

Analysis on the Development of American Private Education and Public Education

Nikoleta Tomecko¹ and P. Karantonis^{2*}

^{1,2*}*The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia*

^{2*}*paul.karantonis@adelaide.edu.au*

Abstract

Compulsory education is a basic public service and a public welfare undertaking that must be guaranteed by the state. The main strategy for the development of private compulsory education in the United States is to maintain the long-term stability of the public and private ratios. This article analyzes private compulsory education and public compulsory education in the United States from the aspects of development pattern, protection of the public welfare of education, and school function positioning. The conclusion is that public education occupies the dominant position; the public welfare attribute of compulsory education is guaranteed and for-profit or quasi-profit compulsory education is excluded and guarded. Protect and respect the choice of education, and relieve the craze of private school choice through public education reform. Emphasize equal support and supervision, and implement both support and accountability. Improve the quality of compulsory education, promote students' all-around development and healthy growth, and effectively guarantee educational equity and social equity.

Keywords: *The United States, Private education, Public education*

1. Introduction

The dual variable of “public and private” is one of the important background variables in the development of American education. For more than a hundred years, many research results in economics, politics, law, and education science have been based on the basic assumption that the public and private sectors are two different sectors. The division between public and private in the social-economic field is an artificial ideological construction and division of legal regulations and its essence is an institutional structure [1].

Compulsory education also has a distinction between public and private in the modern sense. Among them, the supply structure of private and public education has always been a controversial academic and political issue. Compulsory education is one of the most important children's rights recognized internationally. The governments of almost all countries are the main providers of compulsory education, but the school system usually coexists public and private. Since the 1980s, the neoliberal trend of thought and the new public management paradigm have proposed reforms such as “privatization”, “marketization”, and “deregulation” in an attempt to make education a self-regulating market. Privatization of education has become a “global phenomenon” [2]. Discussions triggered by this trend mainly focused on the following four aspects.

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First, compulsory education is a basic public service. To what extent can the public sector transfer this field to the market and the private sector? Western countries took the lead in launching market-oriented school-running model reforms, and they also reflected on the phenomenon of private schools earlier. Some studies have suggested that the strong growth of private school enrolment rates has created a classic policy dilemma, that is, individuals make enrolment choices through the free market of education, but the combination of these choices may not yield the greatest benefit to the majority of people [3]. Studies have also suggested that the development of private schools, especially those favoured by high-income families, has an impact on the overall education system, which mainly depends on the structure of the political system [4]. Second, how to develop private education while ensuring the strong public welfare attributes of compulsory education. The classic educational economics theory believes that the development of private education is affected by excess demand and differential demand, and the "non-profit supply" of private education also plays a key role [5]. In recent years, many countries have recognized the legitimacy of for-profit education, and pre-school education and higher education have been more infiltrated. Upholding and guaranteeing the non-profit supply of compulsory education is the key to guaranteeing its public welfare. Thirdly, what kind of functions should the private schools of compulsory education play in the modern school system? In many countries, the main reason for encouraging the development of private schools is not due to financial constraints. The basic assumption of education privatization reform is that market-driven is more efficient than state-driven, and family preferences (school choices) formed by school competition (to break the monopoly of public schools) can promote the high-quality development of compulsory education [6]. However, as to whether the competition between the introduction of private education and public education has truly improved the quality and efficiency of school education, and whether the government as the main or even sole provider of compulsory education is necessarily inferior in quality and efficiency, so far there is no clear answer. Fourth, what role and responsibility should the government play in the development of private compulsory education? Compulsory education is the main area of government intervention worldwide. The development of private education means that part of the responsibility for education reform has been transferred from the government to the market. However, the freedom of choice based on the market is not enough to deal with the contradictions in economic, social, and educational policies. Many problems arising from privatization seem to need to play the role of a strong government, rather than the role of a weak government that has been advocated before [7].

To facilitate the presentation, this article attempts to abstract the above issues into four concepts: the provisioning mechanism of compulsory education, the public welfare attributes of private education, the functional positioning of private schools, and government roles and responsibilities. These four concepts are interrelated and constitute the overall problem of the development of private compulsory education. Following this logic, when examining a country's private compulsory education development experience, one must look at the supply structure of public and private schools for compulsory education, and clarify to what extent the country relies on public or private schools to provide compulsory education. Second, it is necessary to look at the public welfare attributes of private compulsory education and clarify the degree of compatibility between the pro-market attributes of private schools and compulsory education. Third, it is necessary to look at the functional positioning of private schools in the compulsory education system, and clarify whether private schools can promote efficiency and fairness. Fourth, it depends on whether and how the government intervenes in the development of private education and clarifies the purpose, effects, and policy tools of its

intervention. Using these four concepts as the fulcrum, construct an analytical framework on the American experience.

