beneficial to ZUCC's development in the early booming days.

In terms of bureaucratic management, the influence of ZJU is also evident, especially in early days. ZUCC has been modeling itself upon ZJU in organizational structure, management style, evaluation criteria and bureaucratic setup. In the words of some interviewees, it is the "old way style (Lao Tao Lu)" that ZUCC has been building itself upon. Just like any public HEIs in China, ZUCC has party secretary setup, in addition to the principal office. Also, in order to meet the same evaluation criteria for all the bachelor degree awarding HEIs, the management mechanism for evaluating faculty and department research/teaching responsibilities is basically the

same as the one used by ZJU, except for some adjustment to suit the current development level of ZUCC.

So are there any drawbacks or worries with the strong connection? Some interviewees did mention some for consideration, such as issue of loyalty among school leaders, increasing inflexibility in bureaucratic organization and lack of diversity or characters unique for ZUCC.

In bureaucratic inflexibility, the "old way style" was considered by some as "restraints", which make ZUCC look more like a public university.

> When ICs were established, the management model, operational model and evaluation mechanism all followed the old models, which meant basically one same mechanism. Your faculty sources, teaching program setup, teaching style, library setup and other things were almost the same throughout China. This determines that if ZUCC wants to be flexible and creative in organizational change, there will be some serious restraints. Today, we can see it is turning to be more like the old public HEI school model. Maybe it has something to do with its origin as the secondary college of the public HEIs. One thing we shall agree is these ICs do not have their unique characteristics and they just follow the 'old style way'. (Faculty Interview No. 11)

Maybe it has never been its goal to build a new type of HE model. After all, to solve the realistic challenge of giving more Chinese students the opportunity to go to college is the task assigned to these colleges by the time. To use the educational resources of public HEIs and have these well-known institutions to establish new colleges is practically the fastest way to build colleges with relatively satisfying quality and considerable student capacity. And as mentioned above, the public HEIs have never been trying to let ICs develop in ways of their own choices. Therefore, flexibility and experimentation on HE are never the priority consideration for school leaders.

Another worry also discussed in interviews is the loyalty of leaders. Since they are appointed by ZJU and report to ZJU in terms of annual work evaluation, it seems

reasonable to assume the ZUCC leaders may not put the interest of ZUCC first when it interest comes into conflict with that of ZJU. Though it is a rare situation ZUCC might come to, the issue of loyalty has got some faculty starting their career at ZUCC to question whether the ZJU appointed leaders will speak on their behalf. In 2018 ZJU's Zhejiang Engineering College started recruiting master degree students with the campus set up in the northern part of the ZUCC campus. Basically, ZJU, under the auspice of Zhejiang government, has decided to use the land and hardware facilities at ZUCC to open a new high-end graduate-level engineering college. This has caused some concerns among ZUCC faculty about the nature of this new college and the implications for the future of ZUCC. Some pointed to the loyalty of ZUCC leaders and showed dismay about what they or their leaders can do to protect the interests of ZUCC. Because this is a decision made by ZJU never formally announcing to let ZUCC faculty voice their opinions. And as leaders of ZUCC were appointed by ZJU, they also felt no responsibility to communicate this important decision to ZUCC faculty. Instead, answering to the requirements from the higher mother university is perhaps more important and sensible to do.

So the inexplicable ties to ZJU are mostly considered an advantage, especially in China's public dominant HE system. It has got ZUCC strong faculty resources, big brand name, government preference and institutional management experience, all of which prepare for the quick rise of a new type of HEI. However, these are out of practical considerations, rather than experimenting on some new HE model. Nowadays, the ties are turning increasingly intangible with the requirements from above to keep ICs "independent". But people, or personnel structure, have made these ICs almost inseparable from the mother HEIs. "Old way style" is probably going to stay that way if it is the same group of "people" managing based on their managing experiences.

Bias in a Hierarchical HE System

The last aspect that can help us understand the position of ICs in the HE system

of China is related to bias and prejudice all the ICs have to face. This is also touched upon in the previous chapter on students' perception of ZUCC. Here in the interviews of faculty and staff, this is an issue also frequently discussed. It is certain that in China's hierarchical HE system, the lower tier HEIs face not only less policy support from the government but society-wide prejudice.

In terms of unfavorable policy prejudice, some faculty shared their experiences in grant application to show the unfair treatment in the process.

> Just like our students being labeled IC students when applying for jobs, we teachers face the same labeling when applying for grants and project funding. Many grants favor the public HEIs. For example, the education reform project funding I tried to apply to. I found Hangzhou Normal University was able to apply to almost 20 grant supports. However, there were only 3 grant opportunities for the education reform projects from all the ICs in Zhejiang. Over twenty ICs competed for these 3 opportunities, while one public HEI can apply to more than 10. I wanted to apply, but the chance was too small. We were not on the same starting line as those public ones. So I really hope our school can enjoy a fairer social environment. After all we have made so much contribution to the talent cultivation in the past 15 years. We deserve better. (Faculty Interview No. 16)

It is not difficult to understand the local government is usually more willing to give support to those HEIs directly under their authority. Since the healthy growth of these affiliated HEIs is part of the social progress contribution in the government work report, the development of these public HEIs is of political significance in addition to economic and cultural values. ICs are, therefore, considered secondary or even peripheral when it comes to funding decisions.

