

Comparison of the Examination Policy and the Lottery Policy in Entering Schools

Mingzhu Yang^{1,*}

¹ Lingnan University, Hong Kong, China

*Corresponding author. Email: mingzhuyang1997@163.com

ABSTRACT

To produce a comparison study between the examination policy and the lottery policy, this paper used the admittance policy in the city of Shanghai as the primary example and Xi'an as the reference. By contrasting these policies, it can be demonstrated that fundamental changes have occurred in society including schooling structures and family building as a result of these reforms, which displays the beneficial aspects of the lottery policy. Finally, the methods of improving the lottery policy and China's educational system will be discussed.

Keywords: examination policy, lottery policy

1. INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of globalization, China is required to establish a people-oriented educational concept with international visions and a continuously innovative educational principle in order to promote educational fairness and justice and keep up with global education progress.

Concerning the history of the education recruitment systems in China, the imperial examination, which dated back to the Sui Dynasty, has served as the model for examination policy for the next 1400 years. Although the policy demonstrates numerous deficiencies in the development process, it has been considered appropriate for China's national circumstances, thereby contributing to the growth of China's educational system. However, examination policies are continuously bringing about educational inequity over time, which decreases social class mobility while increasing class solidification.

For the purpose of fostering educational parity, the Chinese government has been revising its educational admittance policy, moving away from an exam-dependent one to a lottery system since 2018, which marks a watershed moment in China's educational system. The cities of Shanghai and Xi'an are the forerunners in this policy reform. Therefore, this study aims to investigate which form of education policy is most required and suitable in China.

2. THE EXAMINATION POLICY

China has established the mandated nine years of compulsory schooling since 1986, indicating that children in elementary and junior high schools are exempt from paying tuition and are entitled to a free, non-testing education [1]. Simultaneously, the government enabled schools to enroll students through tests in order to improve the efficiency of educational resource allocation, thereby raising and transporting a huge number of talented persons for socialist building. However, because of the unequal expansion of educational resources and discrepancies in educational levels, many parents would rather encourage their children to be admitted into the elite schools than the standard junior high schools that are arbitrarily assigned. The next sections will explore and discuss the rationale behind the examination policy in further detail.

2.1. Insufficient investment in education

Compared with the rest of the world, China's education investment is comparatively lower and has been declining over the past decade [2]. In this case, the government will then be unable to contribute equally to each school in terms of the hardware, teaching personnel, and infrastructure. As a result, parents seeking a high-quality education may be disappointed by the absence of such resources. Also, the supply-demand mismatch in education can lead to the popularity of the exam-based school admittance system.

2.2. The pressure of social employment

The employment market is becoming more competitive with the proliferation of high-quality educated talents. It is not unusual to identify a connection between educational background and remuneration as a prosperous future begins with a decent job. Under the circumstances where the pressure of social employment stimulates continuous progress [3], parents manage to prevent their children from falling behind. As a result, parents tend to demonstrate illogical behavior of forcing their children into a preferred middle school.

2.3. A shallow sense of responsibility

Since the implementation of the Compulsory Education Act, it has promoted elite education, relieved the burden on students, and supported the implementation of the nearby enrollment policy [1]. However, arbitrarily limiting students' school choices would certainly lead to their lack of responsibility in the classroom, thus reducing educational quality. On the other hand, it is an essential indicator of a school's quality to measure the enrollment rate from junior high to senior high school; therefore, this forces junior high schools to unfairly compete for intelligent and diligent students [4].

3. OVERVIEW OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN SHANGHAI

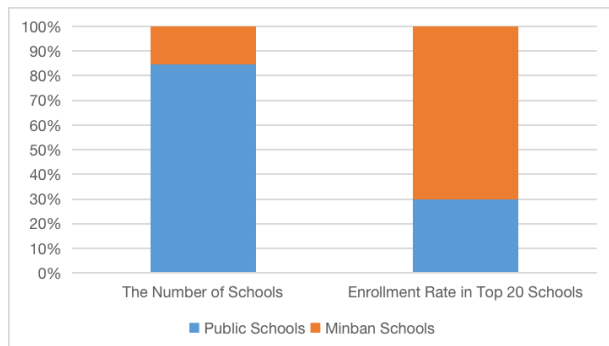


Figure 1 Enrollment rate of high-quality schools in Shanghai public and private junior high schools in 2016.

