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**An interpretive inquiry into Chinese educators' reflections and
perceptions of the Chinese university admission policies**

Liu, Baoshan, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1991

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AN INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY INTO CHINESE EDUCATORS'
REFLECTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHINESE
UNIVERSITY ADMISSION POLICIES

by

Baoshan Liu

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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Approved by


Dissertation Advisor

LIU, BAOSHAN, Ed.D. An Interpretive Inquiry Into Chinese Educators' Reflections and Perceptions of the Chinese University Admission Policies. (1991) Directed by Dr. John Van Hoose. 274 pp.

This study has focused on the analysis of Chinese educators' reflections and perceptions of the current Chinese university admission policies. Ten Chinese scholars with diverse educational background participated in this study, representing a multifaceted profile of the Chinese scholars currently studying in the United States. The four areas of investigation included their reflections on various critical issues dealing with (a) the current Chinese university enrollment system, (b) the impact of the enrollment system on secondary education, (c) their suggestions for reform and change, and (d) their comparisons between the U.S. and the Chinese university admissions policies.

The analysis of data indicated that the participants shared unanimous agreement on many critical issues such as candidate qualification requirements, using the test score as the sole criterion for candidate selection, method of examination, and the impact of the enrollment system on secondary education. A few participants expressed different views on some minor issues such as the limit of age restriction and health fitness. The analysis of participants' demographical differences revealed that variables such as their educational background, location of their universities, age and gender, as well as length of residence in the United States, did not seem to have any

apparent pattern regarding their reflections and perceptions on the questions under investigation.

This study concluded that the university enrollment issue in China is both an educational issue and ideopolitical issue. Fundamental educational reforms are necessary to solve the many problems acknowledged in this study, such as in the university admissions policies and the unified entrance examinations. Though these problems cannot be solved without an extensive political, social, economic, and educational restructuring in Chinese society, it is possible to start now with the reform of many issues that can be achieved within the present sociopolitical structure.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I
AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

While higher education has long been seen as a part of life for most Americans, access to colleges in China today is still viewed as an enviable privilege to few rather than as an unalienable right to all. According to the 1990 National Census Report, the ratio of the university graduates to the whole population is only 0.14 percent. (People's Daily, 10/31/1990)

The United States prides itself on the great diversity of its colleges and on the lack of conformity among them. Colleges have very substantial autonomy in setting their own admissions policies. A highly selective institution may take only one applicant in ten whereas a slightly selective one may take as many as nine. In admitting students, they give variable weight and emphasis to a variety of standards such as grade point average and rank in class, test scores, special academic interests and abilities, special identities, special personal characteristics, contributions to the diversity of the student body, contributions to a campus tradition, contributions to community needs, etc. (Manning, 1977) Autonomy and diversity are two of the outstanding features of the college admission policies in

the United States.

The current Chinese admission policy of higher learning, in contrast, is based on a national educational system which the Chinese government instituted in the early 1950s to meet the needs of the country when China had just revived from the war. Under this system, the state enrolls students in a unified mandatory plan, covers all their educational expenses and assigns jobs to graduates. The criterion for selection to a higher educational institution is the Unified National College Entrance Examination organized and administered by the State Education Commission. In a remarkable historical parallel with the imperial examinations of the old times, China has elevated this entrance examination to a position of far greater significance than such procedures usually enjoy in most other countries. To the millions of high school graduates each year, this examination is the door leading them to or blocking them from fame and success for their entire life. Their fate is solely dependent upon those three examination days in the hot July when they desperately struggle to pass, or to perish in terms of their academic life.

A review of the history of education in China will convey the rationale for such heavy reliance on a unified system and provide the basis to begin an analysis of the current admissions system.

Historical Background

The current national unified college entrance examination represents one of the Chinese social systems which has its roots deep in history. Early in the Tang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.), China created an open, fair, nationwide examination system through which the common people could compete for government jobs and hence participate in the public services. The examination system was composed of several levels.

At the local level, the district examinations were held periodically for males of all ages. The tests were mainly composed of writing essays on Confucian doctrine, morality, the Classics, and literary works. Memorization was the essential skill for assimilating necessary knowledge to meet the requirements of the test. Once a scholar passed the examination, he would receive the title of "scholar" and would be eligible for a low position in the civil service. If the person was ambitious, it also entitled him to attend the next higher level of examination.

