

Research on the Evolution of the College Entrance Examination Policy in Tianjin Based on the Theory of Multiple Streams

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ABSTRACT

The college entrance examination (CEE) is an important system for the selection of talents in China. As one of the four municipalities directly under the Central Government, the change of the college entrance examination policy in Tianjin has always attracted a lot of attention. Studying the regional policy change can better analyze specific problems and draw general conclusions. This study divides the college entrance examination policy since the reform and opening up of Tianjin into four phases, and analyzes the main content and characteristics in order to summarize its law of development and context, and the multiple streams theory is used as the theoretical analysis tool. Based on the policy analysis method, this paper makes an in-depth discussion on the mechanism behind the policy change of Tianjin college entrance examination then obtains the policy change model, and summarizes and expands the applicability of the multiple streams theory in the local environment of China.

Keywords: *College entrance examination policy; Tianjin; Multiple streams theory; Policy change*

1. INTRODUCTION

China is the birthplace of examination. It is "the first country in the world to apply examination to education and educational evaluation, and also the first country to apply examination to official selection"[1]. The college entrance examination is an important system for the selection and cultivation of talents in China. It has always been a sensitive and important issue in the field of education and even the whole society. The change of the CEE policy "is a complex systematic project that affects the whole body, and there are many practical problems to be solved"[2]. In 2014, the national opinions on the implementation of the reform of the examination and enrolment system were officially released. As one of the four municipalities directly under the Central Government, Tianjin has always been concerned about the changes of its CEE policy. Moreover, the study of regional CEE policy changes can also reflect the local conditions of China's CEE and summarize the general rules. Since the resumption of the CEE in 1978, Tianjin has undergone three CEE reform, from a single talent selection system, to the consideration of comprehensive quality of examinees in many aspects. In this forty years of process, what are the reasons behind the policy change? What is the opportunity for Tianjin Education Bureau to make the college entrance examination policy adjustment? This all needs to return to the historical scene and the environment at that time to discuss.

The research on CEE is complicated. Although there are theoretical analyses on some contents of CEE policies, there is a lack of researches on CEE policies in specific provinces

or cities by applying professional theories. Among many theories analyzing policy changes, the analysis model of multiple streams theory includes the source of problems, policy source and political source, etc., while the change of Tianjin CEE policy reflects the influence of policy program, policy feedback, government leadership, participation of all parties and mass incidents on policy changes which can be summarized as the source of problems, policies, and politics. Therefore, the multiple streams theory can be applied to the research on the policy changes of Tianjin college entrance examination. Besides, this paper tries to reveal the "black box" process of the entrance examination policy entering the policy agenda, and to analyze the driving force of Tianjin's CEE vicissitude in each stage. On the basis of predecessors, this paper further explore the explanatory power of multiple streams theory in the local environment of China, which also shows that theory can be applied to the research process of Chinese public policy as a western policy theory. However, the multiple streams theory has mostly been applied in the fields of public health and food safety so far, and the field of education has not been involved too much. Therefore, on the basis of further broadening the application scope of the multiple streams theory, this paper also found its shortcomings in explaining China's CEE policy.

This paper adopts the policy text analysis method. In the process of selecting policy text objects, this paper takes the national CEE policies and those of Tianjin, including the State Council and relevant government departments as the main objects. According to the previous analysis, the time period of text selection is divided into reform and opening up (1978) to 2020. The source of the data is mainly the policy information of the State Council and relevant

government departments, supplemented by the statistical yearbook on the website. In the process of searching the CEE policies, the key words of "College entrance examination policies" and "College Entrance examination reform" were respectively searched centering on the contents in the field at different stages, and it was found that there were a lot of subjects involved, including the State Council, the Ministry of Education, Tianjin Municipal Government, Tianjin Municipal Education Bureau, and other departments and institutions.

