

## **Analysis of Bonus Marks Policy in Chinese College Entrance Examination (CEE) under the Progressive Model**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The progressive model of public policymaking, which draws lessons from the existing experience, can be well combined with the actual situation, and in the process of policy implementation intermittently improve and improve the existing policies. From the point of view of the development of our national college entrance examination bonus marks policy, the application of the progressive model is more obvious. Through the progressive model of analysis of our national college entrance examination Bonus policy, and combined with the experience of the relevant policies of the United States, we can understand the inevitability of its development so far, and can roughly infer its future development direction in the light of the current actual situation. Through the application of the model, the forecast of the development trend of the policy of bonus marks for the college entrance examination in China is of great significance to the improvement and revision of the policy in the future.

**Keywords:** *progressive model, policy-making model, bonus marks*

### **Introduction**

Education plays a crucial role in the continuation of human civilization. It imparts experience from exploring the inner and outer universes so that humanity can develop and prosper. Education is a complex activity and problems that arise for its continued propagation are at times difficult to solve. To address these issues, experts have developed effective models for formulating educational policies. Overview and Historical Background of the Progressive Model- One such model that streamlines educational policy is the *progressive model* based on solving educational problems through rationalism. Progressivism or Incrementalism was first proposed by an American scholar Lindblom as a solution to problems existing

in education through rationalism. In 1958, Lindblom put forward the method of *progressive analysis* in public policy (Lindblom, 1959), which referred to the implementation of progressive politics to real-life situations and needs. As long as the leaders reached a consensus for a general direction, it could be implemented. The process would take existing policies as a base and build more acceptable and stable values and modes of action (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963). Lindblom later published a series of papers, correcting, expanding and perfecting his theory of *progressive adjustment* (Lindblom, 1979) as a result, the model developed into today's progressive model. The essence of the Progressive Model- The progressive model argues that if the scheme of a policy is vastly different

from previous policies, it is harder to predict its consequences. As a result, it is less likely to gain public support, and lower its political feasibility. However, if the model changed progressively, the innovative activities related to it should be marginal, and its formulation *conservative* (Zhenguo, 2000). Simply put, the progressive model advocates not a new scheme, but a small change in the existing scheme. To do this, policymaking depends on the consensus of policymakers, which does not take into account *value factors*, which greatly simplifies the decision-making process.

#### **Advantages and Disadvantages of the Progressive Model**

The biggest advantage of the progressive model is its *marginal revision* of existing policies. It brings small changes to sectors of society, which will not have a great impact on social stability. Moreover, the model focuses on addressing actual problems by identifying and analyzing them and setting them up for targeted solutions.

A major defect of the progressive model is its conservative nature. In the face of rapid social development, the conservatism of progressive model retards the development of society (Huang, 1999). Similarly, the range of alternatives offered by this evolutionary model is limited and not conducive to innovation and discovery.

#### **The Bonus Marks Policy of College Entrance Examination (CEE) in China**

To test the progressive model a key policy change was made to address relative unfairness in the CEE by adding bonus marks in the exam. Since its promulgation, CEE in China has achieved good results and is

showing steady development in many areas of education, science and technology. In this paper, the policy of adding bonus marks to special candidates when they take CEE reflects a preferential policy based on the progressive model. The Evolution and Characteristics of the Policy of Bonus Marks in CEE in China. As the policy changed, a fractal form was attached to the test, dividing into three types, viz. preferential admission, reduced admission and added admission (Lizhu, 2008).

#### ***Priority Admission Stage: Founding of People's Republic of China to 1976***

In 1950, every university enrollment document in China stipulated that *revolutionary cadres and revolutionary soldiers who had worked for more than three years, students of brotherly nationalities and students of overseas Chinese, although their examination results are slightly worse, should be admitted with leniency* (Xuewei, 2003a). The concept of preferential admission was then proposed in 1953 (Xuewei, 2003b). In July 1956, the National Unified Admission and Distribution Measures for Summer Recruitment promulgated by the Department of Student Management of the Ministry of Higher Education for the first time clearly stipulated: *These students should be given priority to admission, Such as candidates who meet the preferential admission criteria, if their political and health conditions are qualified, their academic performance is the lowest admission criteria, when their performance is the same or similar to that of the general candidates (referring to the total score less than 20 points or so)* (Xuewei, 2003c). Until

1976, candidates with high ideological awareness, innocent status and experience in labour and production were the primary candidates for such admission.