When a brilliant and ambitious scholar had successfully passed numerous preliminary exams and survived through all these ordeals, he had to travel a long distance to the national capital where, under the most strict observation, he would take a three-day test in the Imperial Examination Hall. Those who successfully competed with the other 10,000 candidates would be offered a position in the honorable

civil service under the order of the Empire and also be rewarded with prestigious status and financial interest. The winner's family would also share their honor and benefits.

The present competitive selective process for admission to colleges and universities is certainly very different in nature from the Imperial Examination of the past. However, many similarities are retained, especially the psychological dimension--the lasting tension, achievement motives mingled with chronic anxiety, overwhelming pressure of the expectation by family, the elation of success, and the despair of failure. All of these examination syndromes have been vividly described by scholars of the previous ages in literature and government records.

One of the best known stories of such syndromes is one portrayed in the famous Chinese classic novel Stories of the Confucian Scholars written by Wu Jingzhi during the Qing Dynasty (1616-1911). It tells about a confucian scholar named Fan Jin who began to take the Empire Court Examinations at the age of 20. Every year he took the examination and every year he fell short by just a few points. For Fan Jin to continue, his family supported his study with all they had in possession, and a few years later, went bankrupt. After his parents died, his in-laws took over the responsibility, hoping one day they would share his honor and glory. But he continued to fail.

Before long, the in-laws became bankrupt and died in poverty. Now it was his wife's turn to support him. Though poverty-stricken, he never gave up his determination and expectation to succeed. Every day he did nothing else but read, recite, and write. Finally, when he reached the age of 50, he finally passed the examination and was awarded a position in the local official court. But the moment the long-awaited news reached his ear, he became so excited, so overtaken that he suddenly lost his senses, only remembering and repeating one sentence, "I passed! I passed! I passed!"

The author of this classical novel, a Confucian scholar and a victim of the old examination system, used this and many other stories in the book to expose and repudiate the cruelty of the Empire Court Examination systems and showed his sympathy towards the victims like him. But hundreds of years later, this examination syndrome still seems to exist. The story of Fan Jin is frequently cited to warn applicants of the tragic consequences if they have extremely high and unrealistic expectations of themselves before the examinations.

Review of Current Chinese University

Admission Policies

A review of the current Chinese university admission policies is approached through the four main components:

candidates qualifications; enrollment plan formation; enrollment procedures, which further consists of three steps; and lastly, the basis of selection.

Candidates Qualifications

As components of the national higher education system, all Chinese universities and colleges join together to implement a nationwide unified enrollment system. Applicants for undergraduate studies in a higher educational institution must meet the following qualifications stipulated by the State Education Commission:

- 1) They must be senior high school graduates or those with senior high equivalency;
- 2) They must be under the age of 23 and unmarried; candidates for foreign language majors must be under 21;
- 3) They must have good political standing and moral character, with assessment documents in this connection provided by the candidates' former units (Political qualifications include: uphold the four cardinal principles--Marxism and Leninism, Proletarian Dictatorship, Leadership of Communist Party, and socialist Road; Love socialist motherland; determined to study hard for the socialist construction and modernization. See Appendices A and B); and
- 4) They must be in good health (The following health problems may disqualify a candidate: Serious congenital hearing decease; low or high blood pressure; active pulmonary tuberculosis; chronic hepatitis; diabetes; acute arthritis; serious kidney disease and various physical handicap or deformity. See Appendix C for a detailed description).

Enrollment Plan Formation

Institutions of higher learning in China are divided into two categories: one category recruits students from and assigns them to all parts of the country; the other category recruits students solely from and assigns them to the region in which the universities are located (province, autonomous region, or municipality directly under the central government).

The formulation of the recruitment plan includes a complicated process of overall balance, consultation, and adjustment. First of all, the universities should each put together an enrollment plan that covers all disciplines. The plan is based on the forecasts and estimates made by the State Planning Commission and the Planning Department of the State Education Commission about the need for specialized personnel in society in conjunction with facilities and development plans of the various disciplines within the universities themselves.