In the research on policy change, there are mainly two types of research, the first type is theoretical research, the second type is to apply the theory to the actual policy research. As for theoretical research, some scholars believe that policy change is basically a reform activity on the existing policies.[3] On the basis of conceptual development, many policy scientists also classified policy changes: policy innovation, policy continuation, policy maintenance and policy termination, with special emphasis on the study of policy continuation.[4]

Starting from the breakthrough of CEE reform, Chen Liying and Yin Xiaoping believed that the CEE system was restricted by the level of economic and social development, historical tradition, educational concept and talent standards.[5] According to Liu Bo, the changes of the CEE policies will not be accomplished overnight, so the reform of the CEE should follow the law of reform and pay attention to the coordination with the whole social system.[6] The multiple streams theory first appeared in the book *Agenda, Alternatives and Public Policy* published in 1984, which was established by the famous American public policy scientist Kingdon. From 1976 to 1979, Kingdon conducted extensive investigations and systematic studies on health policy and transportation policy, and finally simplified the four sources of the "garbage can" model into three sources, problem stream, policy stream and political stream. Through comparative analysis, Chen Jianguo pointed out that Kingdon's theory opened the "black box" of political system and provided a panoramic analysis diagram of participants in the policy process.[7] These scholars are more inclined to apply the multiple streams framework to study typical cases in order to better verify the local applicability of the theory.

Through the summary and analysis of the above literatures in various fields, it is found that in the existing researches on policy changes, scholars pay less attention to the practical researches in the policy field, and especially lack the application of relevant theoretical models to explain China's college entrance examination policies. Most of the existing studies on the college entrance examination policy focus on the development process of the policy itself, but there is a lack of research on a certain local area. By focusing on regional college entrance examination policies, this paper analyzes the changing characteristics of China's college entrance examination policies in a specific region, so as to reflect the characteristics of college entrance examination policies tailored to local conditions.

2. ANALYSIS ON THE PROCESS OF POLICY CHANGE

This paper divides the policies on college entrance examination in Tianjin from 1978 to the present into four stages: 1978-1993, 1994-1998, 1999-2016, and 2016-present.

2.1. 1978-1993 : the Consciousness of "Knowledge Cultivate the Talent" Highlights

In 1978, the State Council approved and transmitted the Ministry of education's Opinions on the Enrolment of Colleges and Secondary Professional Schools in 1978 and decided to resume the CEE. The key point of Tianjin's CEE policy is consistent with that of the whole country, mainly focusing on the restoration of the enrolment order of colleges and universities broken by the cultural revolution. The main policies are divided into four aspects: colleges and universities mainly recruit young people about 20 years old, and no longer limit the admission requirements the proportion of senior high school graduates; the national unified proposition for enrolment, organized by the province, city, autonomous region examination, marking; the first batch of national key colleges and universities, the second batch of other colleges and universities; the examination is divided into liberal arts and science, both of which are tested in foreign languages, but not included in the total score, as a reference for admission.

At this stage, the main policy subjects are the State Council and the State Education Commission, which use mandatory means such as supervision and inspection to guide the implementation of the college entrance examination policy in Tianjin. The purpose is to restore the order of the college entrance examination under the background of reform and opening up, so that China's talent cultivation can return to the track of healthy development and select suitable talents for reform and opening up. After the resumption of the college entrance examination, the main enrolment targets are workers and farmers, educated youth who go to the countryside, demobilized soldiers, cadres and fresh high school graduates.

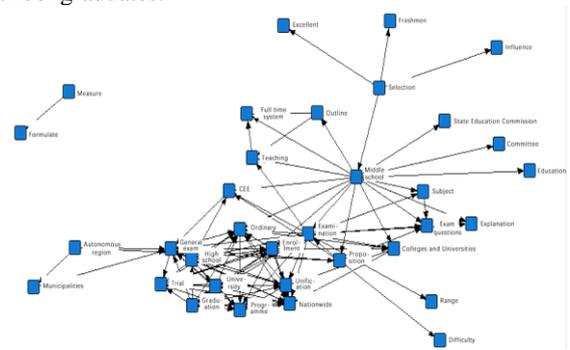


Figure 1: Semantic analysis of policy texts in the first stage

3. ANALYSIS OF THE DRIVING FORCE OF POLICY CHANGE

3.1. The problem stream in the reform of CEE in Tianjin: Demand for talents drives social concern.

The problem stream can provide the basic source and power for policy change, which is the reason why many problems need to be solved in the society are perceived by the government decision-making departments and the process of finally entering the government's policy agenda. According to Agenda, Alternatives, and Public Policy written by Kingdon, important indicators, major contingencies, or feedback from existing policies, etc., can help to selectively define some situations as problems.

