

What Matters for Chinese Higher Education?--Current Issues Analysis

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Abstract: This paper will underline issues in higher education after reading literature, Discuss the critical issues in Chinese higher education. First, inequality in higher education attainment and young graduates suffered from social pressure.

Keywords: Issues of Higher Education Attainment; Hukou and Admission Quota; Finding Jobs After graduates.

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of Chinese higher education undertaken since the late 1990s was caused by booming economic activities and growing GDP in mainland China. Higher education institutions (HEIs) showed an increasing 30% (2% each year) enrollment rate until 2012. Recently, the formal higher education system identified four levels: associate higher education degree combined with higher vocational colleges (gaozhi) and specialized colleges (gaozhuan), while Bachelor's degree, master and doctoral degrees are offered by regular universities as so call undergraduate education and postgraduate education in the western term, majority of undergraduate education will take four years of completion and postgraduate with a preceding two years duration. In addition, public HEIs, private (minban), and sino-foreign cooperative HEIs formed as regular HEIs sectors. Statistical data until 2016, 2,879 higher education institutions are operating in China, including 1,236 schools offering undergraduate/postgraduate programs, and 1,359 provided degree programs with an approximate enrollment of 8.15 million students.

I have been through the Chinese education system from childhood to university. I had experience with different It is vital to understand and evaluate the current higher education system for my context and others concerned about it and a recommendation for further social and educational development.

2. Key arguments

National College Entrance Exam (gaokao) is a compulsory and standardized exam that differentiate at the provincial level. The score of the exam determines three main directions for each student: junior college, regular university, or key university, while students will submit a list of personal preferences with school names and the 2/3 majors under one particular university to enroll it with a bit of flexibility. The critical problem of the Gaokao is chance to join key universities like Peking and Tsinghua University.^[1]

Most literature on educational inequality agreed there is a significant correlation between final enrollment and family status.^[2] there are two hypotheses. One suggests that students from a great family background that able to catch more opportunities in Gaokao selection. Still, luck will stop after a level of education, and another expresses the advantages will maintain even after essential piece and still support them with better achievement in future.^[3] According to Liu,^[4] almost doubled the chance of attending university compared between better-educated family background students and normal status one. In addition, Jiang^[5] focused on parental advantage in Hukou status, and income is key to student higher education attainment. Chinese higher education has four institutional reforms: marketization, massification, privatization, and decentralization.^[6]

The situation suffered in 2014. Total 7.27 million graduates flowed into the labor market, and the graduates were facing tremendous pressure after graduation. According to Jiang, college graduates began to rely on their family background to find a job. A youth survey conducted in Guangzhou shows that 80% of graduates believe that great family background is a significant driving force for their future careers. Another Chinese General Social Survey also proves that 20% of graduates depend on their families to get employment. Therefore, this competition is not about skills, knowledge, or personal capabilities; it depends on their family's parental status and Guanxi cycle. Furthermore, another literature expresses a different opinion in that the PRC workforce still has a relatively low average education level. Higher education in China does not provide the labor with the necessary skills to fit global economic growth.^[7]

3. Analysis and evaluation

I realized that admission quotas in different provinces cause higher education inequality since the test paper varies province by province. Moreover, Hukou or residence restricts the chance of joining Gaokao in another region like Beijing. Research data indicates that the rural-urban gap in higher education attainment is significant evidence to support that students from better-educated family backgrounds are more likely to join higher education, mainly from urban areas.

Considering family income, I suppose this is not a solid factor to join higher education; wealthy families nowadays no longer care about quota and hukou restrictions because they are more willing to send their kids to overseas universities. In 2016, The total number of Chinese students enrolled in international education reached 544.5 thousand, 70% of them registered in an undergraduate program, and their parents paid 90% of them. There are doubled increasing numbers compared with the data in 2010. For the second problem, I agree that college graduates face challenges in getting employment although they enjoy better knowledge and skills than non-college students. It relates to salary and expected salary, location choice, and social pressure. The employment rate of university graduates in China from 2008 to 2017.^[8] An increasing trend during this period that vividly represents finding a job for young graduates is not a problem now.

With statistical data provided by Professor Lu and his student Zhou. They combined the Institute of Economics Education, Peking University, the average income for new graduates of Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's represented in 2825yuan, 8556yuan and 10774yuan in 2017. It shows human capital has a significant impact on start salaries. The higher the educational level then, the higher the monthly salary. However, compared with their expected salary, 50.6% of total graduates are disappointed with their start salary, and even they need to interview 11 times on average to find a proper job.

In addition, more than 80% of graduates are employed in large and medium-sized cities, which reflects that China's economic development is mainly in the urban area. Unfortunately, with the limited salary mentioned above, most young graduates suffer from their daily life in rental, harsh transportation system, long working hours, and social pressure. The talent competition in the labor market is huge for young graduates, and social anxiety such as house, car, and marriage considerations also influence the choice of employment.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, two parts of the issue analyze to understand the current situation in the Chinese higher education system. With critique strategy and self-evaluation, this paper confirmed that family status, hukou, and admission quota are significant factors influencing inequality attainment, while less affected by family income. On top of that, young graduates seek stability and tend to "look ahead/money" when choosing a career because of the location they decide to stay in and substantial social pressure. In the future, more and more private (minban) and sino-foreign cooperative HEIs will launch in the market, competition between school enrollment, quality of teaching standards will become rising problems for all HEIs. Policy support should focus on how to eliminate social pressure and support young graduates living with happiness.

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