After pooling the recruitment plans of different regions and the various universities and colleges directly under its jurisdiction, the State Education Commission will strike an overall balance of the national enrollment plan with the interests of the whole country in view. The recruitment sources plan drawn up on the basis of adjusted enrollment plans of various universities includes the total number of students to be enrolled for the various

disciplines, the areas where the recruitment will be carried out, and the number of students to be enrolled for a given discipline in a given area. The finalized recruitment sources plan is transmitted by the State Education Commission as a mandatory plan for implementation.

(Appendix D provides a sample of the state mandatory source plan for a university.)

Enrollment Procedures

The enrollment work is organized and carried out by the admissions offices under the college enrollment committees of various regions in the following three steps:

1) Application

Candidates apply to the local admissions office at the county level to take the entrance examination and fill out an application form at the beginning of the last term of the graduating year. Institutions of higher learning in the whole country enroll students in three lots according to the following order: the first lot consists of students matriculated by the key universities and colleges; the second consists of students admitted to the undergraduate course on none-key universities and colleges; the third consists of students enrolled in specialized training courses.

Each candidate can fill in three preferences of the key universities or colleges he or she desires to attend

according to the above-mentioned order of admission, plus three non-key university or college preferences for admission in case he or she is rejected by all the three key universities or colleges. For each university or college chosen, the candidate can fill in three discipline or department preferences. The candidate can also state whether he or she is willing to be admitted to other universities or disciplines in case he or she fails to be enrolled according to expressed preferences. This is a most important procedure because it would be extremely difficult, if not entirely impossible, to change majors or schools once a student got admitted.

After examination by the country admission office, which ascertains that the candidate meets all the required qualifications, he or she will be issued a permit to sit for examination.

2) Examination

a. Exam subjects

Examinations are given each year on three consecutive days in July. Since all of China is on the same time standard, the exams are administered in the same sequence and at the same time across the country. The examination halls must be set up at city or county level or above. Each examination is two hours in length and a total of nine subjects are covered.

The number of tests taken varies according to the

interests of each individual student. Candidates for liberal arts disciplines, including foreign languages, are tested in six subjects: Political Science, Chinese, Mathematics, History, Geography, and Foreign Language. Full score for all six subjects varies each year. Candidates for foreign language majors will have an additional oral test in a foreign language.

Candidates for science, engineering, agriculture, and medical science are tested in seven subjects: Political Science, Chinese, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Foreign Language.

b. Producing the Examination Questions

Elaborate precautions are taken to ensure secrecy and fairness at all stages of the examination process. The work of writing the exam questions is organized by the Education Commission, which invites different teachers to participate each year. They are drawn from middle schools, universities, and other educational institutions. Small groups of teachers write the questions for each subject exam. Prescribed answers are prepared with the examination questions along with the maximum number of points to be allotted for each question, the breakdown of points to be allotted for each part of a question, and the standard to be used in determining acceptable answers.

Great efforts are made to prevent disclosure of the examination questions and to preserve the anonymity of

teachers responsible for writing them. Several measures have been instituted to help maintain the secrecy of this process. First, any teacher who has a relative taking the examination that year is forbidden to participate in preparing the questions, and secondly, all of the teachers involved are gathered together in isolated and unspecified resort hotels at different locations each year. While there, the teachers remain incommunicado--no mail, no telephone calls, and no visitors. This is the norm not only for the ten days necessary to write the questions but for the entire time-frame until the examinations have been given.

Once the contents have been determined, they immediately become the state's utmost confidential documents until the examination day. A copy of the examination papers is delivered under the strictest secrecy to each province, which is individually responsible for printing the number of copies to be distributed in their areas. The provincial printers, like the teachers, are then held incommunicado until the examinations are given. The seals on the envelopes containing the examination papers may not be broken until precisely thirty minutes prior to the start of each exam.

d. Taking the examinations

The seats in the exam room are arranged so that there is a single desk for a single person with sufficient spaces

on four sides so that one cannot look at other candidates' papers. No one except the exam supervisors is permitted to enter the exam room. The candidates must present their exam permits at the door and then place the permit on the upper-left corner of their assigned seats throughout the exam period. They may bring nothing except a pen, a pencil, a compass and a set square for math calculation.

