



An Analysis of the Recommendation Examination for Graduate Student from the Perspective of Educational Equity

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Abstract. Since its establishment, China's existing graduate student recommendation system has prioritized educational fairness. This system has been developing for over 30 years and gradually moving towards standardization. This paper gives a brief overview of the recommendation system, and analyzes the current situation of the recommendation. Based on the perspective of the education equity theory, it analyzes the existing shortcomings, proposes optimization paths, and hopes to provide ideas for the relevant education departments and enrollment units to improve the system, promote the most reasonable distribution of higher education resources, so as to achieve the original intention of the recommendation system, and maintain the fairness of the promotion and exemption rules.

Keywords: Graduate Student, Recommendation System, Educational Equity.

1 Introduction

The graduate recommendation system refers to an enrollment system in which universities with recommendation qualifications recommend their outstanding undergraduate graduates of this year, allowing them to directly enter the re-examination process without passing the national unified examination [1]. The graduate recommendation system in China has always regarded educational equity as a specific and long-term requirement, striving to meet the needs of higher education and social development in China [2]. However, due to the influence of subjective and objective factors, there are still certain shortcomings at present. This article starts from the perspective of educational equity, analyzes the current development status of relevant systems in China, and proposes suggestions to help maintain the fairness of the exemption rules.

2 The Development of Graduate Student Recommendation System

2.1 Continuously improving the recommendation system

In the early days, the relevant documents issued by the Ministry of Education had only single regulations on the recommendation work, only providing a rough description of the scope of recommended universities and the proportion of recommendations. There were also some shortcomings in the early disclosure of recommendation information and work as well as reception work. After 2006, the Ministry of Education further standardized the recommendation and admission procedures for exemptions, and actively promoted information disclosure. It explicitly required recommendation and receiving units to disclose policies and regulations on exemptions, qualifications, enrollment quotas, admission information as well as consultation and complaint paths for candidates. At present, various universities have implemented the disclosure of recommended measures, the list of recommended candidates has been published, and the average score of undergraduate students for the past three years has been made public, ensuring that the enrollment process is open, fair, and just [3].

2.2 The scale of recommendation continues to expand

In 1985, 169 pilot universities were exempted, and their scale continued to expand.

According to the list of the Ministry of Education, as of May 31, 2022, there are a total of 3013 higher education institutions in China, including 2759 ordinary higher education institutions. Among 2759 ordinary universities, 39.34% of them have obtained recommendation qualifications. Among them, science and engineering universities and comprehensive universities account for the largest proportion with the number of 99. Next are 48 pharmaceutical universities, 31 normal universities, and 31 medical universities. Besides, Ethnic universities and sports universities have the smallest proportion, each accounting for 5. In addition, the promotion rates of different provinces and cities are also uneven, as shown in Figure 1.