2. Basic facts of American private education and public education

Private education and modern school systems have developed differently due to the influence of social policies and cultures of various countries. Before analyzing the development experience of private compulsory education in the United States, it is necessary to briefly describe its country background. The development of compulsory education in the United States is highly localized, and each state has relatively independent educational autonomy. In the 2017-2018 school years, there are private schools in every state of the United States for compulsory education. Among them, the most are 3339 in California, and the least is 35 in Whiteman.

The degree of development of private education in each state has a certain relationship with the degree of loose local policies. Take market access as an example. Some states do not set any threshold. Some states adopt a more relaxed "registration model". Private schools submit registration applications to the local education department, and they can enter the list of academic education institutions after review. Some states adopt a relatively strict "licensing model". Generally, the school building, personnel, equipment, courses, and articles of association are reviewed by the competent authority, and a school permit is issued after meeting the requirements. Some states adopt a more stringent "approval model", and private schools need to obtain special permission from the education administration in terms of enrolment plans and training plans. Although there are differences in the management practices of each state, there are also some national common points.

First, there is no strong institutional supply for private compulsory education. A collation and analysis of laws, regulations, and policy documents in 50 states and one federal region (the District of Columbia) found that all states have legislation on compulsory education, and the age of compulsory education ranges from 5 to 8 to 16 to 18. To facilitate statistics, the federal government has adopted the concept of basic education to cover the maximum number of years of compulsory education in each state. However, there are very few special regulations and documents for private schools in each state. The vast majority of states have stipulated in principle for private schools through state codes and state constitutions. Some states specifically set out relevant provisions for private schools in the education codes, and individual states have produced the Non-public School Law.

Second, private schools generally predate public schools and have been banned, severely restricted, or compulsory changes. To ensure the standardization and popularization of compulsory education, some state, and local governments have proposed that all compulsory education be provided by public schools. Until the Supreme Court ruled that parents have the right to send their children to private schools, the law forcing all children to attend public schools is unconstitutional, and private schools with compulsory education can continue to develop. However, in the education reform of the 19th century, big cities headed by New York City changed private schools to public schools one after another, at the expense of the private education sector; a substantial expansion of the public school system was achieved [8]. Private schools have made an important and direct contribution to the formation of the modern compulsory education school system in the United States.

Third, the role of the federal government in the development of private education in the states is constantly increasing. During the formation of the federal state, the federal government has relatively small administrative power over compulsory education. In recent

years, the federal level has continuously strengthened the requirements for private compulsory education, mainly through the three departments of Congress, the Federal Ministry of Education, and the National Taxation Administration. The education reform plan passed by Congress shall be supervised and implemented by the Federal Ministry of Education. The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for collecting national private school survey data, conducting nationwide high-quality school evaluations, and requiring state education administration departments to set up “Private School Ombudsman” positions, etc., to provide states with private education development guidance. The State Administration of Taxation grants and supervises the tax-exempt status of non-profit private schools.

Fourth, the composition of compulsory education private schools is more complicated, and many schools are very niche. In the statistical classification of federal education, at least nondenominational schools (opened by individuals, groups, or companies unrelated to religious organizations), sectarian schools (started by religious organizations, mainly Catholic schools with a long history, also known as churches schools), special key schools (schools that follow specific educational philosophy, such as Montessori schools), ordinary private schools, and many other types. This highly decentralized and diversified private school system is an important feature of American private compulsory education.

3. The main policies for the development of private and public education in the United States

3.1. Compulsory education provision mechanism: maintain the long-term stability of the public and private ratio, and public education occupies the dominant position

The delivery mechanism of compulsory education and higher education in the United States is different. In the higher education semester, the number of private higher education institutions accounted for more than 60% and the number of students accounted for more than 35%; while compulsory education mainly relied on public schools [Table 1] and [Table 2].

