

Chinese College Entrance Examination (CCEE) Problems and Reforms

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History of CCEE

- one of the most unique system in higher education field
- established in 1952
- 1949-1951: a period of transition
- from separate mode to united mode.



History of CCEE

- **1949: followed college entrance policy from Jiang Jie-shi's government**
- **maintain the continuity of Higher Education**
- **The experiment of national examination system in 1938-1940**
- **Separate mode: admission size, recruiting criterion and other policies were decided by colleges**



History of CCEE

- **1950: colleges were required to adopt united examination within the regions they located, but separate admission was also allowed, just in case some colleges might have difficulties in practicing the united examination**
- **only 36% of the colleges chose the united examination**



History of CCEE

- 1951: followed the admission policy of last year
- new command : united admission must be finished before separate one
- the amount of united-recruiting colleges increased sharply (70%)
- 1952: all universities and colleges must take part in national examination (except some special colleges)
- 1952-1965: running very well (except 1958)



History of CCEE

- **1958: the college entrance mode was changed from national to separate (because of political reasons)**
- **1966: “Cultural Revolution”**
- **the national examination system was unfortunately chosen as a breakthrough in the area of cultural and educational “revolution”**
- **broken off from 1966 to 1976**
- **almost all normal educational activities were stopped at that time**



History of CCEE

- 1972: some colleges resumed recruiting students
- used recommendation system instead of national examinations
- “自愿报名、群众推荐、领导批准、学校复审”
- political performance, “路线觉悟” (class consciousness), practical experience
- academic requirement : graduated from junior high school or up
- higher education quality(☹)

History of CCEE

- 1977: the national examination system which had been broken off for 11 years long was readopted
- a very important part of eliminating the bad influence of “Cultural Revolution”
- milestone
- 5,700,000(1977) 5,900,000(1978)
- everyone is equal to compete for higher education opportunities, based on their literacy, not on their parentage or so-called political performance anymore.



Why established the national examination system

- the needs of political and economic construction of our new country.
- rebuilding → needed all kinds of professionals
- national examination system could solve the unbalanced recruiting problems between different regions, colleges and disciplines, and could increase the use efficiency of limited higher education resources, especially under the very poor educational condition at that time.



Why established the national examination system

- the need of educational adjustment.
- 1952: we had a very large-scale adjustment of academy and discipline, involved many universities and colleges
- need a more scheming entrance policy to ensure all kinds of higher education institutions get eligible and sufficient freshman, in order to solidify the fruit of this nationwide educational adjustment.



Why established the national examination system

- the need of the development of exam system itself
- big population → large scale of exam
- seeking equity and efficiency is the most important consideration for large-scale exam
- the national exam organized by the government is more efficient than the separate one held by colleges themselves, as concerning economic efficiency, scientificity and authority as well
- get rid of jamming things effectively.



Why established the national examination system

- the desire of common people
- China had been being in situation of falling to pieces and infirmness in hundred years
- everyone desired for the country's unification and mightiness
- the desire had very deep effect on the implementation of centralism in China (including the college entrance policy)



Why established the national examination system

- influenced by culture (two factors)
- the idea of union (caused by thousands of years of centralism)
- the “gene” of united exam originated from the Imperial Examination (existing for 1300 years long)
- rooted deeply on Chinese people, mentally and culturally, which made them easily accept and recognize the national exam
- deep-seated reason for implementing the national exam smoothly
- China Mainland and Taiwan chose the national examination system almost at the same time, though the two sides were totally isolated from each other at that time. Why?