In the process of the policy of Tianjin college entrance examination reform in various stages, the requirements of reform and opening up and the development of economic society put forward more and more requirements for Tianjin college entrance examination. For the change of the evaluation index of the college entrance examination policy, people can see many problems of the college entrance examination policy that have not been found before. At the stage after the resumption of the college entrance examination, the autonomy of Freshmen in Colleges and universities is relatively small, and it is not enough to take into account the professional characteristics; the admission of new students is decided by the unified examination, which is not combined with the students' academic achievements in middle school; the enrolment plan is blind, and the source is not closely connected with the graduation distribution; due to the large number of candidates and the lack of enrolment, employment difficulties, resulting in fierce competition among candidates. At the end of the 20th century, the "command" of college entrance examination to secondary education and teaching has gradually deviated from the correct track, which not only causes one-sided teaching and the subsequent lack of students' knowledge structure, especially non examination subjects, but also brings about the problem of students' partial subjects. In the 21st century, a series of problems such as the influence of fraction theory on students' all-round development, the overburden of primary and secondary school students' schoolwork, the prominent phenomenon of school selection in primary and secondary schools, the difficulty in promoting quality education, the shortage of innovative talents, the unbalanced development of education in urban and rural areas, the phenomenon of extra points fraud and illegal enrolment, etc., have been superimposed and highlighted in this period.

At this stage, the change of demand for different types of talents is regarded as a focus event throughout the whole process of policy agenda. The main problem in the early stage of reform and opening up is that the enrolment plan of colleges and universities is out of line with the long-term and short-term needs of the country. At the time of reform and opening-up, it is also the period of the restoration of the

college entrance examination system. In order to rectify the chaos in an all-round way and return the social and economic development to the right track, the primary task of the state is to speed up the cultivation, selection and use of talents, so as to carry out the society as soon as possible The modernization drive. By the end of 1990s, with the rapid development of science and technology and the emergence of knowledge economy, national quality and innovation ability have become more and more important symbols of comprehensive national strength. Education shows a huge gap with the level of economic and social development, and the contradiction between supply and demand of higher education is more and more prominent. The second decade of the 21st century is the key period for China to build a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way and accelerate the socialist modernization. The demand for high-level education and high-level talents is more urgent than ever before. As a national education examination system, college entrance examination is not only related to the cultivation of innovative talents and the healthy growth of students, but also related to the maintenance of social equity, the distribution of higher education resources, the huge redistribution of social interests, and the overall situation of maintaining China's reform, development and stability.

3.2. The policy stream in the reform of CEE in Tianjin: Officials and experts promote agenda development.

The policy stream describes the generation, discussion, redesign and attention process of policy suggestions and policy programs put forward by experts in the policy community. When the problem is identified and concerned by some people in the society, many policy suggestions will be generated around the solution of the problem, which forms the policy source. The members of the community include bureaucrats, experts, scholars, members of Congress, planning evaluation and budget personnel. Professionals in the field of education, including senior high school teachers, principals and experts and scholars, interact and closely contact each other to produce a common vision, orientation and mode of thinking.

At the official level, members of the government can find problems in this field and give policy suggestions. The reform of college entrance examination has attracted the attention of various interest groups in the policy community, and put forward their own policy suggestions. In the process of discussion, they constantly improve and form a common value orientation. Policy entrepreneurs put forward "the classification of the current college entrance examination", "the problem of subject setting and score proportion", "the principles that should be followed in the reform", etc., which provide some reference for the change of the college entrance examination scheme.

The accumulation of positive policy implementation effect can provide a new direction for the policy change of Tianjin college entrance examination. Beijing and Shanghai, as

municipalities directly under the central government, have provided a new model for the reform and development of Tianjin's college entrance examination, such as paying attention to students' development, not dividing arts and sciences into different subjects, multiple evaluation, course selection pilot, etc., which provide experience for Tianjin's college entrance examination reform.

