

Between Hierarchy and Market

Reform of Chinese Book Industry and the State and Market Fields Dynamics

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1. Aim

This paper examines the market-oriented reform of state-owned publishing houses in China. State-owned publishers are put into publishing groups on central and provincial levels and registered as enterprises. I attempt to find out how publishing houses define their organizational goals and routines to meet state's requirements on their incumbent positions in market.

2. Data & Methods

This research adopts comparative cases studies with data from face-to-face interviews. 8 publishing houses in mass market publishing from 4 publishing groups (1 central and 3 provincial) are selected through a non-probability sampling procedure. Altogether 43 editors and managers were interviewed in the research period of 2012–2013. Based on Walder (1995), Guthrie (1999), and Nee (1989), it is hypothesized that compared with prestigious central publishers, provincial publishers have stronger interdependence with the provincial groups' administrative resources. Yet, the correlation between formal rationalization and development is highly contingent.

3. Results

The field research finds that central publishing houses depend on their centrality in the market to do the minimum of change and turned state's reform goals into nominal, while provincial publishing houses and groups showed 'administrative contracting' mode (Zhou and Lian 2012) in achieving developmental goals due to their peripheral positions in the industry

4. Conclusion

By reaching a qualitative description of the results of reform at the organizational level, this research reveals how publishing houses in China play in both governmental hierarchy – as they are state-owned and pressed by publishing groups' commitment to the political mission of reform – and a horizontal structure of a market field. Market positions and administrative positions together define the path of organizational transition.

References

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