Table 1. The number of public and private schools in the United States from 1980 to 2017 (unit: number)

Years	Compulsory Education			Higher Education		
	Public school	Private school	Proportion of private	Public school	Private school	Proportion of private
1980	82982	20158	19.54%	1497	1734	53.67%
1990	83538	23879	22.23%	1567	1992	55.97%
2000	92034	32190	25.91%	1698	2484	59.40%
2005	96124	35008	26.30%	1693	2583	60.41%
2010	97342	—		1656	2943	63.99%
2011	98119	30012	23.42%	1649	3057	64.96%
2012	98235	—		1623	3103	65.66%
2013	98341	32756	24.99%	1625	3099	65.60%
2014	97673	—		1621	3006	64.97%
2015	98245	33876	25.64%	1620	2963	64.65%
2016	98003	—		1623	2737	62.78%
2017	98117	31880	24.52%	1626	2687	62.30%

Table 2. The number of students in public and private schools in the United States from 1980 to 2017
(unit: million)

Years	Compulsory Education			Higher Education		
	Publicschool	Private school	Proportionof private	Publicschool	Private school	Proportionof private
1980	40.56	4.68	10.34%	9.46	2.64	27.91%
1990	41.12	4.88	10.61%	10.84	2.97	27.40%
2000	46.80	5.12	9.86%	11.38	3.47	30.49%
2005	49.10	4.98	9.21%	13.02	4.47	34.33%
2010	49.24	—	—	15.14	5.88	38.84%
2011	49.32	4.32	8.05%	15.89	5.89	38.98%
2012	49.60	—	—	14.88	5.67	38.71%
2013	50.00	4.42	8.12%	14.75	5.63	38.17%
2014	50.24	—	—	14.65	5.55	37.88%
2015	50.54	4.72	8.36%	14.57	5.42	37.20%
2016	50.60	—	—	14.59	5.26	36.05%
2017	50.66	4.90	8.82%	14.57	5.21	35.76%

First, since the 1980s, the proportion of compulsory education in private schools has increased steadily, but the overall proportion is not high. At present, private schools account for about 1/4 of the total number of schools, and non-religious private schools account for about 1/3 of private schools. From 1980 to 2017, the number of public primary and secondary schools in the United States increased from 82,982 to 98,117, an average annual increase of 0.36%. The number of private primary and secondary schools increased from 20,158 to 31,880, with an average annual growth rate of 1.21%. One of the reasons for the increase in the proportion of private schools is the large-scale school merger movement in the public education system.

Second, since the 1980s, the proportion of students in private schools has been steadily declining, and private schools have tended to run smaller. At present, non-religious private schools account for around 1/5 of the entire number of students in private schools, while religious private schools account for roughly 1/9 of the total number of students. From 1980 to 2017, the enrolment of public primary and secondary schools in the United States increased from 40.56 million to 50.66 million people, an average annual growth of 0.58%; the number of private primary and secondary schools increased from 46.8 million to 49 million, an average annual growth of 0.03%.

3.2. Ensuring the public welfare attributes of compulsory education: Taking non-profit schools as the absolute main body, rejecting and guarding against for-profit or quasi-profit compulsory education

The United States is a typical country that conducts non-profit and for-profit classified management of private schools. The governance of social organizations highly relies on taxation tools. The main difference between non-profit and for-profit organizations is “tax exemption” or “tax payment” [9]. However, the field of compulsory education shows obvious particularity.

First, the law not only prohibits for-profit compulsory education, but for-profit compulsory education schools have little room for survival. At the federal government level, there is no special law to regulate private education, and there is no clear restriction on the establishment of for-profit schools that implement compulsory education. At the state government level, 32 of the 50 states in the United States do not prohibit compulsory education for-profit schools, but the actual development of such schools is hindered. One is that charitable donations have

a unique cultural background in the United States and play an important role in the development of private education. Of course, such charity may have strong religious factors. Second, the American education market does not recognize such schools. The American society has a low tolerance for profit-seeking compulsory education. Pursuing profit through compulsory education schools is considered to be unconventional and unethical. Coupled with a high degree of information disclosure, failure to adhere to a true non-profit school can easily lead to a crisis of trust. Third, the profit margin of compulsory education is limited. With the support of the "School Modernization" project of the Federal Ministry of Education, even when the school age population has not seen a large-scale increase, the reconstruction and expansion of public schools are still advancing. Public schools are generally small in size and class size, while private schools require smaller class sizes and lower student-teacher ratios. According to the calculation of the number of teachers announced by the US Federal Department of Education, the student-teacher ratio of public schools dropped from 18.7 to 16.1 from 1980 to 2017, and the student-teacher ratio of private schools dropped from 17.7 to 11.9. Private schools hardly see a "demographic dividend", and their profits are extremely limited.

Second, the "quasi-profit model" with American characteristics has changed from being encouraged to be questioned, and administrative and legislative supervision has become increasingly strict. Some private organizations do not directly run schools, but can participate in or control non-profit school operations through educational management agencies [10]. For-profit companies sign service agreements with many schools to obtain profits, which constitute a unique compulsory education "public-private partnership" in the United States [11]. For a while, the federal government used the "New Markets Tax Credit Program" to offset part of the cost with tax credits, encouraging companies to invest in charter schools and educational management institutions in areas where the supply of compulsory education is insufficient [12].