***Decreased Admission Stage (1977-2000)***

During this period, the policy of adding points to the CEE underwent some changes e.g. in 1977, no preferential admission was given to candidates with revolutionary cadres (workers and peasants). However, in 1980, the students were given priority to admission under the same conditions as other candidates, but they must have been rated as *three good students* for two consecutive years and student cadres who were active in their work and outstanding in their performance (Xuewei, 2003d). In 1983, the policy stipulated that outstanding young people with more than three years of experience at provincial, municipal and autonomous levels, such as model workers, advanced workers and new Long March assailants, may appropriately reduce the score requirements and select the best ones to be admitted when necessary (Xuewei, 2003b). In 1984, the number of people took care of increased the number of winners of Award on Science and Technology Invention and Creation at or above the provincial, municipal and autonomous levels (Xuewei, 2003c). In 1986, the bonus policy began to benefit athletes and sports specialists, because National Commission of Education put forward a policy that athletes who get the National second-level athlete title can be enrolled under 20-point. This policy aimed to promote the development of the country's sports and train a group of much-needed sports talents. Until April 27, 1987, the State

Educational Commission promulgated the Provisional Regulations on Admission to General Colleges and Universities, which fixed the policy of adding points to the CEE to take care of the population as follows: (1) Three good students and outstanding student cadres recognized at or above the regional level in senior high school; (2) outstanding achievements in political, ideological and moral aspects, and exceptional achievements in related subjects or peacetime; (3) winners or single subjects of scientific and technological inventions at or above the provincial level and/or were winners of some competition. For the winners of sports competitions, the score preferential policy was similar to that of last year. For ethnic minority candidates, returned overseas Chinese, children of overseas Chinese, returned overseas Chinese, Taiwanese provincial candidates, veterans with second-class merits or above, and children of martyrs in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, scores may be appropriately lowered and preferential admissions made (Lizhu, 2008).

***Increased Admission Stage (after 2001)***

Since 2001, the policy of adding or reducing marks in the CEE had made clear provisions on the scoring range i.e. the people cared for, were roughly the same as in the previous period. Three new groups were added to the regulations on admission to universities and Colleges publicized by the Ministry of Education in 2006, namely, the winners of the International Science and Engineering Grand Prix and the Olympic Competition of the International Environmental Scientific Research Project; the children of disabled soldiers and soldiers in hardship areas; and

the children of disabled policemen. The highest bonus score was 20 points. If an examinee had multiple items of addition and reduction at the same time, he usually only took one of the items with the highest score. With the continuous development of the country and the continuous progress of society, the policy of adding points to the CEE was helpful. On the whole, the Bonus Marks Policy had basically taken shape, and the follow-up changes are not big (Zijiang & Zhi, 2011).

### **The Current Policy of Bonus Marks in CEE in China**

In September 2014, the State Council disseminated opinions on the *Implementation of Deepening the Reform of Examination Enrollment System* (hereinafter referred to as the *Opinions on Implementation*), which reformed admission mechanism that would substantially reduce and strictly control the items of examination plus points, and strengthen the examination of candidates' qualification plus points, strictly identify procedures, do a good job of public announcement, and strengthen supervision and management. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Ministry of Education, the State People's Committee, the Ministry of Public Security, the State General Administration of Sports and the China Association of Science and Technology issued the Opinions on further reducing and regulating the score-added items and score-added scores of the CEE (hereinafter referred to as *Opinions*) and on 17<sup>th</sup> of the month, teaching requirements of the implementation of Opinions were made:

#### **1. Cancellation of Some Bonus Sub Items**

The Opinions stipulated that in advanced

secondary education, the international and domestic awards of physical education won by examinees would no longer qualify for bonus points in the CCE. The candidates who have won the ranks in the National Olympic and Science and Technology competitions are no longer eligible for bonus points in the CCE. At the same time, the qualifications of excellent provincial students and candidates with outstanding deeds in Ideological and political morality have been cancelled. The above candidates, in accordance with the relevant procedures, could participate in the independent enrollment of relevant universities, take separate examinations, and break admission and other measures to obtain admission qualifications.