The other interviewee's remark on his observation of official documents from Zhejiang Provincial Bureau of Education also confirms the peripheral position of ICs in policy consideration.

> ICs' position is a bit tricky and the local bureau of education holds

> a dubious attitude to these colleges. In the documents released by the bureau of education, the ranking of HEIs shows the hierarchical order in the eyes of the bureau. The key public universities always come first; then the public bachelor degree level institutions; then, the public associate degree level institutions; lastly, it is the independent colleges. My feeling is that ICs should at least be put in the category of bachelor degree institutions, since they are all awarding that degree. But in documents, ICs are listed behind public associate degree institutions. This shows the bureau holds some dubious attitude to ICs. What are they? Minban or public? (Faculty Interview No. 14)

As a new comer in the HE system, ICs are considered something between minban and public. There is lacking of policy guide on how to support its development, except for the No. 26 Decree published by the Ministry in 2008, specifying the minban nature of these ICs and the requirements for becoming "independent" in campus, degree, finance and etc.[17] At the provincial level, the priority often goes to the provincial level public HEIs. As mentioned before, some ICs have their faculty apply to funding in the name of the mother public HEIs, because applications from these public HEIs receive more preference in the grant allocation process. Using the words of an interviewee, "in the public dominated HE system, if a university wants to grow, finding some public backing can make it easy to gain access to all kinds of resources as well as social recognition." (Faculty Interview No. 11)

Another policy bias for ICs is in the student admission process. This bias is also relevant to other minban HEIs in China. In today's admission process, HEIs are usually put into different batches while admitting students. In most provincial admission policies, there are two batches of admission. The first mainly consists of public HEIs, including 985/211 Project universities. The second includes the rest of the bachelor degree institutions. In Zhejiang, before 2015 there were three batches: 1)

[17] The minban nature of ICs in the No. 26 Decree is mainly referring to the minban tuition these schools charge and the fact that these schools receive far less public fiscal support than the public HEIs. However, in reality the public universities being the key founders make their nature more ambiguous. Practically, how an education institution charges tuition is the basic way to determine the public or minban nature of an institution in China.

key public HEIs, 2) other public bachelor level HEIs, 3) minban bachelor level HEIs. Therefore, the hierarchical admission process is very apparent. The public HEIs always had priority in accessing the high scoring students. The minban HEIs were left to pick among the rest. However, in some provinces, such as Guangdong, the unfair admission process has been changed. Starting from 2018, all the bachelor degree HEIs in Guangdong have the same access to all the Gaokao students. That means minban HEIs and ICs can compete for good students with public HEIs. This is an important break to the public dominated HE system. But it still takes time to see how far the policy will go in terms of treating public and minban HEIs equally.

Despite the gradual reform, the psychological and social consequences of this hierarchical admission policy are indelible. Since the restoration of Gaokao in 1978, the admission process has been set up in several batches dividing the access order to good students. Parents and students have already formed this conception of ranking HEIs. In Zhejiang, even after the abolition of the third batch admission, many parents habitually refer to minban HEIs as San Ben (third tier Bachelor) HEIs, because before all the third Bachelor degree college were minban HEIs, including ZUCC. San Ben is like a social label to designate a positional status to all these minban HEIs. As explained by an interviewee, ICs all face this negative social stereotyping:

> Chinese society gives great emphasis to brand-name, ranking and hierarchy. Many companies only consider job applications from 985/211 university graduates, not independent college graduates. Parents and their children also follow the same thinking model. Being admitted into some top university is considered important for many things impacting the students' future. Therefore, in our society ICs normally receive social discriminations. ICs are considered low-notch and worse than the top universities in education quality. It is a difficult journey ahead of ICs. I often encourage my students to continue for a graduate education. This is a way to prove they are no less than anybody else. (Faculty Interview No. 10)

The social stereotyping affects not only the status of these institutions but the

people in them. Students are barred from applying for positions in certain big corporations and faculty face limited opportunities in grant application. The simple division of HEIs into different tiers has a lasting effect on the development path of not only the institutions but also the students graduating from them. It is like the tracking of students in high schools. Once a student is put in the science track, he or she is destined to become an engineer in career. That labeling or tracking system oppresses the inner voice of students and ignores the variety of individuals. In the same logic, the simple division or categorization of HEIs can reduce the dynamics of HE and lead to the homogenization of HEIs, which is a serious issue China's HE system faces.