In recent years, the "quasi-profit model" of the education management company's agreement to manage non-profit compulsory education schools has been questioned, and many states have begun to clean up and standardize this service agreement. For example, Arizona, California, and other places clearly stipulate that services can only be provided by non-profit organizations, and partnerships between for-profit organizations and charter schools are prohibited; Washington State has established an independent committee to strengthen the supervision of charter schools and external agreements for services Review; Maryland, Minnesota and other places have legislated to explore the "public welfare company" as a new type of corporate legal person, and encourage for-profit organizations, including educational enterprises, to fulfill the dual mission of profitability and public welfare goals by the law. Among them, the "education management institution" is considered to be a public welfare company rather than a traditional company to ensure that the general public interest of education is still protected when it provides fee-based services to non-profit schools [12].

3.3. Functional positioning of private schools: Retaining and respecting educational choices, and at the same time easing the craze for private schools to choose schools through public education reforms

Private school selection is the historical heritage of the development of private compulsory education in the United States, but the craze for private school selection, potential education isolation, and social stratification are real problems.

First, in terms of fairness, private school selection must not challenge the bottom line of social fairness, and the selection of students who violate civil rights faces tax sanctions. Early school selection was mainly based on religious education, that is, children of Catholic immigrant families sought educational opportunities that respect religious traditions and customs [13]. As the contradictions of apartheid continue to ferment, the two-way choice between schools and parents has been distorted and abused, and private schools have become a tool for white “educational segregation”. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated public schools were unconstitutional in “Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka”, which had an important impact on the modern American public education system [14]. Many white families still insist on receiving education in separate schools with black students, so they send their children to private schools that can screen students. In 1970, the US Internal Revenue Service announced that private schools that racially discriminated in enrolment were not entitled to tax-exempt status [15]. This regulation still applies today, and it objectively regulates the admissions behaviour of private schools.

Second, in terms of efficiency, by simulating a competitive education market within the public education system, part of the demand for school selection is diverted to the public education system. Historically, Meyer versus Nebraska, Pierce versus Society of Sisters, and other precedents have clarified the right of parents to choose private schools and developed the concept of educational choice [16]. Private schools are considered to maintain the right to choose education, while public schools are required to comply with various enrolment policy restrictions. Schools cannot screen students and students are enrolled according to their communities. At the same time, private schools are positioned to provide paid high-end selective education and social awareness of high prices and quality has been formed and continuously strengthened.

In response to the above phenomenon, the United States chose to use dredging instead of blocking. “I do not oppose education choices and market mechanisms, but also introduce education choices in the public system [17]”. Increase the investment in public school financial education funds, and pass legislation to encourage school innovation [18] to provide parents with more quality education options. For example, charter schools are set up to challenge the standards of the public education system. Because they are part of the public education system, they must comply with a non-discriminatory admission policy. However, there are restrictions on the number of admissions, and parents need to submit a separate registration application, which is usually regarded as the school choice of the public education department [19].

3.4. The role of the government: Emphasizing the equivalence of support and supervision, implementing both support and accountability

In recent years, state and local governments have continuously strengthened their support and supervision of private compulsory education. The federal government has also established private school offices to provide business guidance and communication, and timely increase federal funding projects those private schools can participate in. First, provide support mainly in an indirect way. This kind of American support was formed in the 1930s. In “Cochran v. Board of Education”, the Supreme Court used the concept of child-benefit to support Louisiana to provide textbook support to public and private school students equally [20]. The main reason is that children are the main beneficiaries of government funding, and indirect funding to parents and through parents to schools is better than direct funding to private schools. This has gradually formed two directions for the US government to support

private schools for compulsory education. On the one hand, the government provides support to students to reduce inequality in educational opportunities caused by tuition fees. States explore the use of policy tools such as education vouchers, education savings accounts, tax-credit scholarships, and personal income tax credits/deductions to provide indirect support to private schools. On this basis, the Federal Ministry of Education issued a new support plan in 2019 to provide federal tax credits for companies and individuals, who donate scholarships to private schools, encourage non-public funds to support private education, and reduce tuition factors for education choices for students of different classes' influences. On the other hand, the government generally does not directly provide funding subsidies to private schools, except for major disasters or emergencies. A content analysis of the policy texts of various states found that at present, only Oklahoma in the United States has clearly stated that it can provide public funding support to private schools. Ten states represented by New York State and the District of Columbia did not specify whether to provide public funding support to private schools. The 20 states represented by Washington State expressly prohibit the allocation or use of financial funds to support religious private schools. The 19 states represented by California and Massachusetts expressly prohibit the allocation or use of financial funds to support all private schools. However, in the event of a major disaster or emergency, federal aid funds can be used directly to support the restoration of private schools. After the outbreak of novel coronavirus pneumonia in the United States in March 2020, Trump, D. signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act. According to the bill, both non-profit and for-profit private schools can apply for federal small business loans through the "Pay check Protection Program", which is used to protect the basic salary of faculty and staff, and to suppress school financial risks under the epidemic [21]. In addition, "Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund" and "Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund Elementary" can be used to provide financial support to eligible private schools [22].

