

Analysis of Educational Inequality Behind the Phenomenon of College Entrance Examination Immigration

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Abstract: In recent years, the phenomenon of immigration in the college entrance examination has been frequent, seriously affecting educational equity. The root of it lies in the significant inter-provincial regional differences in admission opportunities for high-quality higher education in China. Research has found that the dependence of universities on local governments and their pursuit of high-quality student resources are the main reasons for this problem. This article provides corresponding suggestions for this issue from three aspects: in terms of economic foundation, fundamentally filling the differences in the economy and education of each province. At the government level, strengthen the central government's macroeconomic regulation, coordinate the national situation, and allocate admission quotas for each province. At the level of high-quality universities, enrollment should focus on ability orientation and weaken territorial orientation. By reasonably allocating enrollment quotas for higher education in different regions, it aims to break the unfairness caused by regional differences, better ensure that every student has equal access to higher education, and ultimately guide education toward a more equitable direction.

Keywords: Immigration in the college entrance examination, regional differences, high-quality higher education, educational equity

1. Introduction

Chinese society has always had a fervent pursuit of higher education and academic qualifications. The employment market in China is currently dominated by educational qualifications, and educational background has a significant impact on personal income and future development. Therefore, higher education has been widely considered by society. In recent years, the scale of higher education in China has continued to expand, and the popularization of higher education has gradually become a trend. More and more people have the opportunity to receive higher education, which has shifted the focus of attention from the issue of obtaining higher education opportunities to the issue of fair access to high-quality higher education, that is, the issue of fair admission to the college entrance examination.

As one of the most fair, successful, and effective systems in China, the college entrance examination has made significant contributions to the popularization of higher education and talent selection. However, due to factors such as regional differences, there is still some unfairness in the college entrance examination. The phenomenon of college entrance examination immigration is a

concentrated outbreak of contradictions caused by regional differences in enrollment opportunities. This article will study the regional inequality of enrollment opportunities behind the phenomenon of college entrance examination immigration, analyze the reasons for the problems, and provide corresponding suggestions.

2. The Phenomenon of Immigration in the College Entrance Examination

China has a relatively consistent definition of the concept of college entrance examination migration, which generally refers to the behavior of candidates who move from areas with greater difficulty in the college entrance examination to areas with less difficulty in the college entrance examination to take the college entrance examination using changing their registered residence location to obtain more admission opportunities. Excluding factors such as forced immigration due to parents' work, China's college entrance examination immigrants are mainly divided into two situations: one is to immigrate to areas with underdeveloped education but easy admission to the college entrance examination, and the other is to immigrate to areas with developed education and easy admission to the college entrance examination. The essence of the former is that some advantageous groups exploit the loopholes of equal rights policies and use dishonest methods to classify themselves as vulnerable groups to obtain additional benefits, while the latter is formed by complex historical, political, and economic factors in China [1].

3. Problems and Manifestations

China is currently in a developing stage, and it is difficult to achieve a balance in the economic and educational development of various regions in the short term. Therefore, it is difficult to achieve nationwide unified enrollment. Implementing a provincial quota system is the best and inevitable choice for China at this stage. The provincial quota admission system for the college entrance examination is currently an important measure in China to ensure fairness in the college entrance examination, but a series of unfair issues have arisen during the implementation process. The distribution of high-quality universities in different provinces is very uneven, and there are significant differences in the admission quotas allocated by universities to different regions during provincial quotas, with a clear tendency towards local protectionism, which leads to significant differences in admission difficulty among provinces, specifically manifested in huge differences in admission rates [2].

3.1. Unevenly Distributed Universities

The distribution of high-quality universities in China is extremely uneven across various provinces, showing the distribution characteristics of the most in the eastern region, the middle in the central region, and the least in the western region [3]. According to table 1, 14000 people are taking the college entrance examination in Beijing and Shanghai, accounting for only 1% of the total number of applicants nationwide. However, "985 universities" account for 30% of the total number of applicants nationwide, and "211 universities" account for 32% of the total number of applicants nationwide. The number of applicants for the college entrance examination in Shandong, Guangdong, Hebei, and Henan provinces is 3.2 million, accounting for 30% of the national total. However, the number of "985 universities" only accounts for 10% of the national total, and the number of "211 universities" accounts for 7% of the national total. Hebei Province, Jiangxi Province, et al. do not have "985 colleges" and universities. However, there are neither "985" nor "211 universities" in Hebei Province. The uneven distribution of high-quality universities and the huge disparity in the number of candidates reflect the inequity of higher education resources.