Importance of National Examination in China

- high reputation, deep emotion
- readopting the national examination in 1977: saved nation from collapse
- close relationship with politics
- abolished/readopted: political reason
- caused a continuous argument from academe or common people (furious debate)
- important influence on China society
- “baton” of education
- “片面追求升学率” (since 1960s)
- hurts the education badly
- brings heavy physical and psychological pressure on students

Importance of National Examination System in China

- why is it so focused and important in China?
- the performance of exam is the most important or even the only criterion of colleges admission
- related directly with one's possibility of entering into colleges, or entering what kind of or which level of colleges
- “举国大考” (*National Great Examination*)
- “高考节” (*Examination Festival*)
- media focus, bus routes/air lines changed temporarily, inquiring between people.....
- one of the hottest and most enduring topics in China



Importance of National Examination System in China

- highly competitive
- huge influence
- close relationship with individual future
- large scale(2006:10,000,000)
- influence huge population
- reforms are very complicated and hard
- have to be cautious and considerate
- cause emotional vibration
- hurt social stabilization



Dilemma

- facing a dilemma when choosing an appropriate college entrance system
- suitability **VS** shortcomings
- lacking flexibility(☹)
- satisfying different requirements(☹)
- flexible and personal assessment(☹)
- morality or other special abilities (☹)
- recommendation letters/other documents seldom work well in China(☹)



Dilemma

- “上以孝取人，则勇者割股，怯者庐墓。上以廉取人，则弊车羸马，恶衣菲食，凡可以中上意，无所不至矣”（苏轼）
- *if the criterion of selecting Civil Servant is filial piety, the brave person will slice off their thighs as prescription, the less brave people will also be in mourning for their parents for a few years. If the criterion is incorruptness, they will take worn-out carriages, wear rags and just eat simple food. Anyway, they will do whatever can satisfy the emperor (by Su Shi)*
- Under this traditional culture, we have to use rigid examination to prevent from the intervention of non-rigid things
- main reason for the long existence of Imperial Examination

Dilemma

- theoretically speaking, it is best if we can not only recruit students with satisfying special requirements of institutions and desires of examinees, but also ensure the efficiency and equity
- what if college hold exam separately?
- Overload of cost(☹)
- relationship things (☹)
- big risk of hurting equity (☹)



Reforms in Recent Years

- reform since mid 1980s
- the intention of the reforms is to strengthen colleges' self-determination power of recruitment, and make the system more flexible
- abolishing national exam : a challenging viewpoint
- quit national exam twice (in 1958 and in 1966) and replaced with recommendation → sharp decline of HE quality → readopt finally



Reforms in Recent Years

- **1986: the recommendation system (parallel to national exam, small proportion)**
- **difference between the real recommendation system and the old one (totally influenced by political factor, while the academic preparation was almost ignored)**
- **under this real recommendation system, those excellent or talented students can directly enter into colleges with the recommendation from their middle schools**
- **don't need to take part in the national exam**
- **have to pass some special evaluation or exam held by the colleges**



Reforms in Recent Years

- recommendation system: worked very well in the beginning, bad things came soon (bogus information, recommending ineligible students, wire-pulling, corruptions
- “综合能力测试” (Testing for Integrative Ability)
- winners of National Olympic Subject Games be exempt
- returned to united exam
- shrink the scale
- heighten the criterion
- strict the administration
- make the process brighter and more transparent (with the intervention of media and the monitor of public opinions)



Reforms in Recent Years

- “3+ X” (from 1999): another big step of diversification of CCEE
- two fixed groups of exam subjects: arts; science/engineering (past)
- “3”(Chinese, Mathematics and Foreign Language) is required on everyone, but the other subjects can be flexible (“X”) to choose
- each province decides its own subject mode (most choose 3+arts/science integration)



Reforms in Recent Years

- 2001: “self-recruitment”
- applications + national examination scores
- biggest argument: equity problems
- a higher step in 2006: reform of Fudan & Shanghai Jiaotong
- totally got rid of the national exam scores
- what matters in the process of admission?
- high school grades and the scores of testing conducted by the colleges



Reforms in Recent Years

- 2004: making exam questions by province (used to be made by Ministry of Education)
- break the national pattern further
- unbalanced admission marks among provinces
- big issue, huge debates
- proposition of “两会” (the National People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference)
- 2006: China University of Political Science and Law decided to distribute the admission quota to each province, mainly based on its population (“ice-breaking action”)
- internet matriculation, standardized examination, score scale reform, high school graduation examination



Thank you