

# NON-STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITIES AS TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

<sup>a</sup>OKSANA MKRTICHIAN, <sup>b</sup>VALENTYNA SHYSHENKO,  
<sup>c</sup>IRYNA NEBYTOVA, <sup>d</sup>OKSANA PARFONOVA, <sup>e</sup>ZHENYU  
ZHOU

<sup>a-c, e</sup>*H.S.Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, 29,  
Alchevskih Str., 61002, Kharkiv, Ukraine*

<sup>d</sup>*Kharkov National University of Radio Electronics, 14, Nauky  
Ave., 61166, Kharkiv, Ukraine*

*email: <sup>a</sup>oksana.mkrtychan@gmail.com, <sup>b</sup>valentina\_sh@meta.ua,*

*<sup>c</sup>nebytova.iryana@gmail.com, <sup>d</sup>oksana.parfonova@nure.ua,*

*<sup>e</sup>zhouzhenyu@hznua.edu.cn*

**Abstract:** A detailed study of the development of higher pedagogical education in China makes it possible to objectively assess the path traveled, to determine the trends and prospects for its development, taking into account the national characteristics and cultural specifics of the country, as well as taking into account the development trends of higher pedagogical education in other countries. The study of this process acquires significance in connection with the changes that have taken place in politics, the economy, and in the social life of China. The study indicates some positive results in the development of a modern system of higher professional education for students in non-state universities, which include state accreditation of a whole network of non-state universities, organized training of specialists in specialties missing in the labor market, optimization of the modern network and capacity of non-state pedagogical higher educational institutions.

**Keywords:** PRC higher education; universities of China; pedagogical education; teacher training.

## 1 Introduction

The leadership of the People's Republic of China in the field of education is cautious about non-formal education as something that can compete (and, by and large, already does) with the formal education system in the country, so the issue of training for work in this sector is still officially outside the area of responsibility and interest of Ministry of Education and other educational authorities. However, recognizing the perspective of this form of providing educational services first as a sector of the economy, as well as a social reality that has already developed, the authorities in the field of education (especially the higher pedagogical education and the sector of retraining and upgrading the qualifications of pedagogical personnel in the country) are trying to take control of the training of specialists for this sector, working together with the Ministry of Manpower and Social Security of the People's Republic of China, the State Development and Reform Committee of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China.

Due to the lack of obligations to the system of non-formal education regarding the training of teaching staff (the state system of higher education institutions must provide personnel potential exclusively for state educational institutions of the country [6]), the state universities of the PRC, on the one hand, do not directly participate in this process, but on the other hand, the state is interested in having graduates of pedagogical universities of the country work in the informal sector, who received not only the appropriate level of education, but also ideological and moral training to guarantee continuity in instilling true social values in the younger generation [19]. Therefore, it can be argued that the system of training teaching staff for non-formal education institutions is identical to the process of training teachers to work in public educational institutions.

Despite the highly developed network of educational institutions of the PRC that train teachers, large public investments and investments through public-private partnerships in universities and colleges, the teacher training system in China continues to experience the need for further improvement, including in the field of improving the quality of training future teachers and educators, teachers of additional education and other specialists involved in the education and upbringing of children. This fact largely explains the high interest of the PRC professional

pedagogical community in teacher education provided by non-state universities.

## 2 Materials and Method

The methodological and scientific-theoretical foundations of the study are the dialectical approach, which allows revealing the essence of pedagogical phenomena in their interconnection and interdependence, based on a system of principles (objectivity, unity of historical and logical, theoretical and empirical, personality and activity approaches) and general scientific approaches (systemic, complex, predictive, procedural, and functional). The analysis carried out ensured the collection and description of historical and pedagogical facts, their structuring and alignment into a certain process through logical analysis.

## 3 Results and Discussion

The number of higher education institutions in China is constantly growing: in 1995, there were 1,054 of them, in 2015 - 2,560, in 2017 - 2,914. Among the new universities, there are more state and joint Sino-foreign higher education institutions (which formally belong to the non-state sector of providing educational services; their students are mostly those who could not enter a state institution of higher education due to not high enough scores obtained on the Unified State Qualification Exam), the latter are actively receiving state licensing [13]. A diploma of pedagogical education in China can be obtained both at specialized pedagogical universities and at any other universities with pedagogical or teacher faculties. In China, there is a mandatory level of training for teachers of various categories (similar, for example, to the Ukrainian "qualification framework").