Anyone who is thirty minutes late is not permitted to enter, thus losing the opportunity to take the exam for the year. Within the first thirty minutes of the exam, nobody is permitted to come out of the exam room. This rule exists to avoid "leaking" the content of the exam to others.

Anyone who tries to talk with another candidates or tries to leave any secret marks on their exam paper, or conduct any fraud in any way, is immediately disqualified, not only for this year, but for another two years.

e. Grading the papers

As each of the examinations consists of both objective and subjective questions, an enormous number of teachers are mobilized for the pains-taking grading work each year. In 1980, for instance, 3,400 teachers in the city of Shanghai graded some 720,000 examination papers for the 120,000 candidates who took the college entrance exams. (Pepper, 1984) For the whole country, the number of teachers participating in the grading can easily be thirty times more.

The actual work of grading is performed by graders subdivided into small work groups of ten, each responsible for grading only one item of a given exam subject so as to guarantee the same standard for all papers. All of the identifications of the candidates on the paper (e.g., ID number, name, school, district, etc.) are covered to eliminate possibilities of fraudulence.

After the grading of papers is completed, all files of the candidates are sent to the General Admissions Office for final selection. The General Admission Office is relocated every year to ensure confidentiality.

3) Enrollment

The university sends enrollment groups to the General Admissions Office to review the candidates' files after their examination papers have been graded. On the basis of the percentage of the total number of students to be enrolled by the national key universities according to the recruitment sources plan, the admissions office will set the minimum test scores required for the first lot of matriculations. Files of the candidates whose test scores are above the minimum required level will be handed over, in accordance with the candidates' first preference, to the enrollment groups of various universities. The decision on admitting candidates rests with the enrollment groups. If the candidate is not accepted by the university of first preference, his or her file should be swiftly transferred to

the university of second preference. The non-key colleges and universities start their turn three days after the key universities have completed their selections.

Basis of Selection

For all the Chinese universities and colleges, the single criterion for selection is the total test score of the applicants. Though the applicants' files include evaluations of political standing and moral character, medical records, high school records of scholastic attainments, physical education records, the application form for the college entrance examination, and the college entrance examination papers and grades, only the total test scores are of decisive significance, the other data sources only serving as references.

Summary

Historically, the admission to higher education in China has been highly selective and highly structured. This admission system has produced tremendous impact on millions of people who are directly or indirectly involved. However, a careful study of the perceptions of the selectiveness and the process that applicants experience has not been conducted. Reflections on higher education admissions by students who have personally gone through the whole process can provide key insights into the current system and yield

recommendations for change and improvement. But the reflections of Chinese educators outside China can provide significant insights which their counterparts inside China may not be able or willing to provide either due to personal experiences or due to political considerations. The purpose of this research was to study the reflections of these Chinese educators.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this dissertation was to do an in-depth interpretive inquiry into the reflections and perceptions of a select group of Chinese educators studying in the United States on the Chinese university admission policies as compared to the admission policies of U.S. universities at which they are studying. The study was limited to the admission policies adopted between 1977 and 1988 since during this period the admission policies were most consistent and stable. The U.S. university admission policies were limited to those published in the respective university catalogs, as the participants may not be familiar with admission policies of other institutions. The interpretive study approach was used in this study.

The interpretive study approach, as explained by Stake (1978), provides an in-depth examination of the issue under discussion. Results of such inquiry have the potential to:

1. move us toward a fuller understanding of the natural experience acquired in ordinary personal involvement;
2. extend explanation of that which we know and increase our understanding of that which is the foundation of what we know; and
3. enhance generalizations which develop as a product of experience.

Thus, in this investigation, the interpretive inquiry approach was seen to be an effective means of providing a perspective of the perceptions of a select group of Chinese teachers on the issue under investigation.

