

Current Situation, Problems, and Strategy of Basic Public Education Service System in Kunming, China

Ying Yang¹ Yaling Sun^{2,*}

¹*School of Information, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, Yunnan 650500, China*

²*School of Education Sciences and Management, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, Yunnan 650500, China*

**Corresponding author. Email: Ylsun2@163.com*

ABSTRACT

Private education is an important supplement to public education in China. The main form of private schools in Kunming is cooperative schools. In the current development of compulsory education, the trend of “government and public retreat” has gradually formed, which has brought great impact on the balance and fairness of compulsory education. The public school’s quality had decline, the public welfare of compulsory education is questioned, and the burden on parents is aggravated. In order to resolve this problem, government should assume the primary responsibility for holding compulsory education, increase investment in public schools and narrow the gap between schools.

Keywords: *compulsory education, public school, private school, impact, fairness*

1. INTRODUCTION

At the stage of compulsory education in China, private schools have been increasing in recent years in order to alleviate the shortage of educational resources, meet the needs of some parents for selective education and promote the flow of educational funds. Private education has unique advantages in absorbing social funds, optimizing educational structure, and expanding autonomy in running schools. In recent years, many private schools have emerged in the compulsory education stage in Kunming.

However, compared with private schools abroad, China’s private schools have a characteristic that the school’s hardware and some teachers’ salaries are still provided by the government, or they are inclined to purchase land, which is called “cooperation school”. Specifically, there are several types of cooperative education: universities and local governments cooperate with private schools, private schools run by educational groups or run by famous schools. In China, this type of private school accounts for a large proportion. The development of pure private schools facing obstacles.

From a global perspective, private education has existed for a long time. In the United States, government contracting has been widely used as a managerial strategy for achieving efficiency and flexibility of programs in governments. The academic community has different views on government contracting. Advocates have emphasized the advantages of contracting, Ferris and Graddy(1991) found that contracting can minimize service delivery costs, both production and transaction costs.[1] And privatization can improve effectiveness, better quality of services, smaller size of government, greater discretion and flexibility, expanded choice for consumers.[2]

However, critics have also raised the problems of sacrificed service quality, accountability, service coordination, and

democratic values. O’Toole and Meier (2004) using data from more than 1,000 Texas school districts for 1997 through 1999 to examined the impact of government contracting on service quality and the determinants of contracting, they found that contracting trims core instructional spending but does not improve educational performance[3]. Rho(2013) examined in more than 1,000 Texas school districts for 1997–2008 to study the determinants and consequences of contracting. The results showing that contracting is negatively related to spending on school districts’ core instructional functions and that the relationship between contracting and bureaucracy is reciprocal: each is associated with subsequent growth in the other.[4]

In china, government has attached great importance to the private education development, it encourages and guides the social funds to build a variety of private schools. But there are still has many problems in private education to restrict the development of private education.[5] The characteristics of private schools are that the government departments provide rich social resources, including funds, teachers and quality students to them. This has made these schools more competitive, and at the same time widened the gap between key schools and non-key schools, urban and rural education, increased the imbalance of education development, and increased the unfairness in the allocation of educational resources.[6]

The phenomenon of unusual expansion of private primary and secondary schools exists in many regions of China. It’s not only harms the public confidence in *the Compulsory Education Law*, and disturbs the normal order of teaching in rural schools.[7] In order to solve these problems, the “*People’s Republic of China Private Education Promotion Law*” newly revised in September 2017 stipulates the nature of non-profit private education for compulsory education. This provision is precisely to prevent the imbalance of compulsory education from becoming more seriously, and it is a bottom line to hold the education fair.[8]

D.P. Yang (2018) tell us that one of the characteristics of this new round of "education industrialization" is the deep combination of famous schools and the real estate market.[9] The most visible phenomenon is the expansion of super high schools. Hengshui Middle School has 23 schools all over the country, basically cooperating with real estate or large enterprises. Those school enrolled students in advance, grab high-scoring students and excellent teachers with high funds, employ principals with high salaries, and then recycle themselves with high rate of admission. In this way, almost all public schools cannot compete with it. Running education has become a circle of money. In the future, the basic education should encourage multiple ways to run schools and explore the establishment of non-profit schools, from "capitalists running schools" to "educators running schools".[10]

2. CURRENT SITUATION, PROBLEMS OF BASIC PUBLIC EDUCATION SERVICE SYSTEM IN KUNMING

2.1 Current situation

Combining *the national and provincial primary and secondary school building safety project* and *the weak school reconstruction project*, Kunming has completed 322 rural primary and secondary schools standardization construction, the conditions for running schools have been greatly improved.