3.1. Distribution of junior high Schools

According to Shanghai Statistical Bureau in 2015, there were 790 public junior high schools and 117 private ones, indicating that the number of public schools in Shanghai was significantly higher than the proportion of private schools, with 84 percent and 16 percent respectively. However, the proportion of private schools delivering students to the top 20 schools was more than twice higher than that of public schools at the same period. As a result, it is advantageous to choose private educational institutions in terms of the high enrollment rate to be admitted in high schools.

3.2. Admissions Policies

Due to the implementation of an examination policy, private junior high schools are endowed with the methods of choosing and enrolling numerous exceptional students. In Shanghai, on the other hand, public schools are primarily centered on the premise of "recruiting students from the nearby locality" [5], rendering it difficult and impossible for students to compete. Nevertheless, it should be considered that there is an obvious disparity in students' learning abilities so the quality of the learning outcome may be hardly guaranteed and students' learning potential may not be fully exploited. In this case, private junior high schools can recruit high-quality teachers by establishing an attractive salary system [6], thereby being equipped with remarkable teaching ability to meet the need of students who desire to enter prestigious schools.

In addition to the policies outlined above, several private schools in Shanghai have established an innovative method of selecting students under the examination policy, namely private schools affiliated with training institutions, which can improve students' chances of being accepted into their desired school. The next section will illustrate the "Small Class Five" technique in further depth.

4. THE SPECIAL ENROLLMENT MODE IN SHANGHAI— "SMALL CLASS FIVE"

4.1. The Definition of "Small Class Five"

There is a growing tendency that students participate in cram schools in their fifth year of primary school to prepare for the selective entrance exams required for admittance to a reputable junior high school [7]. For those students from families with high socioeconomic status, the prevalent "Small Class Five" in Shanghai can yet be regarded as an effective way to attend high-quality educational institutions. Some training institutions claim that the tutoring class is the equivalent of a well-known junior high school but the outstanding students can be entitled to the privilege of a direct promotion as teachers from prestigious middle schools work as training teachers in this institution [8].

In general, a training institution might offer intense English, mathematics, and Chinese classes, as well as certain advanced courses related to junior high school subjects.

Parents are inclined to uphold a paradoxical attitude towards the unique role of the "Small Class Five" program, either admiring or despising. For the former, this special method enables them to be granted abundant opportunities to enter prestigious schools; while for the latter, the program concentrates merely on improving students academic grades instead of broadening their horizons and expanding knowledge

Although students may be burdened with a heavy academic load, it is conducive for private schools as they can obtain fortune, honor, and reputation by recruiting high-quality students and increasing the high school enrollment rates, thereby resulting in a virtuous cycle. However, this may leave an intractable issue for public schools. As a result, the "Small Class Five" serves as a microcosm of the examination policy which is the product of an unequal distribution of educational resources as well as a symptom of family pressure.

5. THE LOTTERY POLICY

5.1. The publication of the Lottery Policy

Approximately 300,000 students have been subjected to a lottery admittance system to enter a junior high school since 2018. The Education Sector has announced a synchronized public-private school recruiting process, allowing schools to concentrate on "teaching students well" rather than "selecting pupils successfully." When the enrollment number of a private school surpasses its recruitment plan, candidates will be chosen at random using a computer, the procedure of which is similar to the lottery schemes. This approach to 'no particular selection' is in response to the need for 'no class differentiation teaching'.

5.2. The lottery method

In the lottery procedure this year, several innovative strategies have been incorporated. In contrast to prior lottery procedures, the private schools in Shanghai declared in 2020 that it had implemented "classifying in planning, signing up, the lottery process, and enrolment." In this case, the education department will evaluate the standard of classification established by private schools, thereby categorizing students into diverse groups based on their individual circumstances. The reasons for the classification are mainly because people may be suspicious of the possible privilege in the lottery procedure, and the lottery system will only be employed when the signed-up student number exceeds the recruitment plan.

For example, a private junior high school intends to recruit 30 students with special talents, 10 staffs' children, 200 non-resident students, and 100 resident students (see figure 2). The lottery scheme will be abandoned with registered non-resident participants being no more than the planned recruitment number. Other sets of kids, on the other hand, are not so fortunate since they have exceeded their boundaries.

