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Exploring New College Entrance Examination ("Xin Gao Kao") Policy in China

National Values and Regional Practices

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Abstract

In China, college entrance examination is the sensitive and important theoretical and practical problem concerned by the whole education system and society. The college entrance examination refers to the unified national entrance examination system for accessing the ordinary higher education institutions. In this study, the national values are examined to analyze the fairness and justice of China's new college entrance examination system. The regional practices involve the process of new college entrance examination reform. The new college entrance examination is composed of a series of examination systems, including China's current unified national college entrance examination system, as well as the comprehensive college entrance examination reform pilot program and independent enrollment reform program. In addition, the conclusion and implication have been offered to explore the rationales of shaping new college entrance examination in current China.

Keywords

new college entrance examination – China's higher education – fairness of education – education policy

1 Introduction

Reform is a dynamic process and the college entrance examination is also a dynamic and static unity. New College Entrance Examination ("Xin Kao Gao") specifically refers to the college entrance examination system reform

implemented in accordance with the national and local college entrance examination reform plan since the State Council issued the *Implementation Opinions on Deepening the Reform of The Examination and Enrollment System in 2014*. The college entrance examination has the basic, guiding and social control functions for colleges and universities to select talents, guide the development direction of primary and middle school students, and realize the upward mobility of social strata. However, the fairness of the “Gao Kao” has also been criticized, as it plays an important social role. Thus, this study concentrates on exploring the fairness and justice of the college entrance examination and the regional practices of implementing new college entrance examination (Bao et al., 2020; Feng, 2020; Rao, 2020; Meng, 2020; Xin et al., 2020; Liu, 2020).

2 National Values: The Fairness and Justice of China's College Entrance Examination System

In recent years, the fairness of China's college entrance examination system has been criticized and the fairness of the allocation of college entrance examination quota, the examination method and content and the admission have also encountered severe challenges. Fairness and justice are the primary value orientation of a social system. Fairness of college entrance examination refers to the rationality of college entrance examination as a kind of higher education resource allocation system design, emphasizing procedural fairness. The essence of college entrance examination fairness is to realize the outcome of educational benefit distribution. The college entrance examination ensures the relative fairness of entrance opportunity and competition starting point for examinees, promotes the optimal allocation of social resources, guides primary and middle school students to implement quality education, and realizes educational fairness from different levels. But at the same time, due to a series of problems caused by the collision of the new systems, different values and the contradiction of unbalanced development in China's current transition period, the current college entrance examination system and its operation process in China have produced many problems affecting educational fairness (Bao et al., 2020; Feng, 2020; Rao, 2020).

As a higher education entrance examination system, the fairness and justice are its primary value orientation. The college entrance examination has always been the focus of the whole society. Since the resumption of the high school entrance examination in 1978, the reform of the college entrance examination system has never stopped. The baton role of the college entrance examination makes the reform of basic education difficult. The province-specific

proposition and province-specific demarcation of enrollment score make the college entrance examination unfair in the region. In China, the independent enrollment system for colleges and universities is to select innovative talents in advance and the extra points system for special students have the possibility of rent-seeking due to the lack of objective evaluation standards and supervision system. However, the large-scale increase of urban floating population and the traditional household registration system have led the inequality problem of college entrance examination in different places. This not only damages the fairness of education, but also impacts the credibility of the society. Thus, from the perspective of national values, the fairness of college entrance examination policy implementation is an important embodiment of educational fairness. Analyzing the fairness of college entrance examination from the perspective of stakeholders is the breakthrough to interpret the current social structure and the pattern of interest distribution in China. The problems reflected by educational equity are the concentrated reflection of social problems and social contradictions, and educational equity is also an important content of social equity.

At present, China is in a period of social transformation. With the growth of social wealth, social classes are further divided, and social contradictions and conflicts are intensified. As Xi Jinping pointed out in his report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), "The principal contradiction in Chinese society has turned into one between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life." Reflected in the field of higher education is the contradiction between the demand of the masses to accept quality higher education and the shortage and imbalance of quality higher education resources supply. The college entrance examination has long been a social ladder for the upward mobility of children from disadvantaged groups, and the fairness of the college entrance examination system has also become an outlet for social conflicts (Bao et al., 2020; Feng, 2020; Rao, 2020; Meng, 2020; Xin et al., 2020; Liu, 2020). On September 4, 2014, the State Council issued *the Implementation Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Examination and Enrollment System*, which marked the formal opening of the new college entrance examination reform in China. It plays an irreplaceable role, which clearly points out that the current examination recruitment system has some inherent disadvantages, such as the current college entrance examination system has formed a long-term fraction theory education orientation and social ethos, a youngster appraisal way makes the students learning burden, and exam pressure.