In response to such social stereotyping, some ICs with good public resources are making efforts to distinguish themselves from the other ICs. ZUCC is an example by calling itself "New Type" (Xin Xing 新型) in school introduction. During interviews, some senior officials also think ZUCC is developing on a path of its own, not willing to put it into the negatively imaged IC group.

> The social reputation of ICs is not very good. This image is hard to revert. Now we call ourselves 'New Type' HEI. Although we are not so sure what this 'New Type' actually includes, it is a gesture to show we want to find a way of our own. I feel the future is leaning towards public. The resources and reputation for public ones are important and advantageous. (Faculty Interview No. 5)

In a public dominated system, picking the winning side is probably the right decision. The road for minban HEIs is going to be tough. In reality, it is true that minban HEIs usually have lower educational quality. But it is the result of a combination of factors, not just the inside problem with the school. The funding difficulty to attract good teachers, the policy hindrance to access good students and the social stereotyping of minban are all outside factors creating an unfavorable soil for their development. In the case of ZUCC, most of its degree programs are turning public after securing the full public support from the local government. The ICs with public ownership in Zhejiang are all seeking their ways to strengthen the ties with local governments so as to ensure the policy and funding support. What used to be a

new model of minban is gradually turning to some ordinary public HEIs. The innovation in institutional mechanism is losing its luster after they have fulfilled their historical purpose.

Summary

In this section, faculty's knowledge on the nature of ZUCC is depicted. Because of their long term immersive participation in the institution, their knowledge is more nuanced and insightful. Through their lenses, we learn how ZUCC was given birth and the practical reasons underlying the emergence of independent colleges. Also, it seems majority of the faculty point to the importance of the strong backing from the local government and the inextricable connections with the mother public HEI. And further nuanced knowledge about ZUCC's relationship with the local government and the mother institution is provided to show both the obvious and the shady area of the whole story. Despite the quick establishment of social reputation with the participation of public forces in the building of ZUCC, concerns about bureaucratization, loss of innovation and flexibility, and lack of independence from ZJU are legitimate if the institution plans to find a path of its own. In the end, the issue of stratification in a tiered HE system is also recognized by the faculty group. And for many, finding a way to break away from the negatively portrayed image of minban institutions is a solution to the problem. Building strong ties to the public force and turning minban tuition programs into public tuition ones are some of the agreed practices.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Retired UCLA education faculty, Frederick Erickson argues that "ethnography should be considered a deliberate inquiry process guided by a point of view, rather than a reporting process guided by a standard technique or set of techniques, or a totally intuitive process that does not involve reflection"(1984, p. 51). Inspired by this ethnographic approach, I entered the field as an observing participant, working for the English department, and was determined to offer an insider's perspective on recently-developed independent colleges in China. I grounded my fieldwork in the literature on China's higher education system and its privatization reform in higher education. The key goal of this dissertation is to make sense of these independent colleges in the context of China's higher education system. Particularly, I focused on the physical artifacts (programs, personnel system and admission ad) and the assumed perceptions (perceptions of students and faculty) to narrate the institutional story of ZUCC, in which the question about its identity as a private/minban HEI or a public one is interrogated.

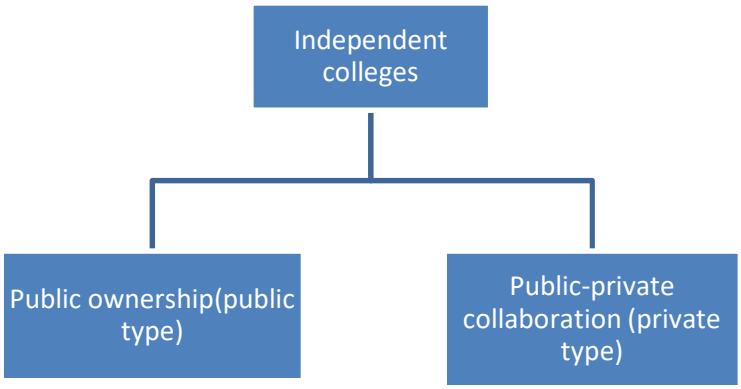
In this dissertation, chapter two takes a historical view at the development of China's private higher education since its emergence in the 1910s. Great attention is paid to the Reform Era (1978 to today), because this is the period characterized by a post-socialist market reform and most relevant to the social context for the rise of independent colleges. A typology is given to make sense of the private higher education structure in current China.

Chapter three looks into the status quo of independent colleges in China, attempting to answer questions, such as what are independent colleges and how they have developed. Through focusing on the regulatory government documents, the development path of these new HEIs is portrayed and the basic characters are depicted so as to offer a knowledge foundation on this new type of hybrid institutions with Chinese characteristics. At the end of chapter two, some background knowledge

about the independent colleges in the province of Zhejiang is introduced so as to both recognize the regional character of independent colleges and set the stage for the ethnographic study on Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC) in the following chapters.