#### **2. Reserve and add Some National Bonus -Projects**

According to the relevant laws and administrative regulations, candidates in these categories can enjoy the bonus policy, such as children of martyrs, ethnic minority candidates in frontier, mountainous, pastoral areas and areas where ethnic minorities live together, returned overseas Chinese, overseas Chinese children, returned overseas Chinese and Taiwan provincial candidates, self-employed retired soldiers, retired soldiers who have won second-class merits (including) or have been awarded honorary titles by units above the Great Military Region (including) during their service period shall be retained.

#### **3. Standardizing and perfecting Regional sub-projects that Need to be Retained**

According to document No. 35 of the State Council in 2014 (*Opinions of the State Council on deepening the reform of the*

examination and enrollment system), it is necessary to retain reasonably assessed local added points. The Provincial People's Government shall determine and report added points to the Ministry of Education for their record. In principle, the added points are only applicable for enrollment to colleges and universities affiliated to the province (districts and municipalities). Relevant localities should explore and improve the policy by increasing points in the frontier areas where ethnic minorities live in extreme poverty. Specific measures should be determined by the provincial people's governments according to actual conditions and submitted to the Ministry of Education for the record. The *Opinions* stipulated that the policy of adding points to the CEE would be fully implemented on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, and that all provinces (districts and municipalities) could only make corresponding adjustments and changes under the requirements of the *Opinions*, and that the scope of the policy shall not be expanded without authorization.

#### **The Achievements of the Policy of Bonus Marks in CEE**

From the founding of the People's Republic China to the present times, the policy of adding points to the CEE in China has achieved undeniable positive results. The effectiveness of the policy of adding marks to the CEE takes into account the *benefits* in the principle of *fairness*. Whether these *benefits* could reach a satisfactory level, or lead to unfairness requires careful analysis and consideration.

#### **Priority in Recruiting Workers, Peasants and Soldiers**

From 1953 to 1956, China's gross industrial output on average increased by 9.6% (per year), and gross agricultural output value increased by 4.8% (per year). The economic development was faster, the proportion of important economic sectors were more coordinated, the market was prosperous and prices were stable. Talents trained at that time in Chinese universities played a key role in this initial period of the country. These college students were workers, peasants and soldiers who were preferentially admitted through CEE, had high political awareness and enthusiasm for the development and construction of the motherland. They made great contributions to the construction of New China. However, this policy of preferential admission of workers, peasants and soldiers also caused some problems, like overemphasizing class composition leading to the decline of the average basic levels of students that affected the quality of higher education.

#### **The Stage of Decreased Admission and Recruiting Excellent Talents**

At this stage, the policy of adding points to the CEE had achieved obvious results, and the trained talent had accomplished the important task of reform. Since 1978, China's economy had grown at an average rate of 9.75% a year and its economic development even faster (Zhikui, 2008). At the same time, China's sports industry developed vigorously, and notable competitive events that reached their highest levels in the world. All this suggested that the policy of lowering entrance scores in CEE had greatly promoted

the development of physical education, science and technology, morality and other aspects of candidates, and had improved the efficiency of training talents in colleges and universities. It also promoted the multi-level and diversified development of higher education, laying a solid foundation for the initial success of reform and opening up.

However, the relevant policies during this period only stipulate that scores could be *appropriately* reduced, which did not have a clear definition. In different periods, according to this *appropriate* regulation, the range and scope of the reduction were different, which caused some confusion, and provided a hotbed for corruption. Moreover, it was unfair for those ordinary candidates who lacked the talent of sports and art to be admitted with top-notch talents by lowering their scores.

