

The New Round of College Entrance Examination Reform in China

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Abstract

The new round of college entrance examination reform has determined the requirements for the establishment of the examination enrollment system with Chinese characteristics in 2020. Shanghai and Zhejiang took the lead in pilot projects and made in-depth exploration in the form, content, batches, voluntary setting and filing methods of the examination. By the end of 2018, 14 provinces and municipalities across the country have launched new college entrance examination reform, which has a wide scope and high intensity. It challenges universities from the aspects of source knowledge structure, teaching management, development direction, and so on. How to deal with the new round of college entrance examination reform has become a pressing issue faced by universities.

Keywords: reform of college entrance examination; universities; opportunity; challenges

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the fundamental way to improve the quality of citizens, promote the inheritance of knowledge of civilization, and create a good life. It is also a cause of decisive significance to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Higher education has provided a steady stream of talent and intellectual support for China's social and economic development. Education has trained a large number of qualified builders and reliable successors of the socialist cause. As an effective way to select talents in higher

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education in China, the college entrance examination has always played an enormous role. However, with the continuous development of higher education and the diversification of the demand for talents, the call for the reform of the college entrance examination has also come one after another. *《The National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Program (2010-2020)》* puts forward the principle of “*establishing and improving a multi-admission mechanism that is conducive to promoting fair access to schools and facilitating the selection of outstanding talents*”. In September 2014, the State Council issued “*the Implementation Opinions on Deepening the Reform of the Examinations and Enrollment System*”, which clarified the overall requirements, main tasks and measures for the reform of the examination enrollment system, and marked a new round with the goal of promoting educational fairness and scientific selection of talents. The college entrance examination reform was kicked off. The reform of the admissions system for college entrance examinations is a nationwide reform involving a wide range of influences and far-reaching impacts. Colleges and universities at all levels must seize opportunities, continuously deepen reforms, promote their connotation construction, and actively respond to the severe challenges posed by the reform of the college entrance examination system (see [1]).

2. Changes and trends in the new round of college entrance examination reform

2.1 Changes in the form and content of the examination.

There are several changes: (1) The liberal arts and sciences division is not divided into arts and sciences. All provinces have broken the liberal arts and sciences. Most provinces have the form of “3+3”. The former “3” is the Chinese, Mathematics, and Foreign Languages. The latter “3” is the academic level test subject. The candidates choose 3 subjects among six subjects of Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, Politics, and Geography. (2) The only exam has been changed into multiple exams. Exploring multiple exams, the reform of the college entrance examination explores the shortcomings of a lifetime test. Most provinces propose English to take two exams for each candidate. (3) The absolute score has been changed into the assigned system. Shanghai and Zhejiang, which have been piloted in advance, have implemented a graded approach to improve the comparability between candidates who selected different subjects.

2.2 Adjustments of the admission batch.

Due to a large number of colleges and universities participating in the admission, the provinces can only arrange different types of institutions to be carried out in batches and forms the admission batches. Previously, most provinces divided undergraduate

enrollment into three batches. The first group of undergraduate students is generally affiliated to the Ministry of Education, the original "211 Project" colleges, and the key universities of the former ministries and commissions jointly established by the ministries and provinces. The second batch of undergraduate courses is generally a provincial non-key undergraduate college. The third batch of undergraduate courses is independent colleges, private undergraduate colleges, etc. In the new round of college entrance examination reform, most provinces have proposed to merge the admission batches, reducing or even canceling the admission batches. As of 2018, the seven provinces of Zhejiang, Shanghai, Tianjin, Liaoning, Shandong, Guangdong, and Hainan canceled the batches of the undergraduate sections and realized the same batch of undergraduate admissions. Other provinces have also accelerated the consolidation of batches in recent years and gradually canceled the admission batches system. At present, only seven provinces including Inner Mongolia, Jilin, Hunan, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia have retained three batches of undergraduate admission, but the reform direction is to gradually reduce batches.

2.3 Changes in the voluntary setting and the mode of filing.

There are several changes: (1) Colleges and universities volunteers have been changed to "professional + college" volunteers. According to the original voluntary setting rules, candidates can report multiple colleges and universities as parallel volunteers. Each college can also report multiple professional volunteers. The provincial examination institutes first submit the candidates' files to the university, and the colleges and universities according to the candidates' scores and volunteer distribution of professional, forming the final admission results. Zhejiang's college entrance examination reform program, volunteering to adopt the "professional + school" model, fully respects candidates' choice of both the institutions and the choice of majors, and invests directly in the specific majors of colleges and universities, directly forming the results of admission. (2) "One file and multiple investments" has been explored. Since 2015, Zhejiang has implemented a multi-investment in the early enrollment of higher vocational education. Fujian has implemented "one file and multiple investments" in art enrollment for many years. It is proposed that on the basis of the original pilot, it will gradually promote multi-entry according to professional level (see [2]). Shandong Province "will explore the implementation of the candidates a multi-investment, multiple choice of the file mode and increase the two-way choice of colleges and candidates"(see [3]). In addition, Jilin, Guangdong, Jiangxi, Hubei and other provinces have all proposed the possibility of exploring multiple interactive admissions and exploring candidates' multiple choices.