Chapter four to six provide the detailed research results on the ethnographic case study of ZUCC. Chapter four focuses on the physical aspects of the institutional story, including history, founding background, programs, tuition and personnel structure. Chapter five provides the interesting insights from the perspective of students. Their perceptions show the importance of social reputation of the founding public institution. And the stereotyped image of independent colleges—third tier colleges (San Ben)—limits the opportunities for these students, some of whom make efforts to climb up the internalized social ladder of higher education institutions. Chapter six reveals the knowledge of faculty working there for more than 6 years. Their understanding provides valuable insights into the birth story of ZUCC, its minban mechanism, the roles of the two founding partners (Hangzhou government and ZJU) and the bias against independent colleges in a tiered higher education system. It is important to note that students' perception and faculty's perception are quite different in terms of attention and stand, but their views are also mutually corroborating. The social capital that comes with the founding parties can have a significant impact on the resources and reputation enjoyed by an independent college, while the existing tiered system stigmatizes the institutional image of these new colleges, which in turn implicitly hurts the people studying and working there.

Figure 7.1 Types of Independent Colleges



Independent colleges in China are a new group of HEIs, established at a time of higher education expansion (massification era) and assuming the historical task of providing higher education opportunities without causing financial burden to the state. Because of the strong role the founding public universities play in the establishment and operation processes, these colleges have been shaped in a way suiting the requirements or plans of the founding public universities. As shown in the above chapters, despite the categorization as minban colleges, independent colleges have most been influenced by the founding public universities in academic programs setting, faculty composition, personnel structure, administration and campus culture.

In this research, the fieldwork is based upon the independent colleges in Zhejiang, where all but one independent college follow the model of public ownership and minban operation mechanism. And this public type of independent colleges is the dominant form in Zhejiang (21 ICs) and Jiangsu (24 ICs) provinces. With the 2008 regulatory government document, many independent colleges are adjusting to meet the requirements on keeping themselves "independent" from the founding public universities. Quite a number of private type independent colleges—having both public and private founding partners—chose to transform into traditional minban HEIs, divesting from the founding public universities. The number of independent colleges declined from 322 in 2008 to 265 in 2017, which can be largely attributed to the

transformation. And also due to the 2008 document, many public type independent colleges, particularly the ones in Zhejiang according to the research, have looked for opportunities to partner up with lower-level governments so as to meet the 500 mu independent campus size requirement and secure long term government funding and BianZhi support. In Zhejiang, over a dozen independent colleges have been undergoing such campus moving plans.

Therefore, from a macro-level, independent colleges have experienced an expansion period before 2008, which coincides with China's rapid massification since 1999 and later entered a period of regulation and adjustment to deal with the social criticisms against some illegitimate behaviors, such as awarding public university degree paper and sharing campus facilities with the founding public university.

To understand the social context for the rise of independent colleges, it is important to discuss the influences of market and state forces. Before the 2008 regulatory document, particularly before 2003, the public universities took the center stage in establishing and running the precursors of independent colleges with either other public partners or private investors. This was the period when the market mechanism was considered a useful tool to realize the goal for higher education provision expansion. In the high days for China's post-socialist market reform, particularly after China's entry into WTO in 2000, the large social trend was to carry out the market reform in all areas so as to both stimulate the economy and reform the backward social and economic organizations. The public universities took this historical opportunity and went ahead to take advantage of their academic capital to engineer a new type of HEIs. During this process, pragmatism plays a key role in deciding how to charge tuition, how to organize academic programs and where to set the campus. This is probably the reason that scholars focusing on China's higher education refer to the rise of minban/private institutions in this period as the neoliberal movement in the China context (Mok, 2007, 2009; Yan, 2010).

However, the social outcry pointing to the irregular behaviors in independent colleges began to catch the attention of the media and eventually the government. The state began to come back to take up its role to regulate and respond to the rising

discontent. The 2008 document is a good example of that regulation. Since then, independent colleges had to find ways to meet the requirements and turn to an adjustment path to ensure its survival and quality.

In a socialist market system, the state's role should never be underestimated. China's public dominant system puts the public institutions in the core position and the minban institutions in the peripheral position (Altbach, 2005). All levels of the government have a natural trust for public universities, since they all serve the same purpose of economic development, political indoctrination and nation-building. The central and local governments are more likely to see the founding of independent colleges by public HEIs with more trust and as an important strategy for local social and economic development. Therefore, despite the pragmatic orientation and the intention to invite market force into higher education, the participation of public HEIs and the strong tie between the public HEIs and the local governments determine the public leaning nature of these independent colleges. The tuition charging is only a pragmatic tactic to mobilize funding from families. The freezing of tuition is a sign for the underlying influence of the government regulation and checking system to ensure the clam-down of the public discontent. So it is safe to say that the state has never disappeared from the picture and the market force has never truly penetrated the public dominant higher education system of China.

