

# System, Structure, and Capital: A Study on the “Three Forces” System of Educational Governance in Private Universities

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**Abstract:** Institutions, structures, and capital are the core elements of educational governance in private universities, and their allocation methods and efficiency determine the quality of the educational ecosystem in private universities. From the empirical investigation in H Province, it can be seen that the governance of private higher education generally faces practical difficulties such as the constraints of regulatory implementation and supervision, insufficient guarantee of basic conditions, and internal friction caused by interest differentiation. From a theoretical and practical perspective, in order to optimize the educational ecology of private universities, it is necessary to construct a “three forces” system with organization as the core, scientifically allocate capital and structural elements; We must deepen the reform of the mechanism, streamline the relationship between the organization, board of directors, and administration; It is necessary to enhance leadership, decision-making, and execution capabilities, consolidate the innovative wisdom of all teachers and students in the school, and ultimately form a benign ecology of “organizational peace of mind, teacher and student satisfaction, and market efficiency”.

**Keywords:** Private universities; Educational governance; The Three Forces System; Leadership; Decision making ability; Execution power

Currently, private higher education in China is developing rapidly, with private universities accounting for 30% of the total number of universities and over 6.5 million students, becoming an important component of socialist higher education with Chinese characteristics. With the rapid development of the education market, the ecology of private universities has become an important issue in education governance. Guiding and standardizing the development of private education is an essential aspect of ensuring education that satisfies the people. Private universities are products of education marketization and an important carrier for the popularization of national education. Under the existing system, it is necessary to strengthen government supervision and guidance, optimize social reputation, and improve the employment market to better serve social and economic development. However, deepening the core position of organizational politics also faces a series of practical challenges such as adjusting the relationship between education and capital, deepening the integration of standardization and autonomy. How to optimize the governance of education in private universities, and correctly guide the formation of the “three carriages” to form a joint force is worthy of in-depth consideration.

## I. Overview of Governance Literature in Private Universities

The key to the governance of private higher education lies in the scientific allocation of the elements between the organization, the main body of education, and the administrative institutions. The academic community has fully recognized the important role of promoting the optimization of the education ecology in private universities, and has conducted a large amount of theoretical and practical research. Dong Xuejun and You Changshan (2009) conducted a systematic study on the strategic position, theoretical support, target content, team building, assessment and evaluation of ideological work in private universities. Dongfang Zhi (2012) proposed that it is necessary to strengthen the organizational leadership of private universities, not only to regularly organize coordination, supervision and guidance, evaluation and inspection, but also to care about assistance. Yang Song (2015) summarized the experience of Guangdong Peizheng College by leveraging the core role of organizational leadership, strengthening grassroots organizations, improving organizational style, and implementing mass line measures; Yu Zhifang (2014) sorted out the organizational work of private universities in Anhui Province and proposed six opinions, including “unified understanding, precise positioning, implementation of authority, highlighting key points, refining policies, and creating conditions”. He Binsheng (2015) proposed to use the “Five Reforms” as the driving force, promote the “Five Innovations”, improve the “Five Mechanisms” of work, and achieve the “Five Unifications” of educational governance optimization. Li Xiaoke (2018) believes that the organizational work of private universities generally faces practical difficulties such as insufficient attention, formality, and passive response, and proposes the “Five in One” work model; Feng Changyu et al. (2020) focused on the governance environment of private higher education and analyzed the impact of market environment, policy environment, campus environment, and network environment on the education ecology of private higher education.

These studies have effectively deepened the scientific understanding of the governance of private university education. However, with the transformation and development of private universities in the new era and the transformation of basic contradictions in national education, the governance of private university education is facing new challenges and opportunities. There is still a lot of room for exploration in its research: firstly, basic theoretical research on the optimization of the education ecology of private universities in the new era. Currently, due to the transformation and development of private education and the education market, it is necessary to re grasp the laws of private education, market, and governance; The second is to promote empirical and contemporary research on the governance of private universities. The current contradiction between the people’s demand for high-quality education and the imbalance and disharmony of higher education resources is prominent. The high cost of running private universities, uneven tuition fees, and quality of talent cultivation are the

focal points of the contradiction. How to respond to challenges, respond to needs, and actively explore the development path of socialist private education with Chinese characteristics.

## II. The main challenges of educational governance in private universities

In the new era, the governance of private universities has entered a new stage, and different types and models of private universities present different practical contradictions. Among them, the most critical three elements are “system, structure, and capital”, and their allocation and operation determine the governance efficiency of private universities. Overall, private universities are facing various changes in development requirements, educational models, student characteristics, market competition, and development demands, thus facing special challenges in educational governance.

### 1. Insufficient implementation and supervision of regulations and systems

In recent years, the education regulations of private universities have made significant progress. Not only at the top-level design level, but also in education regulations such as the Education Law, Higher Education Law, and Interim Provisions on the Establishment of Private Universities, provisions have been presented to regulate and support the innovative development of private universities. In addition, various provinces and cities have specifically issued many normative policy documents to promote the development of private universities in their respective regions. However, from a practical perspective, due to differences in productivity conditions, cultural ecology, policy environment, and development stages of private education, there are significant differences in the effectiveness and methods of implementing policies and regulations in the eastern, central, and western regions. For example, private universities in economically developed areas of the eastern region follow the path of “public new mechanisms”, while some regions in the southern and central regions follow the path of “career integration” development, and more regions follow the path of independent development. Especially for the latter, in the fierce competition of the education market, the tendency towards collectivization, regionalization, and high marketization is very obvious, leading to conflicts between the social and market benefits of some private universities, widening the gap with policy guidance and public demands, which needs to be highly valued.