2.4 Highlight the role of comprehensive quality evaluation.

An important direction of the reform of the content of the college entrance examination is the strengthening of the "two-based, one-reference", that is, based on the results of the unified college entrance examination and the results of the high school-level examinations, reference to the high school comprehensive quality evaluation results. Most provinces have proposed to promote the comprehensive quality evaluation of middle schools in the reform plan and enhance the reference role in college enrollment. The "Trinity" in Zhejiang Province integrates the results of college entrance examinations, high school entrance examinations, and comprehensive quality evaluation. In recent years, Jiangsu, Shandong, Shanghai, Guangdong and other places have also selected local colleges and universities to carry out comprehensive evaluation admissions, and the scale of the pilot is constantly expanded. The pilot of the comprehensive evaluation has broken the scores of the college entrance examination as the sole criterion, and considers the high school comprehensive quality evaluation, the high school level test scores, and the university assessment conclusions, and explores the new model. According to the implementation plan for deepening the college entrance examination reform announced by various localities, it has become an irresistible trend to explore the construction of a "two-based, one-reference" multi-admission mechanism.

3. The impact of the new round of college entrance examination reform on colleges and universities

3.1 The difference in students' knowledge structure and subject base has increased.

The new round of college entrance examination reform has expanded the choice of students, but also made the student source structure more diversified. According to the plan for the college entrance examination reform announced by the provinces, candidates are not subject to liberal arts and sciences, and candidates are selected for examination subjects. This has led to a variety of student choices and a widening knowledge structure. At the same time, different professions have different requirements for examination subjects, and they are forced to plan their studies in advance, considering the university major, and clarifying the direction of learning. The practice in Zhejiang and Shanghai has also exposed the problem of insufficient physical selection. Many candidates are based on the psychology of avoiding difficulties. In order to obtain high scores and avoid difficult physics, there has been a phenomenon of "abandoning the examination" of physics. However, physics is the basic course in the science and engineering majors of colleges and universities, which causes the mismatch between the student source structure and the needs of colleges and universities. This

change will inevitably affect the cultivation of science talents in colleges and universities, which will bring troubles to the selection and cultivation of talents in colleges and universities.

3.2 The difference in students' knowledge levels has increased.

In the new round of college entrance examination reform, the batch merger, according to the professional or subject selection group and other units of file admission, takes into consideration the different level of students' knowledge. According to the previous model, the admission scores of the school are determined by the status and influence of the school by the society for a long time. The difference of students' knowledge level is very small, the score distribution is flat, and the students are homogenized (see [4]). This has made the level of the university very competitive. In the new round of college entrance examination reform, colleges are no longer distinguished and artificial boundaries setting are increasingly blurred. More universities compete on the same stage. That is, universities with outstanding school performance can break through the boundaries of identity, and admission of better quality students. In addition, many provinces explore units that are selected according to majors or subjects, and will be more directly confronted and competitive with similar schools in other universities. For the same university, the admission scores of each major are different, the individual scores of the students are widened, and the difference in knowledge level has increased.

3.3 Some of the unpopular and vulnerable professions are facing a crisis of survival.

In the investment model of colleges and universities, the influence of colleges and universities on some particular professions are concealed. The comprehensive strength of the colleges can make up for the shortcomings of its unpopular and weak professions. The disadvantaged and unpopular professions can compete the enrollment by accepting the admissions (see [5]). According to the statistics of admissions, there are 75 enrollment majors in Jiangsu Province in 2018, and 5 of them have a voluntary enrollment rate of less than 50%. In accordance with the direction of the new round of college entrance examination reform, students have further attached importance to the choice of professions they wish to pursue higher studies in. In the pilot reform of Zhejiang Province, all majors and institutions have been promoted to the same level, and the institutions directly accept candidates' choices. Colleges with distinctive and strong professional skills will be sought after by candidates, and the admission scores will rise. The disadvantaged and unpopular majors will lower their admission scores or even abandon because they choose fewer candidates. After the implementation of the new round of college entrance examination reform program, the relatively weak

enrollment majors of famous universities may not be as good as the specialties of characteristic schools. The low-level majors of famous schools may significantly reduce enrollment plans and even be eliminated.

3.4 The degree of discrimination in the college entrance examination results is reduced.

In the new college entrance examination model, each major requires different candidates so in order to make the scores comparable, many provinces implemented a system of points. Taking Zhejiang Province as an example, the scoring system is applied to the selected subjects. The starting point is divided into 40 points, and the score is 100 points. There are 21 levels, and each level has a score of 3 points. On one hand, this method reduces the score gap, and on the other hand, it leads to a large number of peer candidates, which reduces the degree of discrimination to some extent especially for high-level universities. Although the number of candidates who can get high-level scores are classified into 21 levels, it is still possible to exceed the number of students enrolled in such institutions.

4. Colleges and universities should take the initiative to cope with the challenges brought about by the new round of college entrance examination reform

4.1 Strengthening the connection between high schools and colleges to make up for the disconnection of knowledge structure.