From a micro-level perspective, the ethnographic case study on ZUCC provides further evidences about the public influences inside the institution. In the chapter on the physical aspects of the education at ZUCC, the two public founders—ZJU and Hangzhou government—underlie the founding story of ZUCC. The purpose is to meet the rising demands, serve the local talent needs for economic development and assist in the personnel restructuring of ZJU during its merging process. It is important to note that this dual public connection has greatly helped to win public credibility and reputation for this new born college. For both students and faculty, when they have to consider whether to choose this college for study or work, the public founders' credibility and their strong academic/political influence serve to win their favor. It becomes one of the main reasons for the quick rise and expansion of ZUCC (less than

10 years to expand into a college with over ten thousand students). In addition, the programs offered at ZUCC and the supporting academic resources from ZJU show the underlying ubiquitous influences from the founding public university. The upgrading of some programs from the third tier minban tuition charging to the first tier public tuition charging implies the development path of this institution is more likely to turn increasingly public. And it is probably the will of the founders to formally transform ZUCC into a public one once the historical role it has played has been satisfactorily fulfilled.

Bianzhi is one particular feature within the administrative system revealing the true nature of the institution from an insiders' point of view. A large group of the faculty force enjoy the public personnel affiliation and are in fact employees of the Hangzhou government. The public personnel affiliation is favored by many employees of ZUCC, because it enjoys better job security and welfare. However, the other personnel affiliations, such as the enterprise affiliation, are considered inferior. And they create a hierarchical personnel affiliation inside the institution. Interestingly, similar to China's higher education structure, the closer you are to the public force, the better security and credibility you can enjoy. Again, this can be attributed to China's public dominant system, where the top-class educational resources are all in the hands of the public forces. The students and faculty are aware of this public dominant tendency and are naturally attracted to the institutions associated with public forces.

When exploring the perceptions of students and faculty inside, two assumptions stand out to exert influences on the perceived image of ZUCC among them. One is the social reputation and credibility associated with the public founders. Both students and faculty identify it as an important factor to be attracted to the institution. This assumption makes a lot of sense, considering the public dominant system creates this more credible image of public HEIs.

The other assumption may not be strongly associated with the public founders, but show an interesting stigmatization of independent colleges, because of its minban categorization and SanBen status. An invisible wall is built up between the public

HEIs, occupying mostly the first tier positions, and the minban HEIs, burdened with the negative stereotype of being inferior and high fee charging. This psychological barrier has impacted the self-image of students and many of them are trapped in this socially constructed image, despite efforts to break out and prove their worthiness. Though being more rational, faculty also face some of this similar bias due to the artificially designed hierarchical order of HEIs. For them, it has more to do with grants and funding opportunities. It is important to note that this bias is embedded in the long term domination of public forces in education. People grow used to the idea that public universities are more credible and longer lasting and minban ones are usually profit oriented and less trustworthy. Therefore, this public stereotyping contributes to the quick rise of these independent colleges backed by public universities and sometimes even local governments. To a great extent, I argue this actually provide evidence for the tremendous role public influences have in China's higher education. And it is contrary to the argument that these so-called new colleges, formally categorized as minban institutions, show the evidence for the privatization or marketization of higher education in China. This research shows insiders' investigation into the internal organs of independent colleges reveals a lot about the strong public influences, both physically and psychologically. This is what the official statistical information cannot reveal.

Privatization with Chinese Characteristics

Altbach argues that internationalization and diversification are the two major trends in the growth of private higher education worldwide (2005). Internationalization might be another story beyond this dissertation's focus. Diversification can be used to explain China's newly-emerged independent colleges. In a time of massification, new HEIs were created to meet the new demands. Usually these new HEIs have some private characters since their emergence is situated in the market reform background to meet the surging needs.

To China's story of privatization in higher education, scholars debate with each other in terms of the nature. Yan and Lin (2010) refer to these independent colleges mainly as "commercial civil society." On the one hand, these institutions serve as an important supplement to the public dominant higher education system and may have the potential to turn into non-government "civil society" in China. On the other hand, a careful investigation into its founders or partners reveals the shadow influence of real estate companies or profit-oriented businesses and their short-term plan for economic returns. This side of the debate points to the rampant influence of market or business interests in higher education, which distorts the education nature of private/minban institutions. On the other hand, some scholars try to remind us of the vital role of the state. Wang (2013), in his study on China's privatization of higher education, argues the push for marketization is designed by the state as a pragmatic method to realize the massification with minimum cost and the state is the master mind behind its privatization movement. Therefore, for Wang, the marketization is never intended to stir up the structural or systematic change in higher education organization and it is never the true intent of the government to bring in market force into the higher education arena. As a matter of fact, the market force is always under the check of the state power.