2020 autumn preparatory class of a private junior middle school			
category	Enrollment plan (person)	Actual registration (person)	Need to wave numbers or not
Children of special talents	30	35	Yes
Faculty children	10	15	Yes
Day student	200	200	No
Accommodation students (if accommodation conditions are available)	100	120	Yes

Figure 2 The recruitment plan of a private junior high school in Shanghai.

5.3. Other Upgrades of the Lottery Policy in 2020

5.3.1. Online School Opening day: better decision making

Every private school in Shanghai will conduct a school opening day before the enrollment, during which they will demonstrate the learning purposes and other information, allowing parents to decide whether the school's vision aligns with their own and thus make a rather informed decision.

5.3.2. Direct Entry Policy: a new focus

According to the education bureau, students from nine-year-system private schools are permitted to attend the junior high department directly, but the student recruiting numbers are undoubtedly limited. As a result, nine-year private schools are also popular this year on the school list.

5.3.3. Multi-level Teaching: the mobile learning system

The lottery process widened the learning gap between students in a single school, making it more challenging for teachers to draw up a reasonable lesson plan. As a result, an innovative teaching approach known as the mobile learning system has been deployed in several private schools, demonstrating the possibility of multilevel teaching. In this case, students will be classified into diverse learning groups based on their test results and locate the specific classroom that corresponds to their level. Furthermore, they can simply advance to

the next level for each subject with their performance improving and exceeding their existing level.

The multi-level instruction enables every learner not to be overlooked. Also, numerous efforts will be afforded to demonstrate their solutions against the lottery scheme, from educating earnest children to educating children effectively.

5.4. The significance of the Lottery Policy

In recent years, China's lottery program has been more and more innovative and inventive, which has benefited various individuals. For starters, it has exerted a profound influence on the regulation of school admissions. The demand for admittance to reputable schools has been increasingly huge, perhaps hastening capitalism's predominance. Accordingly, the lottery strategy ensures a fair allocation of public and private educational resources. Second, it plays an indispensable role in alleviating the issue of school-district housing. In metropolitan areas, hundreds of families are confronted with the intense psychological pressure and exorbitant cost to purchase property in school districts prior to the release of this policy. It contributes to them to some extent. Third, under the lottery policy, the number of students recruited by public and private schools is more evenly distributed. Therefore, the over-enrollment for prominent institutions is well-solved.

Furthermore, the lottery program has been proven to be highly effective not just in terms of achieving educational parity, but also because it allows private schools additional opportunities to rethink and reorganize their teaching methods. Private schools used to have strict requirements for possible candidates including their academic background, their achievement, family socioeconomic status, and so on. To maintain teaching quality and avoid losing their reputation, all private schools are required to conceive strategies to improve teaching effectiveness, thereby promoting the development of educational vocations.

6. THE CASE OF THE LOTTERY POLICY IN XI'AN

Although the main investigated location in this research is Shanghai, it is difficult to collect abundant statistics because the lottery policy was just implemented in Shanghai junior high school in 2020. As a result, the lottery admittance case in Xi'an will be explored and compared in order to better understand the motivations behind the policy.

First and foremost, some fundamental phenomena will be analyzed to investigate Xi'an's implementation of the relevant policy for upgrading students from elementary to junior high school. Prior to 2018, junior high schools in Xi'an enrolled students using an

examination system, which was replaced by a lottery system in 2018. This also functions effectively in enforcing the nine-year obligatory education and improving the balanced growth of education.

As stated above, Xi'an employed the examination policy in 2017, and a lottery system in 2019. It can be typically demonstrated in Table 1 that since the lottery method was established, the number of school applications has decreased but the number of projected enrollments has climbed, thereby improving the admittance rate.