More specifically, questions for this investigation centered around the following areas:

1. How did a select group of Chinese educators perceive the current Chinese university admission policy in regard to
 - a. its effectiveness and fairness in enrollment;
 - b. applicants' qualification requirements;
 - c. use of test scores as the single criterion;
 - d. examination methods, questions and grading;
 - e. state mandatory enrollment plan; and
 - f. the enrollment process?
2. How did this group of Chinese educators perceive the impact of the current Chinese university admission policies on secondary (7-12) education in regard to
 - a. purpose of secondary education
 - b. method of teaching
 - c. curriculum planning
 - d. pressure on students, teachers and parents
 - e. social impact on the general public?
3. What changes would be proposed by this select group of Chinese educators in regard to
 - a. applicant's qualification requirements
 - b. examination questions and methods of testing
 - c. enrollment planning
 - d. selection criteria

- e. enrollment process
 - f. university's role versus government's role in the process of admission decision making?
4. How did this select group of chinese educators compare the Chinese university admission policies to the admission policies of the university that they attend as published in the university catalogue?

These questions covered the critical issues under debate, and answers to the questions were intended to provide a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the current Chinese university admission policy and also provide insight into future changes and reforms in the related areas.

Context of the Study

Chinese educators studying in the U.S. spread from the west coast to the east coast. Their number is beyond calculation due to the lack of access to any kind of records. They come from different parts of China, reside in different universities, study different majors, and pursue different degrees. A third of them are government sponsored and the rest are self supported through university assistantships or scholarships. The latter are all on degree programs whereas the former are on exchange programs. But there is one similarity: before they came, they all taught in a Chinese school or a Chinese university and have in-depth knowledge of the Chinese university admission policy. In addition, after they have studied for years in

the United States, they have some familiarity with the admission policies of the American universities, so that comparisons are possible.

Owing to restrictions of transportation, finance, time, and other restraints, this study was limited to students located in the Northeast and Southeast Regions of the United States. The selection of participants to be interviewed was based primarily on availability and willingness to participate in this research rather than on other criteria, but efforts were made to represent the different Chinese geographical regions, different size of the cities in which their universities were located, as well as different lengths of residence in the U.S. Since all of these variables affect their experiences, they may also have an impact on their responses to a particular question.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of interpretation in this study, the following meanings were assigned to words used:

Educator -- a person who teaches in a school or a college, but not necessarily one who engages in teacher education.

Secondary Education -- in the Chinese educational system, it covers both junior and senior high schools (grades 7-12)

Primary school -- a Chinese term for elementary school (grades 1-6)

Junior middle school -- a Chinese term for middle school (grades 7-9), which is also referred to as junior high school by some participants

Senior middle school -- a Chinese term for senior high school (grades 10-12), which is also referred to as senior high school by some participants

Higher Education -- in Chinese educational system, it refers to education in any four-year college or university

Institution of Higher Education -- in Chinese educational system, it refers to any four-year college or university

Key universities -- universities that rank high in academic and research achievements, and possess rich teaching and research resource, and therefore enjoy priorities in budget allocation, students enrollment, and graduate job assignments

Non-key universities -- universities that do not rank high in academic and research achievements

Duck-feeding, spoon-feeding -- These two terms, which originally describe the method of forcing food into ducks' throat through a pipe or spoon so that the ducks grow faster, are used metaphorically to describe the teaching method of forcing knowledge into students' mind without considering whether or not they can digest it.

Standardized tests -- tests that are scored by machines

Handicapped -- those who do not meet the health qualification requirements of the admission policy (See Appendix D)

Underlying Assumptions

Ideas that were accepted and not investigated as part of this study were acknowledged as follows:

1. Given assurance of anonymity and free from any political apprehensions, participants will be open and honest during interviews in relating their perceptions of current Chinese university admission policies as well as their suggestions for its future change and reform.
2. Having finished undergraduate degrees in China and having studied for some time in the United States, all the participants are familiar with both the Chinese and the U.S. university admission policies and will make meaningful and valuable comparisons between the two systems.

Emphasis of the Study

The emphasis of this investigation was limited to an interpretive study of the reflections of a group of Chinese educators on current Chinese university admission policies as stipulated by the Chinese National Education Commission and announced to the general public each year. The following related aspects of the issue were not investigated:

- a. special admission policies concerning minority applicants;
- b. special admission policies concerning extraordinarily gifted individuals in specific areas;
- c. special admission policies concerning handicapped applicants;
- d. special admission policies concerning majors that require particular educational background, experience or talents;
- e. exceptions for special individuals;
- f. financial aspects of admissions.