It is of practical value to evaluate the fairness of the new college entrance examination from the perspective of benefit stakeholders: First, it provides the

basis for the scientific decision-making of the new college entrance examination reform. Cultivation has a long-term and irreversible impact on social development and stability. Second, it provides the basis for the effective implementation of the new college entrance examination reform. It is helpful to the examination institutions, colleges and middle schools. Policy implementers objectively understand the reform direction of the new college entrance examination reform and the original intention of making policies, and adhere to education, selection and fairness. Third, we need to create a favorable policy environment for the new college entrance examination reform. The new college entrance examination involves the wide participation of social groups, such as administration, colleges and universities, middle schools, students, parents and media, to rationally understand the reform of college entrance examination change (Bao et al., 2020; Feng, 2020; Rao, 2020; Meng, 2020; Xin et al., 2020; Liu, 2020).

3 Regional Practices: The Process of New College Entrance Examination Reform

According to the *Opinions on Deepening the Reform of The Examination and Enrollment System*, Zhejiang Province and Shanghai issued the pilot programs for the comprehensive college entrance examination reform in 2014 respectively and they decided to implement the pilot program from the autumn of 2014 for new high school freshmen. In 2017, the first batch of pilot areas high school students completed the college entrance examination and related application admissions process. At the same time, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong province and Hainan province also joined the new college entrance examination reform. In the fall of 2017, the students began to accept the new college entrance examination reform of education and teaching management.

In accordance with *the Decision and Deployment of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council*, and *the Decision of the Provincial Party Committee and Government and the Overall Arrangement of the Ministry of Education*, eight provinces and cities, including Hebei, Henan and Guangdong, have launched trials of new college entrance examination reform since the fall of 2018, and relevant plans have been gradually formulated and improved (Bao et al., 2020; Feng, 2020; Rao, 2020; Meng, 2020). Since 2014, China started a new round of reform of college entrance examination. After three years of practical exploration, Zhejiang and Shanghai in August 2017 began to formally implement the new college entrance examination. At the same time, Shandong, Beijing, and Tianjin start a second round of reforms. The new college entrance examination

system design is rolled out across the country. However, since the launch of the new college entrance examination in Zhejiang and Shanghai, there have been many criticisms and doubts. Especially, the fairness and Scientific of the new college entrance examination system has been questioned. It is urgent to make policy evaluation on whether the new college entrance examination can be demonstrated, promoted and used for reference (Feng, 2020; Rao, 2020).

4 Conclusion and Implications

Chinese scholars mainly focus on the following aspects when arguing about the fairness and justice of college entrance examination: first, the fairness and justice of examination and regional fairness, including whether there are obvious regional differences in the distribution of enrollment plan and admission score line. Second, the fairness and efficiency of college entrance examination, including whether unified enrollment and independent enrollment can select excellent talents for colleges and universities, or whether there will be differences among family backgrounds, urban and rural areas, ethnic groups and regions. Third, the content of the examination is scientific and fair. Whether the proposition of college entrance examination can scientifically and effectively distinguish students' academic level and does not exist the inequality of students of different family backgrounds, urban and rural areas, gender, ethnic group and regions, and whether the provincial proposition covers the regional inequality in the form of fairness. Fourth, the relationship between the college entrance examination and social mobility, whether the college entrance examination limits the speed or scale of upward social mobility, and whether the children of migrant workers should take the college entrance examination in the destination or return to their original places. Fifth, whether the management of the examination process is open, fair and just. It can be seen that each factor and link of the fairness of the college entrance examination may have the controversy of fairness (Bao et al., 2020; Feng, 2020; Rao, 2020; Meng, 2020).

The reason for the unfair college entrance examination is not only education itself, but also social, economic, political, cultural and institutional factors. Influencing the fairness of college entrance examination includes: first, the imbalance of social structure. The urban-rural dual structure in Chinese society, as well as the resulting institutional differences, are the structural reasons affecting the fairness of college entrance examination. Second, the social governance is unbalanced. China lacks a perfect credit system and constraint system: the construction of examination legal system lags behind; the political system needs to be improved. The fairness of college entrance examination

has become a concrete manifestation of the social orderly supervision system. Third, the uneven distribution of resources. The distribution of higher education resources in Eastern and Western China, between urban and rural areas, and among different provinces is not balanced, and resources are scarce. The college entrance examination is a redistribution mechanism of educational resources, and the scarcity of resources is the material condition root of the fairness of college entrance examination. Fourth, the college entrance examination function alienation. In the history inertia of traditional culture and system environment, the university entrance exam is flipping off the deep imprint of imperial civil service examination system, is not only to talent selection mechanism but important way to change the fate of life. The college entrance examination has become a ladder for social promotion, an important way to bear social equity, and a burden that the whole people cannot afford (Bao et al., 2020; Feng, 2020; Rao, 2020; Meng, 2020; Xin et al., 2020; Liu, 2020).

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