### **Increasing Score for Admission Stage**

Since 2001, the talents trained by our universities have maintained the good momentum of our country's development. In 2012, China became the second-largest economy in the world. People's living standards further improved and the country becomes more stable and prosperous. In addition, beginning 21<sup>st</sup> Century, China has made huge progress in sports, art, military, science and technology, reaching the world's top level. For example, China succeeded in bidding for the 2008 Olympic Games and ranked second in the number of gold medals for the first time in this Olympic Games. Mo Yan(novelist), and Tu Youyou(medical chemist), won Nobel Prizes in literature and physiology, highlighting education and scientific research at home and abroad. All of

these achievement have been realized. However, in recent years, problems with the policy of adding points to the CEE have emerged, raising doubts and suspicions. For example, only the top six candidates in Shaoxing City (Zhejiang Province) could get 20 points in the college entrance examination, only after paying 600 yuan for registration fee and 15,000 yuan for training fee, the candidates in the Training Centre of Navigation model will certainly get the top six scores (Li'ao, 2009). In order to introduce talents, Heilongjiang Province suggested that all outstanding experts and doctors working at or above the provincial level should be awarded doctorates. If the children of the degree personnel take part in the CEE in Hunan Province, the provincial voluntary schools will take care of 20 points for filing under the admission score line (Xueyan, 2010); In 2006, in this province *thousands of sports specialists fake[d] events*, more than 3000 candidates registered for the reexamination test but were absent, and a large number of candidates with the national second-level athlete certificate could not meet the standards (Qiulian, 2011). Such series of events caused people to question the rationality of the policy of adding points to the CCE.

Generally speaking, the policy of adding points to the CEE has played a positive role in the development and progress of the country in a certain period of time. The policy of adding points to the CEE is indispensable under the current CEE system. However, the aforementioned cases reveal that there are still some problems in the policy of adding marks to the CEE in China,

which still need to be improved continuously.

### **The Bonus Marks Policy in the US: Characteristics**

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) used in the United States for college entrance is published by Educational Testing Service (ETS) (Quanyu, 2003). There are preferential policies for college admission in the United States mainly fall into the following categories.

#### **1. Legacy**

Legacy Admission policy refers to the special consideration given by universities (especially private universities) to their alumni's children when they apply for admission (Jing, 2010). This policy results in enrollment rates of 20-45% with Harvard and Princeton is 40% each. Legacy Admission policy enrolls a very small number of unqualified people, most are qualified, and some are exceptionally good. Preferences are similar for ordinary applicants, they got the priority to be considering (Quanyu, 2003).

#### **2. Sports Excellence**

As we all know, sports in the United States is quite developed and closely integrated with universities, so the sports expertise of American students often plays a key role in choosing universities. American universities usually use academic reference index (AI) to determine the lower limit of performance when they recruit sports students, which is a comprehensive calculation based on SAT scores and high school performance rankings, with a maximum of 240. For example, in 2001, the lower limit of AI for special sports enrollment set by Ivy League schools is 169 (Quanyu, 2003), which is actually equivalent to the method of

decreased admission for enrollment in China.

### **3. Preferential Policies for Ethnic Minorities**

The policy for admitting minorities in American universities is based on Affirmative Action (Anderson, 2004). In the era of just ending apartheid, it was impossible for blacks who had suffered from racial discrimination to gain access to higher education. As President Johnson pointed out, it is totally unfair to let someone who has just shaken off the shackles compete with others (Yuxiang, 2013). So American universities began to offer a series of preferential admissions to minorities. Many schools reserved certain places for minority students establishing an enrollment ratio for them. In universities with high selectivity, minority students accounted for more than 30%, such as Harvard University, which accounts for about 34% and Dartmouth College about 33%; in other universities, the proportion is lower between 10-20%, such as the University of California, 19.1%, and the University of Michigan, 13.6% (Lifeng, 2008). As for specific scores, take the case of the University of Michigan as an example. The total score of each applicant is 150, and a candidate's SAT score of 1600 is only 12 qualified. Hispanic, African-American and Native Indian candidates can gain 20 bonus points. Under this admission policy, an African-American candidate with a SAT score of 0 has a higher chance of admission than a White or Asian student with a SAT score of 1600 (Xing, 2004). In recent years, the policy of adding points to the entrance examination in the United States has been constantly improving. The main controversy