Significance of the Study

The literature shows that the people's views on the impact of the current Chinese university admission policy on the overall growth of young people are highly divergent, ranging from conducive to obstructive, positive to negative, and fair to prejudicial. However, all agree that the impact is both tremendous as well as far-reaching, and the consequences are both serious as well as long-lasting.

Though there have been scattered studies on this issue in recent years, this research approached the problem from a different perspective. This investigator has a rare opportunity to study the perceptions of Chinese educators who have been immersed in a different culture and studied under a different educational system. The reflections of Chinese educators studying in the United States can provide unique reflections which their counterparts in China may not be able or willing to provide. While this study involved a small number of participants, the in-depth inquiry and careful selection can yield key insights. As a Chinese proverb goes, "A stone from a different mountain may be able to break through the jade," or "practices in a different place or thoughts from a different school may be more valuable than the accustomed practice or accepted thoughts." Therefore, the findings of this study could provide a valuable contribution to the future improvement or reform of the national educational system in general and the Chinese university admission policy in particular.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher recognized several limitations of the study. For a research that attempts to study the university admission policies of a nation that has a population of more than 1 billion, a larger sample would be more desirable, and therefore more representative. The sample population was a

convenience sample as opposed to a representative one. A sample of ten could only allow the researcher to select participants who are studying at the major higher institutions in the U.S. The views of those Chinese educators who are studying at the junior colleges and small universities were not investigated. The university admission policies during the 1989 and 1990 academic years were seriously affected by the 1989 political turmoil in China, but, to avoid the political apprehensions on the part of the participants, the policies of these two years were not analyzed in the current study. The literature review was restricted to the publications available in various university libraries in the United States.

Summary

Chapter I dealt with an overview of this study which provided the historical background and the current practice of the Chinese higher education admissions, purpose and significance of this study as well as its limitations. Chapter II will provide a review of the literature for the study, beginning with an overview of development and change of the Chinese university admissions policy over the years.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE FOR THE STUDY

An overview of development and change

China has a long history of holding large-scale examinations. As early as the Tang dynasty (618-907), court examinations were implemented to select outstanding, talented people to serve the official court. The examinations also propelled the vast ranks of intellectuals to devote themselves to better scholarship and learning. However, from the Song dynasty (960-1279) onward, the examinations became increasingly stale and stagnant. The contents of the examinations, by being restricted to Confucian thoughts and philosophy, became ossified. Then, from the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) onward, there emerged a stereotyped writing format which put thought and knowledge under lock and key. For this reason, the Imperial Court Examination had to be abolished before the end of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).

After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, Chinese universities and colleges recruited students first separately and then jointly. Unified nationwide recruitment was first introduced in 1952. When the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, the system of national unified entrance examinations was abolished, and recruitment was suspended

for five years. When it was revived in 1972, a recommendation system was instituted to admit only workers, peasants, and soldiers with at least two years of work experience. This enrollment system was beset with problems, which resulted in the decline of student quality and a shortage of qualified graduates.

In 1977, enrollment to institutions of higher learning was changed again: the recommendation system was denounced, and the entrance examination was reinstated. High school graduates were allowed to apply directly for the entrance examination and political screening focused on the students' personal political conduct. The new policy was warmly received, and reinstating the entrance examination system helped raise the teaching quality of secondary schools. Consequently, the quality of new recruits admitted to institutions of higher education showed tremendous improvement.

At present, in accordance with the unified enrollment system, the overwhelming majority of colleges and universities in China conduct enrollment in compliance with a unified policy. Art academies and physical culture institutes recruit either separately or jointly with similar institutions. The Ministry of Education exercises unified leadership over nationwide enrollment, and various provinces set up their own enrollment committees in charge of local entrance examinations and selection.

Enrollment is based on comprehensive assessment of every candidate's moral, intellectual, and physical qualities. The tests fall into two categories: those for candidates specializing in science, engineering, agriculture, and medicine, and those for candidates specializing in humanities. The former are required to take examinations in politics, Chinese, mathematics, physics, and foreign language; the latter in politics, Chinese, mathematics, history, geography, and foreign language.