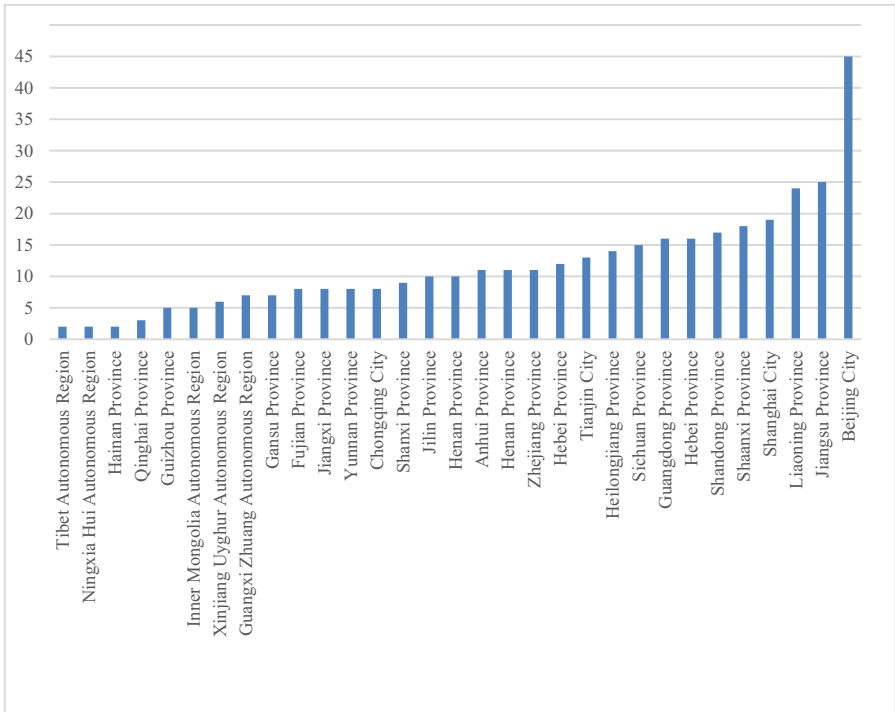


Fig. 1. Comparison of the Distribution of the Number of Provinces, Cities, and Autonomous Regions in China's Recommendation Universities

With the continuous increase in the number of universities to be recommended, and the proportion of universities to be recommended is also expanding. In the early days, the recommended proportion of universities with graduate schools was generally controlled at 5% of the total number of this year's graduates, while other universities were 1%. According to the 2023 ranking of China's universities' postgraduate recommendation rates released by CNUR, in 2022, 366 universities were eligible for recommendation, with a total of 6 universities having a postgraduate recommendation rate of over 40%, about 18 universities having a postgraduate recommendation rate of over 30%, about 60 universities having a postgraduate recommendation rate of over 20%, and about 121 universities having a postgraduate recommendation rate of over 10%.

2.3 The special plan is progressing well

(1) Special plan for education master's teacher in rural school.

The Ministry of Education began implementing the "Rural High School Education Master's Teacher Special Plan" (referred to as the "Master's Teacher Plan") in 2004.

The rural master's specialized training mode has been continuously optimized, from the "i+1+1+2" mode in 2004 to the "3+1+1" mode in 2007 and the "3+1" mode starting from 2010. The recommended quota for the "Master's Teacher Plan" is only about 5%,

with majors including politics, Chinese language and literature, English, mathematics, and so on. In the same situation, it is more important to consider the interests of normal students. With the continuous increase of recommended universities and students who are exempt from exams, the scale of the "Master's Teacher Plan" is also expanding.

(2)Special program for university retention.

In order to ensure the smooth progress of student work and management work in schools, many universities with recommendation qualifications will select a group of capable students from their undergraduate graduates every year, and let them stay on campus as full-time counselors or management personnel. For example, Tongji University's "Youth Talent Reserve Plan", South China Normal University's "Promotion and Recommendation of the Special Plan for Ideological and Political Talents", China University of Mining and Technology, China Three Gorges University's "Special Plan for Counselors", and South China University of Technology's "2+3" Student Counselors Plan.

2.4 Increase the autonomy of students who are exempted from applying for exams

At the beginning of the establishment of the recommendation system, universities had great power. In addition to recommending universities could develop their own recommendation methods to select talents. If candidates wanted to apply to other universities or enrollment units, the university with recommending right also needed to contact them. If they were not accepted by the enrollment unit, the university also had to notify them, which would limit students' right to apply. Starting from 2014, the Ministry of Education has decided to no longer set retention quotas and no longer differentiate between academic and professional degrees when issuing recommendation. This policy enhances the autonomy of students who are exempt from enrollment, effectively protects their interests, and breaks down enrollment barriers.