for adding points focuses on the preferential admissions for minorities. Many people believe that preferences for minorities can lead to *reverse discrimination* and create new inequalities. Others argue that the policy of adding points to minorities is in itself a denial of minority competence and has lost its value in the United States, where basic education has become quite popular.

### **The Enlightenment of the U.S. Bonus Marks Policy to China**

Higher education in the United States is top notch in the world and school experience is worth the effort. However, we need to recognize the differences that arise based on ideologies, economic levels and cultural environments between China and the United States. And though United States may have successful admission policies, we must objectively analyze them before we can select them for use. First, preferential enrolment of alumni's children is justifiable when there are private universities to go to. Many private universities in the United States are responsible for their profits and losses, if they rely solely on tuition income, they cannot maintain the normal operation of the school. Donation of funds for admission and alumni has become an important source of funding for private universities in the United States. But this kind of practice is not feasible in our public colleges and universities, which is a non-profit organization funded by the national government and states. Second, the sports specialty students in American colleges and universities often learn systematic sports skills, and are directly recruited in the sports industry to become professional athletes.

Most sports specialty students in China enter non-sports colleges and universities and will not engage in the sports industry after graduation, thus such a change in policy in China would not be fruitful or would benefit but a few. Finally, the preferential policies for minority enrollment in the United States have been weakening in recent years, and even faltering (Fanmei, 2012). The fundamental reason is that the educational environment and resources enjoyed by minorities have improved significantly, and they have shown that their abilities are not inferior to those of the major ethnic group. However, the minority in the central and western regions of China cannot be given such opportunities because of scarce educational resources, impoverished teaching levels and poor teaching conditions. Therefore, equating minorities in our country are better by having bonus marks for college entrance.

### **Trends on the Policy of Bonus Marks for CEE**

Analysis of the Opinions in 2015, the policy of adding points to the CEE in China shows the following trends.

#### **1. The Trend of the Bonus Marks Policy in CEE**

The current policy of adding 20 points to the CEE is more standardized and clear, as policy provisions have changed from vague to specific. With clear regulations, the policy of adding points to the CEE does not change with the changes of political resources occupied by various government departments, which forms a stable policy of adding points to the college entrance examination, which is not disturbed by the external environment. In fact, in recent years,



almost all the laws and policies of our country have tended to be clear and detailed, and the policy of adding points to the CEE will certainly follow this trend in the future.

## **2. Policies Provide Greater Attention to Equity**

Opinions dictate that bonus points are a form of compensation, reflecting the principle of fairness and justice. However, some art, sports, science and technology specialists enjoy relatively rich educational resources, and if they continue like this they would violate the principle of fairness. In recent years, sports, science and technology and other specialties had been frequently fraudulent with allocation of their bonus points; implementation of such policies have led to corruption seriously affecting fairness in CCE. Therefore, the state cancelled qualification of these special students, making the process equitable and fair.

## **3. Setting up of Bonus Items is more Standardized**

*Opinions* clearly stipulated that the local extra-points will be cut down dramatically, and some extra-points policies for ethnic minorities and poverty-stricken areas will be explored. In different provinces, there are many local Added-Point items, they are not only different in standard, but also do not have any principle of fairness. Due to the decentralization of power by the central government in the past, some local governments arbitrarily increased the bonus points program, which resulted in unfairness in the whole country. So reducing the unreasonable local bonus policy will become the trend of the future CEE Bonus policy.