According to Yang's research report (1987), in the 1950s, the rate of admission based on the higher education entrance examination (i. e., the ratio between the number of new students enrolled in higher education and the number of applicants taking the examination) remained consistently above 70-90 percent. Fervent pursuit of a higher rate of promotion was not a problem. In 1962 and 1961, due to economic difficulties in society at large, the rate of admission fell down to 27 percent. From this point on, the problem of one-sided pursuit of a higher rate of promotion emerged.

The conditions have become even more aggravated since the Cultural Revolution. Since there was blind promotion into senior middle school during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the size of the graduating senior middle school class from 1977 to 1981 expanded tremendously, but the colleges and universities could only admit 4-6 percent of

the applicants. Since 1982 there has been a reform in the structure of middle school education. This, combined with an increase in the number of students admitted to colleges and universities, has helped the situation gradually ease. However, even though the rate of admission in 1985 reached 19.53 percent it is still lower than the rate of admission in 1962, the lowest among the seventeen years before the Cultural Revolution.

The problem is that many of the new students who qualify for college and university admission are actually high school graduates from previous years. Therefore, the actual rate of admission among current year graduates is even lower than the rate of admission among those who sit for the examination. For example, in 1978, the number of current-year senior middle school graduates was 6.827 million. Of these, only 112,000 were admitted to colleges and universities, representing a admission rate of only 1.64 percent. 1985 was the "best" year, and even then the rate of admission was only 18.51 percent. (Yang, 1987)

Competition is inevitable, but has become distorted due to its excessive intensity. This is the fundamental reason why the one-sided pursuit of a higher rate of promotion has become even more intense in the last few years.

Competition, however, is not restricted to the senior middle school. All the graduates of ordinary senior middle schools are selected through various levels of screening and

elimination. In 1985, according to Yang (1987), there were 19.99 million graduates from primary schools. The junior middle schools admitted 13.67 million people. Thus, the rate of promotion from primary school to junior middle school was 68.4 percent. There were 9.98 million graduates from junior middle schools, and the senior middle schools admitted 2.57 million students. This means that the rate of promotion from junior middle school to senior middle school was 26 percent. In general, two percent of the people of the appropriate age group entered colleges and universities. Therefore, it is easy to see why one-sided pursuit of a higher rate of promotion at the time of senior middle school graduation has an impact on junior middle schools, elementary schools, and even kindergartens.

Closely related to the enrollment planning is the job assignment after graduation. Every year, the Chinese government has to guarantee a job for nearly 600,000 college graduates. Generally, the job placement for college graduates focuses on key state and local projects, research institutions, ministries and companies, and a small portion on rural and collective undertakings. As China desperately needs qualified teachers for compulsory and college education, all the graduates from normal colleges are required to return to their original provinces to work. Under the current economic climate and personnel system, college students are financed by the government. Therefore

they are not allowed to find jobs on their own outside the scheme. The official theory is that "the government financed their education, so graduates had a responsibility to serve the needs of the country's economic construction." (Zhu, 1991)

Review of Selected Literature

Introduction

Due to the limited availability of Chinese publications in the United States, the literature review has made extensive use of Chinese magazine articles and newspaper reports in addition to the scholarly journals. In China, magazine articles and newspaper reports play an important role in the realms of academic endeavor and professional research because scholarly journals are few in number, thin in volume, long in printing cycle and small in distribution. Therefore, magazines and newspapers have virtually become a main source for voicing critical reviews as well as for publicizing research findings. Also, newspapers are the main source for announcing and publicizing government policies and decisions. The greater part of the literature reviewed was written in Chinese, while others were written in English.

The literature review has been done in such a way as to gain insight into a number of areas of concern: a) the Chinese university enrollment system; b) the Chinese

university entrance examination procedures; and c) its impact on secondary education and its social consequences.

On the Chinese University Enrollment System

Between 1980 and 1988, the people of China enjoyed a comparatively freer political atmosphere. Different voices began to be heard on all critical and sensitive issues. The university enrollment system was one of those issues that saw heated discussion and debate.