3.3. The political stream in the reform of CEE in Tianjin: People's will and leaders' concern

The political stream independent of the problem stream and policy stream mainly include the political activities or events that affect the rise of policy issues to the policy agenda, including the change of national sentiment, the action of pressure groups, the change of executive or legislative bodies, and the ruling concept of the ruling party. In the process of college entrance examination reform in Tianjin, the key personnel changes or leaders' attitude directly lead to the acceleration of the reform process. After the reform and opening up, Zhao Ziyang, then Premier of the State Council, made a serious criticism on the government work report made at the fourth session of the Fifth National People's Congress in November 1981, seriously criticized the problem of middle schools' one-sided pursuit of enrolment rate. As for "exam oriented education", former President Jiang Zemin once pointed out that "education is the main base for knowledge innovation, dissemination and application, and also the cradle for cultivating innovative spirit and innovative talents." When the decision-makers pay special attention to a certain problem in a certain field, the problem will easily enter the vision of the decision-maker and become a policy issue, which will have a significant impact on the development of the field. Since then, the reform of the college entrance examination and the theoretical research of examination science began to attract great attention, leaders attached great importance to the college entrance examination. In the process of college entrance examination reform in Tianjin, the key personnel changes or leaders' attitude directly lead to the acceleration of the reform process. After the reform and opening up, Zhao Ziyang, then Premier of the State Council, made a serious criticism on the government work report made at the fourth session of the Fifth National People's Congress in November 1981, seriously criticized the problem of middle schools' one-sided pursuit of enrolment rate. As for "exam oriented education", former President Jiang Zemin once pointed out that "education is the main base for knowledge innovation, dissemination and application, and also the cradle for cultivating innovative spirit and innovative talents." When the decision-makers pay special attention to a certain problem in a certain field, the problem will easily enter the vision of the decision-maker and become a policy issue, which will have a significant impact on the development of the field. Since then, the reform of the college entrance examination and the theoretical research of examination

science began to attract great attention, leaders attached great importance to the college entrance examination. Another major factor influencing the political source is public sentiment, also known as national sentiment. The change of national sentiment has an important impact on the policy agenda and policy outcome. With the continuous progress of economy and society, the people's demand for the fairness of the college entrance examination is more and more intense. Although the college entrance examination plays an important role in the entrance of elite education, it cannot meet the growing needs of more and more candidates for higher education. In November 1998, economists Tang Min and Zuo Xiaolei wrote to Zhu Rongji, the Premier of the State Council, proposing to expand the enrolment scale of higher education.

3.4. Multiple streams coupling: The overall needs of reform and opening up.

The policy window is the key point of the intersection of the above three sources. Only when the policy window is opened, can problems or projects be put on the policy agenda. Since the 1980s, the worldwide scientific and technological revolution has brought new opportunities and challenges to China's economic and social development. China urgently needs talents who are more in line with the requirements of national reform and opening up. In October 1984, the decision of the CPC Central Committee on the reform of the economic system, which was deliberated and passed at the third session of the twelfth session of the Communist Party of China, put forward: "science, technology and education play an extremely important role in the development of the national economy. With the reform of economic system, the reform of science and technology system and education system has become an urgent strategic task. The frequent reform in the 1990s reflects the pursuit of the ideal college entrance examination by the government and all walks of life, and also reflects the problems of the college entrance examination itself. Promoting quality education, overcoming the tendency of examination oriented education and expanding enrolment are the key policy issues. At this time, China's high-speed economic growth and urgent transformation of the mode of high-speed economic growth and the urgent need to improve the quality of talents have entered the stage of rapid economic growth and urgent transformation. China is facing the requirements of building a powerful country in higher education, human resources and science and technology.

On the one hand, the problems caused by the change of the evaluation index of the college entrance examination policy and the feedback of the negative policy effect have attracted the attention of people from all walks of life; in addition, the policy source mainly composed of various options and policy suggestions put forward by the policy community and the softening activities carried out by policy entrepreneurs provide solutions for the reform of the college entrance examination; finally, the strong public sentiment

makes the government department Facing the necessity and urgency of the reform of college entrance examination, the adjustment of key personnel makes the policy change of college entrance examination into the field of government work, and directly contributes to the opening of "policy window".