At the beginning of the 21st century, China proposed a large-scale reform of teacher education. Currently, the country is creating a multi-vector system of pedagogical education, which has various forms and standards, the basis of which is state pedagogical universities of various types and levels, but in which other educational institutions (in particular, private ones) also participate. Changes in the structure and content of pedagogical education that took place in the first 20 years of the 20th century in China are reduced to the following:

- Pedagogical universities and colleges are rapidly increasing the scale of admission of applicants and graduation of specialists "to ensure a high-quality personnel reserve for all (without excluding) institutions providing educational services, regardless of their form of ownership" [16]. This is one of the reasons for the rapid development of pedagogical education in China and may serve as a sign of efforts to expand the influence of the public sector on non-formal education, in particular, regarding the training of pedagogical personnel;
- Pedagogical universities accept only half of applicants for pedagogical specialties, while the rest receive non-pedagogical specialties (management, marketing, informatics, etc.), but have the right to work in schools in administrative positions and, subject to completion of courses in a specialized subject, to teach it in a secondary school. Also, future teachers, due to the presence of traditionally non-pedagogical faculties in the structure of the university and the introduction of these subjects in a small number in the schedule (or as electives and open lectures), have the opportunity to find out inter-subject connections and better understand the practical aspects of the subject they will teach, in the modern world;
- The number of pedagogical schools that no longer meet the needs of the modern labor market and schools is sharply decreasing. According to the plan of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, by 2025, primary and secondary school teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree in education. As a result, secondary

pedagogical schools should gradually disappear in the coming years. At the same time, in the course of the reforms, it became obvious that university graduates who obtained the “bachelor's” level, possessing good theoretical training, are less prepared for practical activities than school graduates. Therefore, the number of internships (both mandatory and social) for students-future teachers is increasing in the PRC today;

- Updating the content of educational programs is one of the obvious most important tasks. Higher education institutions are also actively working on internationalization, improving university education technologies, introducing educational innovations, introducing special directions to educational programs related to the development of the creative potential of students, state financing of innovative educational projects and programs. Leading specialists from abroad are invited to work with Chinese students, grants and other forms of financial support are provided for students to study at leading foreign universities, as well as for development of joint scientific and creative projects, involvement of foreign educational technologies and innovations, etc.;
- There is a significant expansion of the nomenclature of pedagogical specialties. In accordance with Order No. 10 of the Higher Attestation Committee under the State Council and the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in 2009, psychology and physical culture were included as independent components in the system of pedagogical sciences in China, and in 2023 it is expected that arts (in particular, music and dance, since 2005, it is an alternative form of physical culture lessons at school) will also be included [5; 15; 18].

Pedagogical universities are among the Top 3 specializations in China. Most of them are state-owned, but at the beginning of the 21st century, the number of non-state pedagogical universities began to grow. However, they are independent only financially: private and non-state universities are maintained at the expense of tuition fees and sponsorship from private foundations. In other issues, they are under the control of the state: the central government determines the general policy on education, and the authorities in the provinces carry out quality control. Not all non-state universities in the country have the right to issue diplomas of the state standard, and, therefore, are not yet able to compete with state universities, which continue to play a dominant role in the country's higher education system. However, officially, namely non-state universities of China have the right to become Sino-foreign universities, and in this case their activities fall under the project of the Ministry of Education of China on cooperation with other states (which makes it easier for a non-state university to go through the procedure of obtaining permission to issue a state-standard diploma). Today, the most recognized Chinese-foreign universities, which have pedagogical departments, are: Tsinghua University - Berkeley University; The Chinese University of Hong Kong - Duke Kunshan University; New York University - Shanghai University; University of Nottingham - Ningbo City University; Jiaotong University, Xi'an - Liverpool University [8]. Students at such universities partially or fully study a foreign program, often in English, implement scientific projects together with foreign colleagues and can go for a semester on exchange, use grant projects of a foreign university, teachers undergo advanced training at a foreign partner university (often, with the financial assistance of the Chinese government), and there are also many other advantages [4].

In recent years, non-state universities have mostly updated their methodological and theoretical base and developed a new model of training specialists to meet society's demand for providing services in the field of specialized pedagogical education, as well as for the formation of a qualified corps of subject teachers. Moving away from the idea of providing educational services according to foreign models (which was a rather attractive marketing move at the end of the 20th century), such educational institutions from the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century do not blindly adopt the experience and practice of state

and foreign universities with a clearly defined professional orientation, but follow the path of developing a non-state higher education institution with its own specifics in order to make the educational institution more competitive and interesting for potential investors and applicants [17].

Traditionally, the activities of such higher educational institutions are oriented to the needs of a specific region or even a city district, and also provide author's programs for training subject teachers, taking into account the potential of this region. The example of the Capital Pedagogical University (Beijing) is illustrative, which positions itself as a higher educational institution of a pedagogical and linguistic profile, that, together with a mandatory block of academic disciplines approved by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, offers its students such courses as “Teaching Chinese to foreigners”, “Preparation for HSK” (HSK is a state qualification exam in the Chinese language, which is taken by foreigners and is mandatory for those who want to receive grants for studies in the PRC or the right to study in universities in the PRC), because both in Beijing itself, as well as in the large university cities of China, there is a lack of teachers who know how to work with English-speaking foreigners and prepare them in a short time to take Chinese language exams. Also, graduates of this educational institution work at the Confucius Institute abroad [10].