Mok (2007, 2009), as a long-term follower of China's privatization and marketization, tries to apply the western concept of neoliberalism in the context of China, calling the increasingly private tendency of higher education in China (rising tuition and rise of minban institutions) as impacts of neoliberalism. Different from other scholars, Mok notices the role of the state was starting to return around 2012, when China's massification has reached a point where social discontent began to rise (2012). Therefore, it seems China's policy towards marketization vacillates between decentralization and centralization, depending on the social context and policy needs.

As a socialist market society with a strong state presence, I disagree that the western originated concept of neoliberalism can easily fit into the China context. As this research has shown, China still has a very public-dominant higher education system and the influence of the public forces can be observed in daily practices and

people's perceptions. The concepts such as choice and freedom, frequently raised in a market oriented system, are seldom discussed or noted by the participants in higher education system. So to understand China's privatization, it is important to evaluate the negotiations among different forces.

Burton Clark designed an analytical triangle to explain the complex interactions among three major forces, namely the state, the market and the academic oligarchy, when the neoliberal global force began to exert its influences in the 1980s and the universities underwent some structural changes in terms of funding and academic mission (1983). According to this cognitive model, the market's influence continues to grow and erode the academic power of universities and colleges. The states in many regions, especially the U.S. and U.K., withdraw themselves from their role of public higher education provider (Torres, 2002). Only some top universities, called here as "academic oligarchies", maintain the independence and capability to negotiate with the prevalent market force.

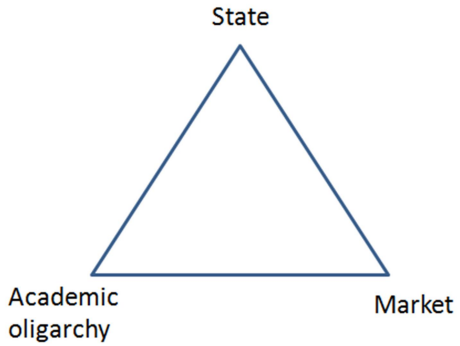


Figure 7.2 Clark's Triangle of Coordination (1983)

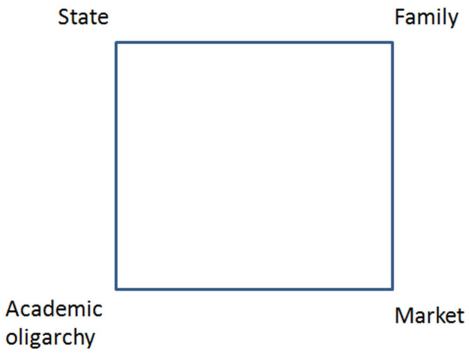


Figure 7.3 Revised Triangle of Coordination

In the case of China and the rising independent colleges, I theorize on the basis of Clark's triangle of analysis. With the anthropological ground research, family or public perspective is added to enrich the analytical model. In the case of China, market concept is an imported one, therefore it lacks the deep-rooted ideological belief in a market-regulated system. On the contrary, the state is widely considered as a more trustworthy provider for education. In the late 1990s, when the massification began, it was the state which introduced the hand of the market to help to solve the higher education provision problem. From the perspective of the state, the market force has been a useful tool to achieve certain goals and the state is always read to intervene when it sees necessary. In the case of independent colleges, the 2003 and 2008 regulatory documents are important examples to show the checking power of the state. The market force can only develop according to the path designed from the top, though the state also welcomes the vitality and self-sustaining ability resulted from the market competition.

In terms of academic oligarchies, the major top universities in China are all public. Behind the numerous independent colleges, one can find the indispensable influences of the first tier public universities. And the state regulation clearly stipulates that only the public universities can establish independent colleges. In the founding process, the public universities often seek partnership or policy support from the local governments. This Chinese characteristic compromises the independence of academic oligarchies. To a great extent, public universities work together with the local governments to set up independent colleges so as to provide the necessary talents and educational resources for local economic, cultural and social development. The state trusts the public universities with founding new institutions and the public universities try to win local funding/policy support for provision of educational services to the public and expansion of academic influences. The case of Zhejiang's independent colleges proves that the local government support is one of the key ingredients for their survival and development, considering the land requirements for new campuses and personnel affiliation system. Therefore, in the case of China, the

state and the academic oligarchies often coordinate with each other to serve the goal of higher education provision and expansion. But due to the control of key resources by the state, the public universities are more willing to seek partnership and their independence is usually considered secondary. For ZUCC, the partnership between Hangzhou government and ZJU not only provides a strong foundation for its quick rise but also wins the trust from the public. In general this kind of partnership is understandable and pragmatic in China's public dominant higher education system. Neither independent civil society nor neoliberal transformation is within the consideration of local government officials and public university administrators when they set up the new HEIs.