Table 1: 2022 National College Entrance Examination by Province [4].

Province	Number of applicants	Number of 985	Admission rate of 985	Number of 211	Admission rate of 985
Nationwide	11,930,000	39	1.62%	116	5.01%
Beijing	54,000	8	4.29%	26	13.99%
Shanghai	50,000	4	5.33%	10	13.58%
Tianjin	58,000	2	5.81%	4	12.68%
Shandong	598,800	2	1.47%	3	4.44%
Guangdong	702,000	2	1.32%	4	2.74%
Hebei	753,200	0	1.48%	1	4.42%
Henan	1,200,000	0	1.14%	1	4.14%

3.2. Regional Protection Preferences

Key universities in China have a certain preference for local candidates when allocating enrollment quotas, and the enrollment quotas allocated by the school's location are far higher than the national average [5]. The more developed the economy is, the more concentrated universities are, and the distribution of enrollment plans is also greater, resulting in significant differences in the admission rates of high-quality universities across provinces. According to Table 1, the admission rate of Tianjin 985 is 5 times that of Henan Province, and the admission rate of Beijing 211 is 5 times that of Guangdong Province. Peking University and Tsinghua University are representatives of the highest-level universities in China, and they are the coveted universities for many Chinese students. Therefore, the Qingbei ratio has always been of special concern to the people of the whole country. However, the inter-provincial differences in admission rates at Tsinghua and Peking University are even more astonishing. According to table 2, the admission rate of Qingbei in Beijing is 20 times that of Henan Province and 25 times that of Guangdong Province. That is to say, the probability of Beijing candidates being admitted to Tsinghua and Peking University is much higher than that of candidates from other provinces. From this, it can be seen that the higher the level of universities, the more obvious the territorial advantage of student sources [6].

Table 2: Number of Admissions to Tsinghua and Peking University [7].

Province	Admission rate of Tsinghua and Peking University (‰)
Nationwide	0.72
Beijing	9.13
Shanghai	4.31
Tianjin	2.79
Shandong	0.52
Guangdong	0.36
Hebei	0.61
Henan	0.46

4. Reason for the Problem

4.1. The Dependence of Universities on Local Governments

Since the 1990s, many universities have been decentralized to local areas and implemented a management system that focuses on local areas and is jointly built by the central government. Although key universities directly under the Ministry of Education are still under central management, they also rely heavily on local governments, especially financially. According to the agreement signed between the Ministry of Education and local governments, except for Peking University and Tsinghua University, which are solely responsible for investment by the central government, other universities are jointly built by the central and local governments. According to the situation in different regions, the central government and local governments respectively bear different proportions of educational investment. The dependence of high-quality higher education institutions on local finance has led to their need to tilt their enrollment plans toward their respective regions [8].

As policy executors and defenders of local interests, local education administrative departments have a primary preference for political achievements, followed by local interests. Increasing the enrollment quota for the location can keep high-quality students in the local area and prevent talent outflow. Graduates staying and working in the local area can promote the development of the local economy, which can serve as a political achievement. Therefore, local governments will invest a large amount of funds in local universities to support their construction and development, and will also maximize the utilization of local university resources, requiring universities to expand their enrollment in their respective regions.

4.2. Universities Strive for High-Quality Student Resources

From the perspective of the preparation of enrollment plans for universities in China over the years, there is a bias towards the quality of high-quality students. For example, in 2006, the Ministry of Education clearly stated that the enrollment plans of higher education institutions directly under the Ministry of Education should adhere to the principle of "prioritizing the quality of student sources and balancing regional balance" It can be seen that an important reference indicator for the allocation of enrollment quotas in universities is the quality of high school students in various regions. However, the quality of high school students is based on the quality of basic education. If the quality of basic education is poor, the quality of high school students will also decrease, and the development of basic education is closely related to the investment of various regional economies. The economic development in the eastern, central, and western regions of China is very imbalanced, and the financial investment in basic education varies greatly among provinces (cities, districts), forming an imbalanced pattern of basic education among different provinces (cities, districts), which in turn affects the allocation of enrollment quotas for universities in various provinces (cities, districts) [9].