### 2. Relative shortage of basic supporting conditions

Private universities generally attach importance to the efficiency of education, emphasizing the scientific allocation and maximum utilization of internal factors, which is reasonable. But the problem lies in the fact that the education industry itself has social, public welfare, and educational characteristics, and there is a value conflict between it and the excessive pursuit of assessment and quantitative management indicators and measures. Under the existing mechanism of private universities, “non profit” departments are often marginalized, with their forms outweighing their functions, and there is a tendency to prioritize administration over organization and business over ideology. This has led to severe uneven distribution of resources in terms of funding, personnel, and decision-making power. More importantly, in the talent cultivation system, there is a phenomenon of “leaning towards disciplines”, where there are often fewer majors with high funding and difficulty in teaching but good job markets. However, those who are enthusiastic about hosting “popular” majors with low investment find it difficult to form distinctive educational characteristics. Due to the uneven allocation of factors, the guiding role of organizations cannot be fully realized, which in turn leads to internal conflicts between systems, structures, and capital, making it difficult to form a joint force in the governance of private higher education.

### 3. Differentiation of ideas and interests

With the popularization of higher education and fierce competition in the market economy, private universities are facing new challenges and opportunities. One of them is that due to its unique institutional mechanisms, the difficulty of coordinating relationships among different groups within the school varies. Private universities need to handle external and internal relationships, the relationship between organizers and scholars, the relationship between schools and faculty, and the relationship between schools and students. Compared to public universities, the situation is more complex. If these relationships are not handled properly, it will inevitably affect or hinder the healthy and sustainable development of private universities. Specifically, due to the existence of “capital”, the organizers of private universities pursue the economic benefits of the education market and attempt to control and lead the educational behavior to the maximum extent possible. However, in terms of the existing governance structure, any private university cannot avoid the intervention of organizational leadership, which is determined by the system and management mechanism, and there is a competition for decision-making power between the two. In addition, as a market entity, private universities can enter the market through professional brokers, but cannot fully independently control the scientific operation of the education subject. This requires educational administrative power to allocate functions. In this process, as the behavioral subjects of employees and teachers, they will also join the game system to maintain and expand their own interests. How to coordinate the will and power of the three parties has become the core issue of educational governance in private universities.

## III. The Construction of the “Three Forces” System for Educational Governance in Private Universities

On the basis of empirical research in H province, it can be found that there is still a lot of room for exploration in promoting the modernization of governance in private universities, especially in the transformation of basic contradictions in the field of higher education in the new era. The governance of the education ecology in private universities faces new tasks, missions, and challenges, which require adapting to local conditions and exploring innovation.

### 1. Construct a scientific operational relationship between institutions, structures, and capital

The new mechanism of private universities is a new transformation, exploration, and breakthrough in the talent training mode of private higher education institutions, and is an essential requirement for the healthy development of China's higher education. Multiple national documents point out that "education, science and technology, and talent are the fundamental and strategic support for the comprehensive construction of a socialist modernized country." Guiding and standardizing the development of private education is an essential aspect of ensuring education that satisfies the people. Under the new mechanism of private higher education, institutional construction is an important guarantee for the healthy development of schools. It is necessary to fully leverage the leading role of organizations, establish a scientific system and mechanism for private education governance, and form an efficient governance structure to guide educational capital to play a market role. In terms of educational orientation, resource allocation, quality supervision, and clean governance performance, the "three forces" should be organically coordinated to smooth governance relationships.

### 2. Building a scientific governance structure for the organization, board of directors, and administration

The key to the healthy development of private schools lies in how the organizational system, organizers, and administrative system of private schools can each perform their own duties, independently carry out their work, and collaborate with each other. Integrate organizational leadership throughout the entire process of running schools and educating students, and connect with the board of directors to form a "decision-making line". The "governance line" should be parallel to the school administration through the dean's office and the board of directors, rather than just executing board decisions. At the same time, while maintaining the decision-making power of the school's administrative daily management affairs, it is also necessary to pass the "supervision line" to ensure that the school's teaching, scientific research, and management work comply with the requirements of the education line policy. In specific work, by combining points and lines, we ultimately build a radiation surface that covers all stakeholders, including government, investors, employers, senior managers, ordinary faculty, communities, students, parents, academic committees, teacher representative conferences, trade unions, and other internal and external fields, ultimately achieving harmonious development through marketization and value orientation.

### 3. Form a collaborative pattern of leadership, decision-making, and execution forces

At present, it is necessary to fully utilize the ideological guidance role of the Hu organization in private universities, strengthen the direction and nature of education, supervise the educational behavior of the main body of education, and actively play the role of the organization in mobilizing and guiding the ideological work of teachers and students. At the same time, the educational entities are maximizing the role of private mechanisms in the allocation of resources in the education market, strictly adhering to relevant education laws and policies, and striving for an organic unity of social and economic benefits. As an administrative system that implements organizational and board resolutions, it is necessary to optimize the structure, scientifically allocate resources, efficiently promote education and teaching reform and innovation, form a distinctive educational system, and ultimately form a joint force system of "organizational leadership, board decision-making, and administrative execution". It is necessary to effectively enhance the discourse and leadership power of organizational work in the educational behavior of private universities, and thoroughly solve the long-standing problems of "organizational work being empty but not practical, educational subjects being profit seeking but unjust, and the administrative system being rigid but not acting" in private universities.

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