Second, strengthen the business guidance and supervision of private schools. In the past 30 years, the "standards-based reform model" has been dominating public education in the United States. One of the important trends in state-level legislation is to formulate clear and measurable standards to promote the standardization of public-school education [23]. In recent years, many states have incorporated private schools into unified management. One is to clarify the requirements for teacher qualifications. For example, Michigan state stipulates that teacher in private schools should have a bachelor's degree and obtain a Michigan teaching certificate. Vermont states that all faculty and staff teaching in private schools must obtain permission from the State Board of Education. The second is to clarify the academic year and teaching time requirements. For example, New York State stipulates that private school students' school hours, lecture hours, absenteeism policies, etc. must be consistent with public schools. The third is to clarify the requirements for teaching materials and course content. Some states require private school courses to be the same as public school courses; some states require private schools to open full civic education courses, the main content is state history, constitution, etc. For example, the four states of Delaware, Nevada, New York, and Rhode Island have the most stringent requirements on the content of private school curriculum, which not only require the same as public schools but also make clear regulations on civic education curriculum. Compared with the United States' advocacy of diversification of higher education, the trend of uniformity and equalization in the field of compulsory education is more obvious.

At the same time, strengthen accountability for the quality of compulsory education. The third-party quality certification widely used in higher education was moved to compulsory

education. At present, six states including Connecticut, Iowa, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin have included compulsory education private school quality certification as a mandatory requirement in their state regulations, and most other states have adopted it as a recommended requirement. At the same time, more and more states will obtain third-party quality certification as one of the basic conditions for private schools to obtain government support. The government uses the professional power of third-party institutions to exercise education quality supervision, which not only meets the public's accountability requirements for education but also helps to urge private schools to continuously improve the quality of schooling.

4. Conclusion

In terms of development pattern, the United States is dominated by a private economy. In terms of public welfare guarantees and the functional positioning of private schools, the two U.S. focus on governance such as education for-profit and school choice. In terms of the government's role, the United States emphasizes both support and supervision.

In terms of the supply mechanism of compulsory education, even in American society where the private economy is the mainstay, compulsory education is mainly provided by the public system, and compulsory education is not the key growth area of private education. Although the choice between public and private enterprises does not directly correspond to the choices of the government and the market, the pattern of public and private enterprises reflects the degree of government efforts.

In terms of safeguarding the public welfare attributes of education, the United States relies on the tax system to strengthen the supervision of non-profit private schools on the one hand and on the other hand to strengthen the supervision of service outsourcing of compulsory education schools, which indirectly prevents for-profit companies from pursuing profits through schools. To promote the construction of non-profit private schools under the framework of the new law, in addition to the renewal and advancement of social concepts, it is also necessary to combine classified management reforms and strengthen non-profit attribute management.

In terms of school function positioning, American private schools are expected to reform the public system inefficiently, but a highly selective private system is not a government-led reform idea. The history of private compulsory education is a history of school selection reform. It should be realized that no matter what function private schools perform in the compulsory education section, they must be based on ensuring fairness. First, we must strengthen standardized governance, reduce the endowment difference between public and private schools in admissions policies, and promote the rational allocation of student resources between the two types of schools. Second, we must explore diversion measures, introduce healthy competition factors into the public education system, and encourage public schools to learn from the development experience of high-quality private schools, invigorate public education systems and mechanisms, promote the quality and efficiency of public education, satisfy parents' educational choices, and ease parents' concerns educational anxiety. Third, we must explore education fairness monitoring and accountability mechanisms, guide private schools to play more of the function of maintaining education fairness, strengthen the regulation of tuition standards, regulate and prevent excessive fees, and strictly prohibit private schools from "pulling seedlings" and "rolling expansion", etc. Behaviour promotes students' all-around development and healthy growth. Fourth, we must

improve the quality of compulsory education as a whole, and effectively guarantee educational fairness and social fairness.

In terms of support, the United States mainly adopts indirect support. In terms of regulation, the US's supervision of private schools is not without loopholes, but on the whole, it presents the characteristics of multiple subjects, multiple methods, and law-first.

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