With regard to family, their needs and calculations should also be put into the picture, since it is their tuition paying and decision making that allows the quick expansion of independent colleges. To a great extent, the hybrid model of public ownership and private running is to suit the preference of these families. In China, many families dream of sending their children to the few top public universities, which is believed to bring glory and honor to the family line. Students interviewed all mention the brand name of ZJU is one of the key reasons for them to choose ZUCC. Therefore, it is their preference for top universities, behind which lies the long term tradition of passing the imperial examination to enter the elite class, that prepares the social and cultural context for the rise of independent colleges. They play an important role in shaping the privatization with Chinese characteristics. As mentioned by one of the interviewees, if ZUCC had another name, such as Hangzhou City College, the school would become less desirable. The attraction of being associated with the top university (elite class) is a driving force for many families to pay the triple tuition to enter the third tier (SanBen) college. Therefore, the participation of public universities is somehow a social necessity, because the families lend great credibility to these top elite universities. To some extent, the choices made by these ordinary families are turning the higher education system increasingly public. The trust is given to those with strong public backing, rather than the ones with only private founders. The bias against minban HEIs is embedded in the system, but it

results from the social attitude of the general public. Therefore, the family choices and preferences prepare the social and cultural foundation for the rise of independent colleges with public ownership but operating under minban mechanism.

Future Research

In the field of comparative education, China or Asian education is an important sub-field. However, a lot of researches are conducted from the outsiders' perspective. Some of them are marvelous and provide very insightful analysis to the particularities of Chinese or Asian education (Marginson, 2011; Hayhoe, 2011; Hawkins, 2013). There is a lacking of insiders' researches, a kind of researches that reveal the inner mechanism and insiders' viewpoints. For the many universities and colleges in China, there are many different facets: the different tiers of HEIs, the considerations of families and students, the western and eastern regional differences, the minban HEIs, the Sino-foreign joint institutes and the globalization of education from the perspective of local colleges and universities. China is a vast country with hugely different circumstances when it comes to higher education. The forces of marketization, globalization and massification all reflect themselves in a different way when it meets the Chinese context. Therefore, a lot more researches can be done to explain the characteristics coming out of this interaction between international forces and local contexts. Insiders' researches can surly help to enrich the knowledge on China's education and broaden the analytical framework for understanding China.

In terms of China's private higher education, as discussed in the second chapter, there are three major types: traditional minban HEIs, independent colleges, Sino-foreign joint institutes. Further researches can be conducted about other two types of private higher education. Traditional minban HEIs suffer from the social bias and lie in the lower ladder of the hierarchical system. The social stereotyping and the cultural worshiping of top universities all contribute to the difficult circumstances they have to endure. The lived experiences of students and faculty in these institutions

and how they perceive their conditions can be interesting topics to explore. These are important experiences from the bottom, which are not often given a lot of academic attention.

The Sino-foreign joint institutes are the results of marketization in the past two decades. Today there are quite a few globally prestigious universities already setting up campuses in China, including New York University in Shanghai, University of Nottingham in Ningbo, and Xi-an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in Suzhou. They form a small portion of China's higher education, but their presence is a sign of China's openness and the diversification of its higher education. These foreign universities try to maintain their original university mission and character while adapting to the local needs and meeting the local higher education requirements. How these joint institutes survive and develop in China is another interesting topic to explore. And how are they perceived by the local students and families? What are the experiences of studying in these institutions like? What conflicts or problems arise when the western educational models meet the Chinese educational practices? I am sure there must be many interesting stories within these Sino-foreign joint institutes.

This dissertation makes some efforts to contribute to the knowledge on Chinese higher education, particularly its private or minban part, from the anthropological insiders' lens. It is believed that more such in-depth insiders' research can be conducted to reveal the inner mechanism and experiences of the minban HEIs in China. It is the goal of this dissertation to explore the story of rising independent colleges in China and reveal the inside experiences of these newly-established minban HEIs.

Appendix 1: Sample Interview Questions

Interview Consent Form

Information on the Study

Thank you very much for considering participating in this research. The following is a detailed research guide for interviewees. Please read in detail to assist you in deciding to be a volunteer interviewee for the study.

Research question: this study attempts to explore China's "independent colleges" running under the publicly owned and privately run model

Researcher: Xiaopeng Shen (UCLA doctoral candidate in education)

email: xpshen@gmail.com phone: 13805784164

Faculty sponsor: Prof. Val Rust (School of Education, UCLA)

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Research summary: The research plans to use Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC) as a case to reflect the characteristics of independent colleges. It hopes to interview the people who are associated with this college to understand how this new type of independent colleges is made sense of and how the publicly owned and privately run model is played out in reality. Through depicting the case of Zhejiang University City College, the research tends to explain the private colleges with Chinese characteristics.