3 The Shortcomings of Graduate Student Recommendation System Based on the Perspective of Educational Equity

3.1 Educational equity and its analytical perspective

Education equity refers to the educational concept that, under certain external environment and social resources, everyone can enjoy equal rights and opportunities to receive education [4], and in the process of receiving education, individuals have equal access to capacity development, and their personality can be freely developed [5]. From the relevant theories of American scholar James Coleman on educational equity, it can be seen that there are three aspects of education, those are starting point equality, process equality, and outcome equality respectively. In China, a complete postgraduate recommendation process mainly corresponds to the three stages in the Equity theory of education. At the starting stage of education, the education department limits the number

of schools with recommendation qualifications and the proportion of recommendation. During the education program stage, schools should formulate their own recommendation standards and screen out qualified recommended students under the guidance of relevant regulatory authorities. The final educational achievement part requires candidates to fill out their recommended preferences and let their voluntary colleges decide whether to be admitted or not.

3.2 The fairness issues in the graduate student recommendation system

In the process of implementing the graduate student recommendation system, there will inevitably be disputes between various stakeholders regarding "fairness" and "unfairness", making the issue of "unfairness" more prominent.

(1)The uneven comprehensive quality of students leads to unfairness in the starting point of education.

In terms of the diversity of candidates, recommended candidates will crowd out the degrees of ordinary college students. In 2013, the Ministry of Education required that the number of recommended students should not exceed 50% of the enrollment plan, and each major should reserve a certain number of places for unified exam students. However, in the actual admission process, some universities did not achieve this in order to attract outstanding students. The unfair behavior of the university admissions department deprives students of the opportunity to enter prestigious universities, which goes against the principle of educational fairness and fails to ensure the fairness of the starting point of education.

From the perspective of regional distribution, universities with recommended quotas account for a large proportion in the eastern region. The imbalance in the development of the East and West is the main factor leading to this phenomenon, which can't be completely eliminated in the short term.

(2)Inadequate systems lead to unfair educational processes.

Due to the imperfect system of graduate student recommendation in the country, the fairness of the education process can't be guaranteed. Because a scientific and standardized regulatory system has not been established, it is difficult for relevant departments to supervise some details of graduate student recommendation work.

The Ministry of Education issued a regulation in 2014 to "lift the restriction on staying in school", which was originally intended to protect the independent choice of university students. However, during the implementation process, it also had certain negative effects. One is that under various pressures, some outstanding students from non-key universities "flee" to prestigious universities in the process of pursuing prestigious universities. Secondly, it is difficult for non-key universities to obtain recommendations from other universities. And universities in the western region are facing more and more difficulties. Third, relying on merit rankings alone for exemptions may not be the best way to achieve equity in higher education [6]. It is obvious that the policy adjustment has invisibly expanded the level gap between universities.

(3) Competition among universities for student resources leads to unfair educational outcomes.

Some universities prioritize "background" over anything else, and the recommendation of academic performance is influenced by family background, resulting in "background theory" and fairness issues in the recommendation policy.

In terms of the scholarship system, recommendation students have obvious advantages. In order to obtain better students, major universities will offer them more attractive conditions, such as scholarships. From a fair perspective, after admission, universities only use first-class scholarships for new students to reward recommendation students, which is unfair for unified exam students.

4 Optimization Path of Graduate Student Recommendation System Based on Educational Equity Perspective

4.1 Improving students' comprehensive literacy and maintaining fairness at the starting point

Recommendation students are usually relatively passive in the admission process. In order to enhance their abilities and prevent the occurrence of "high scores but low abilities," it is necessary to strengthen their learning and continuously expand their abilities [7].

At the same time, recommendation students must be proactive and adhere to their reputation. Before selecting a school, write a personal introduction and a letter of introduction from the instructor to the instructor they want. In addition, one should actively participate in the summer camp of the school they are applying for, maintain contact with teachers in advance, communicate more, and let teachers know their true ability.