In 2017, the resident population of Kunming City was 6.783 million, 953 schools (excluding 269 primary school teaching points) in the compulsory education stage. Public schools are the main part of compulsory education, but the number of private schools is gradually increasing (Table 1).

Table 1 Number of primary schools in Kunming

Year	Primary school		Secondary schools	
	<i>public</i>	<i>private</i>	<i>public</i>	<i>private</i>
2015	781	74	128	53
2016	759	74	127	57
2017	678	77	139	59

2.2 Problems of basic public education service system in Kunming

2.2.1 Unbalanced development of Education

With the migrant children moving into the city, the pressure on urban educational resources is gradually increasing, the urban schools classes are big, and the problems of low standards and small quantity of books and teaching instruments become obvious. The proportion of big classes

has risen, teachers are under great pressure, and urban teachers are obviously inadequate.

In rural areas, due to the rural students entering the city, small classes in rural schools has become increasingly. Those school are lacking art, sports, and computer teachers. The allocation of rural compulsory education teachers is insufficient, and lack of high-quality teachers.

At the same time, with the development of education, all students can go to school to study, but people's requirements for quality education resources are increasing, choosing schools in compulsory education stage is prominent.

2.2.2 the trend of "government and public retreat"

When children graduate from primary school to secondary school, parents tend to choose private schools, which is because in Kunming, the famous secondary school is basically private schools.

According to national macro statistics, private schools in the secondary school account for about 10%, but in Kunming, the proportion of students in private schools in 2017 was 22.25%, especially in Wuhua District, the proportion of students in private schools was 55.16%, which means that more than half of the students attending to private school, they need to pay tuition. From 2015-2017, the proportion of private students in the past three years has been rising.

Table 2 Student number in Kunming

Year	Primary school		Secondary schools	
	<i>public</i>	<i>private</i>	<i>public</i>	<i>private</i>
2015	87.6%	12.4%	81.59%	18.41%
2016	87.73%	12.27%	79.13%	20.87%
2017	87.38%	12.62%	77.75%	22.25%

The large amount of education funds invested by the government has not improved the conditions for running the public compulsory education schools. On the contrary, the number of high-quality public schools has decreased, the polarization has become more obvious, and the public school brands have been "privately run." The gap between famous schools and ordinary public schools has widened.

In recent years, private schools have developed rapidly, especially in terms of hardware resources. Taking Guandu District as an example, although the account of private school student in primary schools at 2016 was only 33.53%, but the total area is 51.06%, fixed assets is 48.51%, especially experimental equipment accounted for 72.72%. In secondary school, the account of private school student is 35.96%, but the total area is 52.82%, fixed assets is 49.85%, experimental equipment accounted for 78.87%. It can be seen that private schools get higher support in hardware investment than public schools.

In terms of teachers, 66.67% of the teachers in the Guandu District Primary School, who has high professional titles are working in private schools, and excellent teachers are moving to private schools.

3. THE IMPACT OF TREND OF “GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC RETREAT”

3.1 The Decline of Public Schools

According to the provisions of the Compulsory Education Law, the enrollment of public schools must follow the principle of “students go to school near home”. However, private schools are not bound by this clause and can enroll students across regions and sections. Private schools have enrolled the best students through examinations, and employ high-quality teachers with high salaries, the school is getting better and better. However, the price of such development is that public schools are shrinking, unable to recruit good students, and the loss of outstanding teachers eventually leads to public school decline.

The compulsory education school system is undergoing differentiation, private education has become synonymous with quality education, and public schools have become second-class schools. Taking Chenggong District of Kunming as an example, from the results of the 2015-2017 senior high school entrance examination, although the results of public schools and private schools have risen, the performance of private schools is better (Figure 1). The concentration of educational resources leads to the "Matthew Effect", which aggravates the polarization of educational ecology.