Table 1. The comparison of the enrollment of 5 junior high schools in Xi'an in 2017 and 2019

School	Years	Number of applicants (person)	Planned enrollment number (person)	Admission ratio
Middle school affiliated to Xi'an University of Technology	2017	5200	1200	1:4.3
	2019	3900	1600	1:2.4
Tie first middle school	2017	6500	1500	1:4.3
	2019	4750	1600	1:2.9
Yixin middle school	2017	3200	600	1:5.3
	2019	2400	900	1:2.6
Middle school affiliated to Xi'an Jiaotong University	2017	6000	900	1:6.6
	2019	2950	1100	1:2.7
Huizhi middle school	2017	4300	800	1:5.4
	2019	2200	900	1:2.4

Concerning the advantages of the Xi'an lottery scheme, first and foremost, once the method is in place, the number of applications in each school was reduced, resulting in a more equitable distribution of school registrations and a less rivalrous competition among students. Furthermore, the enrolling pressure on the schools has steadily diminished, allowing for a healthy expansion of admission. Finally, an increase in the acceptance rate may provide students with more alternatives to choose their desired educational institution.

According to Figure 3 from the National Bureau of Statistics, the total admission ratio in Xi'an's schools in 2017 was around 20% but it has increased to 48.66% in 2018 following the implementation of the lottery method. In other words, this permits more children to be enrolled in junior high school, with an increase from one out of every five candidates to one out of every two applications

since 2018. Therefore, it can simultaneously boost the percentage of youngsters who are endowed with the right to receive compulsory education.

As a result, several inferences and advantages can be drawn from the Xi'an case and this is also one of the primary reasons behind our country's lottery program.

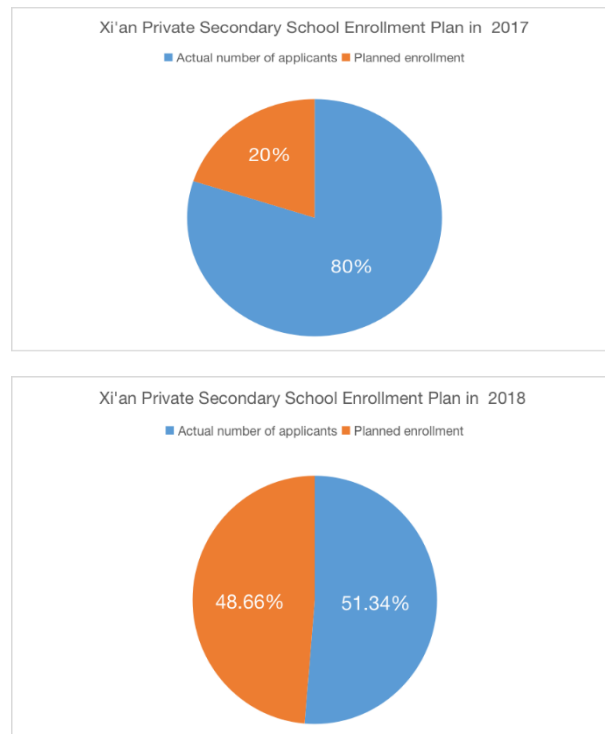


Figure 3 The comparison of the actual number of applicants and planned enrollment of private junior high schools in Xi'an in 2017 and in 2018

7.THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE EXAMINATION POLICY AND THE LOTTERY POLICY

While researching for information from the Education

Bureau on Shanghai elementary school entering junior high school through either examination policy or lottery policy, the study intends to explore and compare the advantages and disadvantages of those two associated regulations in terms of the following five elements (See Table 2).

Table 2. The comparison between the examination policy and lottery policy

	Examination policy in entering school	Lottery policy in entering school
Registration process	Cumbersome, many steps, long time	Simple, few steps, short time
Parents	1. Nervous, worried, suffered, and tired; 2. Value, pressure, and unfairness.	1. Less tension, worry, and suffering. Slightly relaxed, but hesitant; 2. Pay attention to be relatively fair and treat it with a normal heart.
Kids	1. Stress; 2. The course tasks are heavy and boring; 3. Being forced to participate in various training classes, interest classes as well as preparing for various exams and interviews.	1. Relatively low pressure; 2. Feel relaxed, colorful, and interested; 3. Have a lot of free time.

