Trust, Ownership, and Autonomy: Challenges Facing Private Higher Education in China

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Abstract

The issues of trust building, ownership, and autonomy vs control are becoming critical challenges for China’s private universities. These challenges are indicative of the need for continuous growth within private universities, as well as the need for improvement in the external environment for private universities to develop their full potential. This article describes the policy context in which private higher education in China has grown and expanded; it pinpoints the complexity of ownership issues, and the need for private universities to move from concern over expansion to internal and external trust building. Finally, the article provides a close examination of the dynamic interplay between government control and the quest for autonomy by private universities.

Development of Private Higher Education in China

China is a country with a very long history of private education. From the first school established by Confucius approximately 521 BC until 1949,