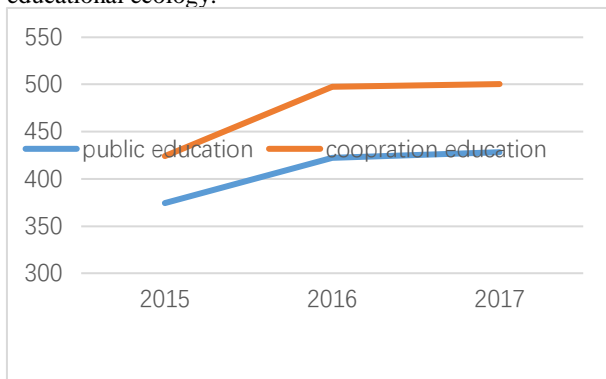


Figure 1 Average score of the test scores in Chenggong District

3.2 The public welfare of compulsory education is questioned, and the burden on parents is aggravated

The polarization of the public education service system allows wealthy to attend high-quality private schools and the ordinary people to attend mediocre public schools. Education has become a "circle of money" business. In private schools, the tuition fee for a school year is often more than 10,000RMB. Addition to fees for

accommodation and school uniforms, which are more than 10 times higher than those in public schools.

Collect fees in compulsory education have an impact on parents' thinking. They think that the school that pay for money is a good school. In order to get good education, parents prefer to pay more money to let their children enter private schools instead of public schools, the burden on parents is aggravated. However, due to the scarcity of quality educational resources, the competition in prestigious schools is fierce, and parents are more anxious and panicked about receiving compulsory education.

Compulsory education is free admission, non-competitive, non-selective, non-eliminated education. This is stipulated in the national constitution and the education law. But the current public education system cannot satisfy the conditions for the people to receive equal compulsory education. To obtain high-quality educational resources, high tuition fees are required. This is contrary to the free and public nature of compulsory education. The public welfare of compulsory education has been questioned.

4. SUGGESTION OF BASIC PUBLIC EDUCATION SERVICE SYSTEM IN KUNMING

4.1 Compulsory education should be based on public schools

The nature of compulsory education is consistent all throughout the world. It is organized by the government with taxpayer money. It is exempt from examinations, free of charge, non-competitive, non-selective, non-eliminated education.

The characteristics of compulsory education are basic, guaranteed, public welfare and publicity. Compulsory education is a public product, which is stipulated by law, undertaken by the state and the education is mandatory for the whole people. Therefore, the government is the main body of compulsory education.

Schools in the compulsory education stage should take public schools as the main body, and public schools should account for an absolute proportion. The government should undertake compulsory education for every school-age child and provide equal and high-quality compulsory education for every school-age child.

4.2 Increase investment in public schools and narrow the gap between schools

Under the background of insufficient supply and poor quality of public education resources, coordinating public and private education resources to provide quality compulsory education for school-age children is the statutory responsibility of local governments. Government should not only strongly encourage and support the

development of private education, but also regulate the development of private education.

Specifically, local governments should increase investment to reduce the inter-school resource allocation and quality of education in compulsory education, increase support for public schools, narrow the gap between schools, and provide more quality education in the region, so as to achieving the goal of equalizing basic public services

5. CONCLUSION

Although private schools have alleviated the problem of insufficient quality education resources, however, in the current development of compulsory education, the trend of “public retreat” has gradually formed, which has affected the balance and fairness of compulsory education. In Kunming city, the famous secondary school is basically private schools. Private schools have developed rapidly, especially in terms of hardware resources. Private schools have enrolled the best students and employ high-quality teachers, the school is getting better and better. However, the public school cannot recruit good students, and loss outstanding teachers eventually leads to public school decline. In order to get good education, parents prefer to pay more money to let their children enter private schools instead of public schools, it increases the burden on parents. In order to resolve this problem, we claimed that compulsory education should be based on public schools, government should undertake compulsory education for every school-age child and provide equal and high-quality compulsory education for every child. Government should increase investment in public schools and narrow the gap between schools.

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