4.2 The government establishes and improves the recommendation system to ensure fairness in the education process

In order to screen out outstanding graduate students for recommendation, the government should introduce policies and establish a comprehensive evaluation system that divides the evaluation into two parts, namely "learning ability" and "expansion ability". In addition, we can also use the application assessment system in western countries as a reference, use GPA to know students' professional achievements and knowledge level and use professors' recommendation letter to know students' scientific research level and character and conduct. Besides, we can also use personal statements to know students' self-evaluation and development plans, and use academic certification materials to know students' scientific research potential and training direction. Eliminate discriminatory and reasonable distribution. The management department should truly change the current situation of double first-class universities not accepting students from ordinary universities, gradually eliminate background discrimination, and try to treat every university equally. Secondly, in order to retain and receive high-quality promoted and exempted students, western universities need to develop a corresponding compensation

mechanism and increase funding to form some distinctive majors. Thirdly, the government departments need to increase the higher education budget to expand the enrollment of graduate students, so as to ensure the realization of educational equity [8]. In the allocation of degrees, the method of professional classification should be adopted, and the state should conduct secondary allocation based on the development level of each major. Through the overall and secondary allocation of various disciplines, administrative differences can be reduced to some extent to ensure fairness.

4.3 Universities should fulfill their main responsibilities to promote fairness in educational outcomes

Change enrollment idea. Each enrollment unit should conduct a comprehensive assessment of students and provide them with the same opportunity to apply for admission to different levels of universities. Firstly, double first-class universities should get rid of "background discrimination". The assessment of recommended students is not solely based on their academic performance, but on their research ability, potential, and sensitivity to the subject they are studying. Abandoning the admission methods of "kinship" and "geography" to provide more choices for students from ordinary universities. Ordinary universities should leverage their strengths and avoid weaknesses, and avoid direct conflicts with double first-class universities in terms of educational resources. Strengthen communication with universities and research institutes through recommending student sources, and achieve an organic combination of "bringing in" and "going out".

Cultivating the professional characteristics of universities. Many western universities and ordinary universities are already in a disadvantaged position in accepting students who are exempt from promotion. To attract more recommended students to apply, such universities need to innovate in their subject characteristics, concentrate their advantageous resources, enhance their comprehensive strength, and create distinctive or even ace majors. In addition, western universities should also strengthen the alliance between enterprises and schools, actively building a school enterprise cooperation platform with influential enterprises in the industry, in order to improve the practical application ability and employment prospects of the recommended students. The second is to establish an effective reward system to attract more students to the school. A sound scholarship system can help recommendation graduate students from the pressure of studying, living, and other aspects, thereby enabling them to focus more on scientific research.

Optimize the enrollment configuration of mentors. As the main person in charge of graduate education, their rights and interests should be protected during the enrollment process. One is the autonomy of mentors. When admitting recommended students, one should respect the advice and requirements of the supervisor. The second is to actively participate in market competition. Excellent student resources are very important for mentors, and in order to gain a favorable position in the enrollment process for mentors, they must take proactive measures. Develop a set of graduate elimination system. For universities with admission criteria based on academic performance, after the admission of students who have been recommended, exams should be organized to assess

their mastery of cutting-edge knowledge and professional literacy in their respective fields. After one semester of enrollment, professional course exams and thesis defense are also organized to focus on evaluating the scientific research level and professional abilities of recommendation students. Unqualified students will be disqualified from admission and returned to the university.

Strengthen communication and connections between schools. All colleges, universities, and research institutions should jointly establish an information exchange and management platform, and implement the management of rotating "holding positions". Require all enrollment institutions to promptly disclose the promotion and exemption of their units, such as selection rules, quota allocation, etc. Build a joint training mechanism with the recommendation students as a link between universities as well as between universities and research institutes, and equip excellent promotion and exemption students with resources and mentors.

5 Conclusion

The recommendation of graduate students is an important enrollment system and is also a work that is gradually improving and developing. Although there were some issues related to fairness during the implementation process. However, if we always adhere to our original intention and take ensuring educational fairness as the starting point, and make corresponding efforts and adjustments from the three levels of the country, universities, and students, then our country's graduate enrollment system will take a step towards fairness and justice, and will better play its role as a talent selection mechanism.

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