As American minorities

progressively demonstrate their extraordinary abilities, Americans begin to progressively eliminate their preferences for minorities, which cannot be understood as an unfair manifestation. This is essentially a recognition of these minorities have the ability to compete equally with others without the help of external forces. When China's basic education can cover every corner of the country equally, it may be the beginning of the progressive disappearance of the policy of adding points for ethnic minorities.

## **Countermeasures and Suggestions on the Policy of Increasing Scores in CEE**

With the continuous development of our country, the policy of adding points to CEE is constantly improving through the application of progressive model. However, there are still many hurdles to overcome; the following countermeasures and suggestions are put forth.

### **1. Improving the Evaluation Feedback Negotiation Mechanism**

The progressive model can improve the policy in a stable state, effectively solving contradictions and conflicts, and can solve practical problems as well. Only if the discovery of problems is quick; if delayed, it will lead to chaos. Moreover, the progressive model lags behind due to its slowness and delayed decision-making processes. That is why it is crucial to improve the evaluation feedback negotiation mechanism determine problems as they arise.

The progressive model achieves has a suboptimal scheme, policymakers should pay attention to the effects of policy implementation. What is the effect of the

policy, whether there is distortion in the process of implementation, and what new problems have arisen, all of which need to be understood in time? The person in charge of the policy should hold regular hearings in a certain range, listen to the opinions of various parties, and timely understand the effects and problems of the policy. When problems increase democratic consultation should be carried out, respecting public opinion to minimize the harm.

In fact, improving evaluation and feedback mechanisms greatly shortens the process of the progressive model to improve the policy and the lag in the model. Policymakers can actively communicate with the public, understand and solve new problems arising from the policy in a timely manner, improve the efficiency of mode operations, and accelerate the improvement in the policy.

## **2. Strengthening Independent Enrollment in Colleges and Universities**

By excluding national unified points, all candidates can compete fairly through the platform of CEE, and at the same time, eliminate the negative effects caused by fraudulent marks. However, cancellation of extra points from speciality students has affected the development of these candidates to a certain extent and is not conducive to the cultivation of top talents in various fields. That is why independent enrollment in colleges and universities has become an effective solution for specialities students in sports, art, science and technology. It avoids the unfairness caused by the competition between the top students and other

candidates and gives the top students the opportunity to continue to develop themselves without burying their shining points. To strengthen the construction of independent enrollment in colleges and universities, we should let the enrol power run in the sunshine and public supervision, so the governments of central & local must efficiently improve the supervision and management mechanism, strictly abide by the regulations, and put an end to behind-the-scenes manipulation and favouritism. Colleges and universities should further improve the construction of related discipline system, adopt different training methods from ordinary students, and train students with special abilities in systematic science.

## **3. Implementing the Rule of Law and Improving Mechanisms of Supervision**

First, favouritism, material falsifications and behind-the-scenes manipulations should be countered by legal constraints. China is still in the primary stage of socialism, and many relevant legal systems are not perfect. Formulations of effective laws that go through constant revisions is imperative.

Second, lack of supervision and management often results in unfairness. One bonus point difference can determine a student's fate of entering a college or not, that is why stricter supervision and management is required. Relevant institutions should publicize their list of winners, items and scores, and accept extensive supervision from the public. Lack of transparency can lead to wrongdoings.

Finally, accountability mechanism

must be introduced. Our country's policy of adding points to the CEE is basically formulated by the Education Department, which lacks discussion with the public and results in power manipulation. Effective accountability makes the system more responsive, avoids abuse of power, and promotes fairness.

### Conclusion

Horace Mann, an American educator, believes, *Education is a great tool for achieving human equality, and its role is much greater than that of any other human invention* (Xueyan, 2010). With the increasing popularity of higher education, equity has become a major concern. One way to establish equity is to develop policies that

ensure fairness in selecting talent, the policy of adding points in CEE can be useful for *one test determines one's life*. The mild and stable nature of the progressive model not only meets the requirement of the steady development of the country but makes the policy of adding points to CEE evolve for a better direction. This model in education will play an important guiding role in the future development and improvement of our higher education and in turn our country's progress.

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