5. Suggestions

5.1. Strengthen the Central Government's Macroeconomic Regulation

The government should strengthen macroeconomic regulation, establish and improve supervision mechanisms, closely cooperate with local governments, and fully leverage government functions. At the same time, it is necessary to streamline administration and delegate power, increase the autonomy of various universities, and improve the efficiency of utilizing limited resources. National policy support is the guarantee for educational development, and the direct reason for the uneven distribution of high-quality higher education resources in China is the imbalanced investment. Meanwhile, according to Ronald Dworkin's theory of resource equality, the government should ensure that

citizens have equal access to various resources. Therefore, the government should strengthen macroeconomic regulation, establish a sound supervision mechanism, increase supervision of the implementation process of various specific policies, regularly inspect the implementation of policies, cooperate with local governments, effectively implement various policies, and fully leverage the government's functions. The key points of the 2018 work of the Ministry of Education pointed out the need to promote coordinated development of regional education, implement the upgraded version of the Central and Western Higher Education Revitalization Plan, and the government should play a macro regulatory role in implementing policies. The carrier of high-quality higher education resources is various higher education institutions, and the reasonable operation of universities is the core of improving the efficiency of utilizing limited high-quality higher education resources. Government streamlining and delegating power to higher education institutions has more autonomy, which helps them integrate resources more effectively, thereby achieving complementary advantages between key universities and between key and non-key universities, and promoting the coordinated development of higher education institutions at all levels.

5.2. Make up for the Imbalance in Education in Various Regions

The level of economic development is an important factor that restricts the development of education at all stages. On the one hand, the current economic level in China is not sufficient to support the synchronous development of education at all stages. Promoting coordinated regional economic development can provide financial support for the development of universities themselves. On the other hand, it can also enhance students' ability to pay, especially candidates from economically underdeveloped areas. At present, there are significant differences in the economic development of different regions in China. Developed regions have higher levels of education at various stages, while economically underdeveloped regions have lower levels of education. This leads to the pressure on universities in economically developed regions to bear the expansion of enrollment, while economically underdeveloped regions lack talent. In the long run, this will further expand the unequal opportunities for education in different regions. At the same time, according to Christopher Jenks' humanitarian equity theory, there should be a certain tilt towards vulnerable areas. Therefore, it is necessary to promote the coordinated development of the regional economy, appropriately increase investment in education funds in the central and western regions, deepen the strategy of western development, promote the revitalization of the old industrial base in Northeast China, promote the rise of the central region, balance the education development situation between regions with large economic development levels, and promote education equity.

5.3. Focus on Ability Orientation and Weaken the Tendency towards Localization

In terms of the current national conditions of China, high-quality higher education is still a scarce resource. Therefore, high-quality higher education should better shoulder the responsibility of cultivating elite talents for society and should recruit the best students for training. Therefore, universities should consider students' abilities as the most important measure when recruiting students. However, many "985 Project" universities in China currently have a tendency towards "localization" and "mutual benefit" in their enrollment, resulting in students from different regions not being able to equally enjoy high-quality higher education resources. Although the local government has provided many policy and financial incentives to local universities, in return, universities allocate a large number of enrollment quotas to the local area to obtain more government support [10]. However, as the highest quality higher education resources in China, these universities should bravely shoulder the responsibility of promoting social equity. When universities allocate enrollment quotas, they strictly control local enrollment quotas, comprehensively consider factors such as the number of

candidates, basic education level, and the number of high-quality universities in each province, optimize the allocation of enrollment quotas, and reduce regional differences in higher education enrollment opportunities.

6. Conclusions

This article explores the current situation and characteristics of regional differences in enrollment opportunities for high-quality higher education in China through data analysis. This article argues that high-quality higher education enrollment opportunities present a situation of "strong in the eastern region and weak in the central and western regions". The regional differences in access to high-quality higher education in China are generally not significant, but there are significant differences across provinces. The regional differences in enrollment opportunities for high-quality higher education are influenced by various factors. For the convenience of analysis, this article summarizes the influencing factors. The uneven distribution of high-quality higher education resources in China, the tendency of "localization" of university enrollment, and local protectionism in areas where high-quality universities are concentrated. In response to the reasons for regional differences in higher education enrollment opportunities, relevant countermeasures, and suggestions are proposed: promoting coordinated development of the regional economy and promoting educational equity. Increase macroeconomic regulation and balanced and coordinated development. High-quality higher education institutions focus on ability-oriented enrollment and weaken the tendency toward localization.

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