According to system theory, higher education and secondary education are an organic whole. Secondary education is the basis for the implementation of higher education. Higher education and secondary education should be able to connect with each other in terms of training objectives, training specifications and basic requirements. This requires the presidents and teachers of universities and middle schools to strengthen communication and explore and collaborate on some essential issues. When formulating reform plans, the education administrative department should fully consider meeting the national development strategy and the training requirements of colleges and universities, fully consider the professional settings of colleges and universities, the strength of teachers, and the conditions for running schools, and continuously improve the matching of professional requirements and knowledge structure of students.

4.2 Strengthening connotation construction and enhancing professional competitiveness.

Colleges and universities should not blindly pursue the expansion of scale in the setting of undergraduate majors but should combine the discipline foundation and the characteristics of running a school to scientifically set enrollment majors and enrollment plans. Colleges and universities at different levels should actively meet the needs of national and regional economic and social development and strategic needs, and comprehensively consider the factors of enrollment, employment, teacher strength, and discipline development according to their own positioning, and establish a professional dynamic adjustment mechanism. "Double-class" universities, local high-level universities, local general universities, and higher vocational colleges must set their own professional training goals according to the school's orientation. The "double-class" construction university should take the initiative to meet the national strategic needs and undertake the historical mission of cultivating scientists and engineers. Local high-level universities should develop superior disciplines according to their own characteristics, and build specialties to enhance their attraction in a specific subject and profession. Private undergraduate and higher vocational colleges should set up majors and enrollment plan according to the needs of regional economic development to better serve local economic and social development. In the process of implementation, we must pay attention to guard against the preferences of candidates, blindly expand the scale of the current so-called "hot" profession, and lose their own school characteristics (see [6]).

4.3 Promote large-scale enrollment and implement a wide-caliber thick foundation training.

On one hand, under the new college entrance examination model, if the various majors in colleges and universities take the choice of candidates and directly participate in the competition of students, the effect will not be ideal. If the group is warm, several similar majors will be merged for large-scale enrollment. Reduce the number of volunteers, increase the chances of being selected, and ensure the overall quality of students in most majors. On the other hand, according to the large-scale enrollment, the implementation of wide-caliber and basic foundations in the lower grades of the university, focusing on general education, so that students have a broad basic knowledge of the discipline and a high overall quality, while guiding students to career planning, Make scientific and accurate judgments on professional choices. After entering the school, students will learn more about related majors after a period of study, and then choose majors according to their hobbies and personal ambitions, thus avoiding the blindness of professional selection at the time of college entrance examination (see [7]).

4.4 Intensify the cultivation of excellent students and improve the quality of personnel training.

First of all, the new round of college entrance examination reform puts forward new requirements for the quality of talent training. Under the new situation, the competition for students in colleges and universities is becoming more and more fierce. The new round of college entrance examination reform has expanded the candidates' choices. Only by providing better quality education resources and providing better education services can colleges and universities attract candidates. Colleges and universities should promote the coordinated development of disciplines and teaching work from the concept, system and measures. The academic level of the university is represented by the best professors and scholars, but the university's brand is derived from the influence of university-trained graduates in society. Colleges and universities should take the initiative to cope with the new challenges brought about by the new round of college entrance examination reform, enhance the sense of urgency and the need of cultivating quality professionals. Also, colleges and universities must explore diversified training models according to their own goals and positioning, combining professional characteristics and social needs.

4.5 Deepen exchanges with secondary schools, and select talents for win-win cooperation.

Colleges and universities should take the initiative to connect with high schools and strengthen exchanges with high school teachers and students through various forms. At the symposium on college entrance examination reform organized by the Zhejiang Provincial Examinations Institute, many high school principals proposed that the new college entrance examination reform requires high school students to select examination subjects according to the intended profession. However, high school students and teachers do not fully understand the majors in colleges and universities. High schools lack career and academic planning teachers. It is imperative that university experts and professors provide professional guidance and academic planning to middle school students. Colleges and universities should take the initiative to meet the needs of high schools by assisting secondary schools to establish laboratories, organize middle school students to visit universities and other activities and communicate face-to-face with middle school students.

4.6 Make full use of the multi-admission mechanism to improve the accuracy of talent selection.

Multi-admission refers to the selection of students according to the results of college

entrance examinations, high school level test scores and comprehensive quality evaluation, which is the "two bases, one reference" proposed by the college entrance examination reform (see [8]). In the process of implementation, how to scientifically collect and apply comprehensive quality evaluation is still an important issue facing the education administrative department and universities. At present, the role of high school level test scores in the college entrance examination has not been highlighted. The direction of this round of college entrance examination is to abolish the liberal arts and sciences. One inevitable result is a volume of mathematics and arts, which reduces the degree of distinction between mathematics, physics, chemistry and other subjects, and eventually reduces the degree of discrimination. The selection of talents at the level of the university poses a challenge. High-level universities should aim at this round of college entrance examination reform, scientifically design independent enrollment and comprehensive evaluation programs, continuously improve the scientific and precise selection of talents, and enroll students who truly have academic expertise and innovation potential.

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