

A STUDY ON AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM — PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

One of the structures of higher education system in comparative study is by dividing the institutions into two sectors, public and private. The higher education system of the United States is one of the most complicated and diversified systems.

In terms of defining the private and the public institutions, besides their financial resources and their accountability as the main items to separate them, we can still use the tuition and fee as a significant item to separate public and private institutions.

To discuss the situation of American higher education institutions in terms of their public and private status, seven issues were mentioned. In order to distinguish public and private institutions clearly, the aim of higher education cannot do it, even though there are two philosophical issues always presented in every institution. They are vacation-oriented policy and the philosophy of educating "the whole person." The reputation and the autonomy of institutions cannot do it either. The diversity of American higher education system shows the differences among all institutions, either public or private. This issue cannot distinguish them into public or private clearly.

There are three items which present the differences between public and private institutions. First, the control of campuses, most public institutions have big campuses and large size of student bodies, and with less close relationships between students and teachers, and among students. Reverse situation happens in most private institutions. Second, private institution most likely would set stricter standards for enrolling freshmen or new students. Public institutions cannot do this

without regulatory problem with local congress or regents. Lastly, financial resource is the most important item in distinguishing institutions. Public institutions receive most of their financial support from the local or state government, while the private institutions receive theirs from private donations and students who pay tuition and fee.