Interview questions

Part 1

1. How much did you know about ZUCC and independent colleges before you came here? Why did you choose to come to ZUCC?
2. What is your current impression of ZUCC? Is it different from your impression when you first came here?
3. How do you see the development of ZUCC in these years? What are the big changes in your eyes? Do you see changes in physical campus, faculty, student body and school vision?
4. Do you think ZUCC is an independent college? If so, what makes you include ZUCC as an independent college?
5. How do you see the connection between ZUCC and Zhejiang University? What are the ties and how independent is ZUCC?
6. What advantages and disadvantages does ZUCC have as an independent college associated with Zhejiang University?
7. What kind of higher education institution do you think ZUCC belong to? Or how do you think ZUCC define itself? Among all the four year institutions in Zhejiang how do you think ZUCC is ranked?
8. To what extent ZUCC is different or similar to public universities? To what extent ZUCC is different and similar to other independent colleges?
9. How do you comment on ZUCC in terms of its teaching quality and student body?
10. In your experience what do you think can best exemplify the characteristics of ZUCC?

Part 2

1. How much do you know about the publicly owned and privately run model? What are the pros and cons of this model? How did it emerge?
2. How do you understand the publicly owned and privately run model with independent colleges? What are the areas this model can found to exert its influences on?
3. What are the things in this college that can be explained as the influence of public ownership?

4. What are the things in this college that can be explained as the influence of private market mechanism?
5. Have you found any controversies over Zhejiang University City College and independent colleges overall? How do you think of these controversies? What are the influences of these controversies?

Part 3

1. How would you rate the degree of being public? 10 is being fully public and 1 is being fully private? Why?
2. How do you see the future of Zhejiang University City College and independent colleges overall?

Be noted:

a. You have the right to choose to participate in this study or not. And there will be no harmful consequences if you choose not to.

b. You can also choose to stop the interview if you feel any part of the interview making you uncomfortable and you don't feel like answering it.

c. You have the right to choose to answer or not to answer any of the questions above.

d. Your interview will be kept confidential. The interview data will be safely protected and kept.

e. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact me through the contact methods indicated above. I will try my best to answer them.

f. No personal information will be not revealed in the research and in the writing of the dissertation.

g. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to conduct a 1 to 1.5 hours interview based on the questions listed above.

Appendix 2: Sample Interview Questions for Students

Interview Consent Form

Information On the Study

Thank you very much for considering to participate in this research. The following is a detailed research guide for interviewees. Please read in detail to assist you in deciding to be a volunteer interviewee for the study.

Research question: this study attempts to explore China's "independent colleges" running under the publicly owned and privately run model

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Interview questions

Part 1 Personal Questions

1. Where is your hometown? What major do you study? Is ZUCC the ideal school for you when you pass the college entrance exam?

2. Could you talk about the situation when you filled in your application form? Why did you choose ZUCC? What are the considering factors when you select colleges?

3. What did you know about ZUCC when you filled in your application form? What kind of college did you know ZUCC was?

4. Could you describe your feelings or impressions when you first arrived at ZUCC?

5. What are the pros and cons for choosing ZUCC?

6. What level of college do you think ZUCC is today? What are the main characters of ZUCC in your eyes?

Part 2 ZUCC impressions

1. Could you talk about your program and your department? What are the major characters of your program and the department you study in? What is good and bad about the program?

2. How do you think the connection between ZUCC and ZJU is manifested? How do you perceive the relationship between ZUCC and ZJU?

3. How do you see the differences between ZUCC and traditional Minban colleges, such as Shuren university?

4. How do you see the differences between ZUCC and regular public universities, such as Hangzhou Normal University?

5. What is your knowledge about independent colleges? From what you have learned in and out of school, what is the common impression or evaluation for independent colleges?

6. Do you feel independent colleges are closer to public HEIs or private/minban ones? To what extent do you see them similar to public HEIs? To what extent do you see them similar to private/minban ones?

7. Do you feel what are the differences between us (ZUCC) and other independent colleges in Zhejiang?

Future

1. As a graduate from an independent college, what do you think are your strengths and weaknesses? When you graduate and enter the society, how do you feel you are treated and looked at as a graduate from an independent college?
2. How does the degree from ZUCC help or limit your personal development?
3. If you have to give a score (10=full mark) to the overall experience at ZUCC, what is your score? Why?

Be noted:

a. **You have the right to choose to participate in this study or not. And there will be no harmful consequences if you choose not to.**
b. **You can also choose to stop the interview if you feel any part of the interview making you uncomfortable and you don't feel like answering it.**
c. **You have the right to choose to answer or not to answer any of the questions above.**
d. **Your interview will be kept confidential. The interview data will be safely protected and kept.**
e. **If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact me through the contact methods indicated above. I will try my best to answer them.**
f. **No personal information will be not revealed in the research and in the writing of the dissertation.**
g. **If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to conduct a 1 to 1.5 hours interview based on the questions listed above.**

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