Using the example of the Jilin Institute of Foreign Languages “Huaqiao”, which is a non-state pedagogical higher educational institution, we suggest considering a typical model of a non-state pedagogical higher education institution and the main principles of its educational activity. From the point of view of the main approaches to learning, pedagogical private and non-state pedagogical educational institutions seek to shift the emphasis from classes to the development of students' abilities, from learning to education. Subjects in the curriculum are organized according to the principle of “seven blocks”:

1. Subjects of the ideological cycle – they are taught during the entire period of study (history of China and the People's Republic of China, history of ideological and political teachings of the People's Republic of China, Politics).
2. Subjects and courses contributing to the improvement of the student's basic knowledge (general education subjects): (Chinese language and literature, foreign language).
3. Subjects of the professional block (pedagogy, age-related physiology, age-related psychology, methods of teaching the main subject, educational activities in educational institutions).
4. Subjects and courses that contribute to the education of the qualities of a cultural personality (culture of the country whose language is studied, ethics, aesthetics).
5. Subjects and courses contributing to the preservation and improvement of the psychological and physical health of future specialists (physical culture, art).
6. Practice in the use of computer technologies in the professional activities of future specialists.
7. Management of professional activity planning (educational management, time management, economics of education, self-management).

The model of the organization of providing educational services involves staged training: undergraduate training is divided into 2 stages - basic and advanced. At the main stage, the emphasis is made on the transfer of elementary knowledge in the specialty, the formation of skills and abilities necessary for the future profession. The task of the advanced stage is to expand students' horizons, improve their complex abilities, develop skills and abilities in accordance with the current needs of society. After completing the 2-year course of study, students receive the qualification “junior bachelor”, and after another 2 years (full course) – “bachelor” [3; 9; 11; 14].

The main direction of training of specialists-future teachers in non-state universities of the People's Republic of China today is the training of highly qualified teachers of the “shuangshi” type – “dual type” teachers. This type of teachers involves a combination of the properties of researchers-scientists with

practitioners who have adequate tools to fulfill their professional duties as a subject teacher. Also, in private pedagogical universities (International Youth University (Beijing), SIAS University (Zhengzhou, Henan Province) and "SN Mandarin" University (Shanghai)) around since 2015, the "teacher duo" model began to be tested, which became very popular with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This model involves the work of two teachers in tandem, where one of the teachers is a theoretical teacher and exclusively teaches new material in the form of a lecture (in particular, online), and the other teacher provides advice on practical homework. It is believed that this model contributes to increasing students' interest in the subject and the quality of its learning (thanks to the individual work of the teacher with each student) [1; 2; 7].

Also, on the website of the Jilin Institute of Foreign Languages "Huaqiao", the principles of training future teachers, which are typical for all non-state higher educational institutions of the pedagogical profile, are clearly formulated. They are as follows:

- It is necessary to train teachers of the "shuang shi" type (the training of high-class students of applied specialties should be based not only on knowledge taken from books, but on practical experience and skills as practicing teachers);
- In training regulations, special attention should be paid to the practical abilities and skills of each student individually, namely to the ability to solve actual problems through planning, organization, design, production, operation, management, and other methods;
- Educational institutions must train students in close cooperation with institutions of the educational and social spheres in order to create favorable conditions for students to undergo practice and enhance the skills that are being formed;
- From the point of view of the education model, it is necessary to deepen the reforms, to try to solve the following problems:
  - On the content of education - to overcome the gap between theory and practice, to bring outdated educational programs in line with the modern level of development of society, to shift the emphasis from the study of the theory of a narrow scientific field to the application of knowledge of a practical type;
  - In the methodology of teaching foreign languages, it is necessary to change the traditional monotonous monologue method in order to direct students to the development of their students' communication skills as an end in itself to study a foreign language;
  - Students should become full-fledged subjects of educational activity, be at the center of learning. The center of gravity in education should shift from the teacher (teaching) to the students (learning);
  - When evaluating students, it is necessary to focus on their abilities and personal qualities, and not only on the number of points obtained on exams [14].

#### 4 Conclusion

The experience of training future teachers in non-state pedagogical universities is interesting due to the fact that the very system of organizing educational services in these educational institutions contributes to the formation of the opinion among future teachers that the individual characteristics of students should be taken into account in their work, and non-uniformity of approaches to each student is the norm. Also, the system of teacher tandems and individual work with the student contribute to the formation of future teachers as a tutor (whose activity belongs to the sector of non-formal education), as well as the possibility of additional pedagogical attention to students, development of their abilities in a specialized subject.

It can be assumed that over time, non-state pedagogical universities will take the place of state pedagogical colleges and institutes, since, unlike state pedagogical universities, they are

focused on producing "specialists of a practical profile" [12] – "socially responsible specialists, with a broad outlook, who are in demand on national labor market, with solid knowledge and outstanding abilities, with good knowledge of foreign languages and culture of behavior, i.e., specialists of a wide range of applied profiles with solid knowledge, positive personal qualities and developed complex abilities" [13]. Among specialties, the primary importance in such training is attached to foreign languages, humanities, economics, management, and pedagogy.

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