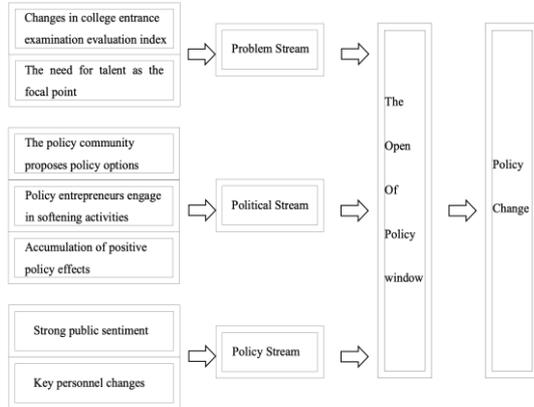


Figure 5: The policy change model of Tianjin college entrance examination

Through the above discussion and analysis, we can reorganize the process of Tianjin college entrance examination policy change based on the multiple streams theory to construct its model. The source of the problem of the policy change of Tianjin college entrance examination is composed of the change of the evaluation index of the college entrance examination policy and the different demand for talents in different stages. The origin and development of the policy is composed of various suggestions and alternative plans put forward by the policy community, the softening activities of policy entrepreneurs to the general public, the professional public and the policy community, and the accumulation of the implementation effect of the new college entrance examination program in Zhejiang and Shanghai. The political source is composed of strong public sentiment and the key "top leaders" driving the policy of college entrance examination. With the continuous development of the three sources, they interact with each other and interact with each other to realize the intersection, open the policy window and promote the policy change.

4. CONCLUSION

With the help of the multiple streams theory, this paper analyzes the process of the three changes and finds that they have the following characteristics.

Firstly, Tianjin's college entrance examination policy was closely related to the national reform needs at that stage and the demand for talents, and was strongly influenced by the politics, economy, culture and society at that time. The above three major policy adjustments of the college entrance examination have obvious cyclical characteristics. There will be different policy problems in different periods, and different problems in different periods will also have

different adjustment for the relationship between stakeholders. On the one hand, the degree of solving problems depends on the economic and social development environment, on the other hand, it also reflects the understanding and grasp of policy issues by policy subjects, and the level of understanding often affects the policy content.

Secondly, policy change depends on the coupling of the three streams. The "window of policy" finally opens and realizes the change, which is based on the problems arising from the change of policy evaluation indicators and the focus events as the core, the policy source with the policy community putting forward suggestions, policy entrepreneurs carrying out softening activities, the accumulation of positive policy implementation effect as the core, and the political source with strong public sentiment and key personnel changes as the core. Flow realizes the result of convergence and mutual action maturity.

Thirdly, the multiple streams theory, as a policy analysis theory originated from the west, has certain explanatory power in explaining the policy changes of China's college entrance examination. However, Kindon believes that the problem stream, policy stream and political stream are independent of each other. They do not pay attention to the progress of other sources in the process of forward flow and development, and do not interfere with each other. In the context of China's public policy, the three sources interact before they meet again, and they cannot be strictly distinguished. In particular, there is a very close relationship between political sources and policy sources, which influence and promote each other. In this case, we can find that the starting point of the policy agenda of college entrance examination lies in social problems. The emergence of social problems may be the research content of experts and scholars in the source and flow of policies, resulting in the interaction between the sources of problems and the sources of policies; the existence of problems also changes the national mood, which leads to the attention of leaders, which is the connection between the sources of problems and the sources of politics. Experts and scholars write research reports and submit internal reference reports, which are not only an integral part of policy sources, but also bring some issues into the vision of leaders. There is also interaction between policy sources and political sources. Besides, policy enterprises have dual identities, which play a role in the political and problem sources besides the policy source.

Fourth, the establishment of multiple streams theory is based on the pluralistic political system of democratic countries, which was born in the West. However, China is a unitary country, and its cultural soil and political soil are not the same. Especially in the political source, the game between parties or interest communities occupies an important part. However, in China, there is no excessive game within the political parties because of the multi-party cooperation system in which the Communist Party of China is in power and other democratic parties participate in politics. In the west, its citizens have more dominant power in the process of public policy agenda setting, compared

with Chinese citizens do not have more room for discussion. To sum up, the multiple streams theory provides a framework for the study of the policy changes of CEE in China, but the theory also has its differences in political and cultural background.

In addition, the author mainly takes Tianjin college entrance examination policy as an example. Due to the long history, incomplete data and text, the grasp may not be accurate, but it can reflect the general trend of changes, which will be paid more attention in future research.

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