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Private higher education in China: access to quality higher education and the acquisition of labour market qualifications by low-income students[1]

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Abstract

The development of private higher education in China is an important area of policy concern and for academic research, especially under the conditions of globalization. This article reviews the current situation and forecasts the likely trend in several key areas, such as governmental regulation, funds and competition for enrolments. The article focuses specifically on how this process affects access to high-quality private higher education and the acquisition of labour market qualifications by low-income students. It warns against social stratification, aggravated by regional diversity, and suggests that the Chinese government and other stakeholders work together to use globalization to build a more socially equitable private higher education system in China. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and inter-governmental organizations

(IGOs) in particular should play a more important role in developing Chinese private higher education. Further research should pay attention to the experience of students from specific low-income groups and to the relationship between NGOs, IGOs and the Chinese State. Their interaction will determine the degree of social stratification and influence other issues, such as the development of the graduate labour market. The opportunity for comparative studies, drawing upon experience elsewhere, should also be considered. As a contribution to this, the article is based upon recent Chinese data and analyses not available previously to a non-Chinese-speaking audience.

Keywords:

globalization | Chinese private higher education | social stratification | non-governmental organizations | inter-governmental organizations

Notes

[1]An earlier version of this article was presented at the biennial conference of the British Association for International and Comparative Education, Queen's University, Belfast, 8–10 September 2006.

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