Highlight	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The school acquires quality students; 2. Great freedom of faculty team building, school management, and motivation; 3. High-quality students match high-quality schools; 4. Improving the level of basic education. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reducing the pressure on ordinary families to enter school; 2. The source of students is roughly balanced, and education is fair; 3. Better guaranteeing the penetration rate of compulsory education.
Problem	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Underground" exams may cause unequal educational opportunities; 2. Not favorable to students' healthy growth as the separation of instruction and examination fosters extraordinary growth in out-of-school learning; 3. Long-term investment of energy and financial resources; 4. Part-time extracurricular occupations cause schoolteachers to neglect their duties at school. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ignoring the diverse development needs of different students and cannot make full use of the educational resources; 2. The existence of "black box operation" makes the "school choice fever" intensified; 3. Students will be overly relaxed because they don't have to take exams.

7.1. The most important point in the lottery policy

Meanwhile, the most significant element in the

existing lottery scheme is how parents and children pick schools. As a result, as indicated in table 3, public and private schools are compared and contrasted [9].

Table 3. The comparison of public and private schools

	Public school	Private school
Hardware facilities	Ordinary	Better
Teachers	Moderately good teachers	More outstanding teachers
Student source	Relatively balanced student level	The quality of students is polarized, better and worse
Soft power	Unique school cultural atmosphere	The flexible mechanism and diversified teaching concepts
Charge standard	Enjoying national compulsory education	Higher tuition
Scale	Generally larger school sites in the urban area	Generally small ones located in the new city
Entrance situation	Mainly with the high school entrance examination system, there will be a corresponding top student training plan in the third grade	With strict management and hierarchical teaching, the school will have a direct promotion

Firstly, compared with the public schools, the private ones receive more financial assistance in order to upgrade their gear and modernize their technology. In terms of

student sources, private schools have become polarized and multilayered, but student levels in public schools are largely typical. Second, although both public and private

schools have different software styles, the tuition fee of private schools are more expensive than that of public institutions. Last but not least, private schools, which are usually located in the new city, are smaller than public schools. As a result, if the government manages to properly execute the lottery policy in the future, sufficient breakthroughs and adjustments must be adopted in schools. Simultaneously, rather than squeezing out popular schools, parents should select schools based on their children's learning capacity and learning plan.

8. CONCLUSION

With the advancement of globalization, China must establish international educational ideals with an emphasis on people-oriented grit and continuous innovation, promote educational fairness and justice, and keep up with the global educational progress.

The twenty-first century has witnessed the rapid advancement of education throughout the world and the educational undertaking in our country is no exception with Shanghai representing one of China's most prominent educational provinces. Although the admittance policy based on examination used to play an indispensable role in Shanghai, the system should be modernized in order to break through the bottleneck and keep up with educational advancement. Therefore, it is imperative and urgent to implement the lottery policy in Shanghai.

In general, it is discovered that the benefits of Shanghai's lottery scheme outweigh its drawbacks and the potential advantages are stated as follows. The country's nine-year obligatory education system may be improved so that all Shanghai primary schoolers can successfully enroll in junior high school as the enrollment procedure has become fairer and more transparent. To some extent, it has also decreased corruptive behaviors such as bribery and the occupation of the degree. Moreover, the enrolling process has been streamlined and simplified to better serve the relevant stakeholders. For schools, the enrollment pressure is relieved, allowing them to devote more attention to improving their educational quality. It alleviates parents' stress of providing their children with the opportunity to learn, allowing them to focus more on children's overall and integrated development, which may not only encourage students' moral, intellectual, and physical growth but also provide them with more holistic and healthy development.

Several flaws can also be identified in China's current educational system. Despite the benefits of the lottery strategy, the strengthening of the enrollment method does not imply a qualitative and fundamental transformation in the entire educational system. Many parents in Shanghai are still striving to enroll their children in a reputable junior high school, even if they do not meet the lottery requirements. This is mainly because the educational

resources of various schools are not balanced, and the educational gap between them remains considerable. As a result, special emphasis should be placed on enhancing the overall quality of school education levels in Shanghai after gradually upgrading their enrollment system in order to establish a balanced academic situation in all schools.

Furthermore, the government is required to increase the funding for junior school education, raise the bar for opening a school, and improve educational resources. Schools should strengthen teacher training, introduce high-quality instructors, learn more from outstanding schools, communicate and connect with them more effectively.

To summarize, it is necessary and essential to convert the examination program to a lottery policy in China's educational system. However, there is still an opportunity for progress and improvement.

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