Zhao Sheng (1984), supporting the current enrollment system, maintained that since the introduction of the regulations in 1952, the unified enrollment of institutions of higher learning has achieved tremendous success. He contends:

In accordance with the socialist system and the party's education policy, we adopted the principles of all-around assessment of moral, intellectual, and physical conditions and select the better qualified. Although many countries of the world have stipulated similar requirements for college enrollment, China is the first clearly to set them down as a basic principle, and they bear the characteristics of our country. In conformity with the public ownership of the means of production and planned economy, the unified enrollment plan for China's institutions of higher learning has played a beneficial role in socialist construction. In line with the relevant policies of the party and the government, we have made a number of corresponding stipulations in college enrollment such as due consideration for candidates of worker and peasant origin and for candidates of national minorities and overseas Chinese. All these are necessary. (p. 54)

He further maintained that as part of the educational system, the college entrance examination system is subject to the heavy influence of the political system, the labor

personnel system, and the education system. In light of this, the reform of the college enrollment system must be in the interest of the selection of outstanding new students by institutions of higher learning, of the development and improvement of secondary and primary school education, and of social stability. But primarily, it must be in the interest of socialist modernization centered on economic construction. In other words, it must serve socialist modernization. This should be the guideline for college enrollment work.

He admitted, however, that the existing college enrollment system also has some defects which "become quite conspicuous today because the number of high school graduates increased, college enrollment decreased, and competition in college entrance examinations became fierce. As some high schools one-sidedly sought high promotion rates, the deviations of overlooking holistic education appeared." (p.54)

Holding a different position, Wu Shishu (1985) listed three problems of the existing enrollment system:

- 1) The planning system is over-concentrated. The enrollment of every college comes from above and reaches the lower levels as a mandatory plan. The number of students to be enrolled and the places of enrollment are also drawn up by the leading department and transmitted to the lower levels as a mandatory plan. This method has great blindness. It causes either contradictions between the source of enrollment and the placement of graduates or difficulties for the college's pursuit of the principle of selecting the best. For instance, in Zhejiang University in 1983, the highest score of the candidates was 608 points

whereas the lowest was 412, a difference of 196 points which caused tremendous difficulty for class teaching.

2) The method of examination is too unitary. The selection of talented people is a complicated matter. It is very difficult to find out the all-round conditions and true level of a student through only one examination, which obviously cannot meet the demands of all kinds of colleges and specialties. Take teachers colleges. As the trained students will become teachers, there are some special requirements on the students' ability of expression, appearance, bearing and organizing ability, but the written exam cannot detect any of these personal traits of a candidates.

3) The standard of enrollment is mechanical. The present method takes the examinees' total test scores as the criterion of enrollment, enrolling students from the bracket of higher scores to the bracket of lower scores. The colleges have little room for choice and can hardly consider the preferences of the students. Consequently, some students have met the enrolling test score requirement, but the scores of courses related to their specialties are too low and hence they find it difficult to pursue the study of their specialty once enrolled. (pp. 107-108)

Pointing to the same issue, Wei Zhi (1984) remarked that colleges and universities in various provinces enrolled students and assigned their graduates to work in their own provinces in a unified manner. The enrollment management system was also highly concentrated. Stated another way, the students were enrolled by the admissions offices of various provinces in a unified way and distributed to various colleges and universities according to the centralized enrollment plan.

He ridiculed the enrollment source plan which is the plan providing for the localities where the college can enroll students as well as the number of students to be enrolled after the enrollment plan is decided. He compared

it to the practice of "allocating goods" or "monopolizing purchase and sales by the state." Since college students were totally taken care of by the state like "products" of state enterprise, they could only be "allocated," that is, the graduates were assigned jobs under a unified placement plan.

The formulation and implementation of the source plan, he further argued, involves a certain blindness. As the source plan only lists the total college enrollment and not the enrollment of various specialties, it is very difficult to meet the different demands placed on various kinds of specialized personnel. There is a great contradiction between the sources of students and the places where the graduates are assigned.

Tackling the same problem, Tong Sheng (1984) asserted that, though socialist colleges cannot go without a plan, the concrete method of drawing up the plan should be constantly improved at different times and according to different conditions. "We must on no account be bounded by the enrollment source plan and allow the selection and training of talented people to be affected. In other words, we must make clear whether formulation of the enrollment source plan is subordinate to the needs of training talented people or the training of talented people should be subordinate to the enrollment source plan." In Tong Sheng's view, the answer should be the former, not the

latter.

He suggested that as the ills of the policy of "monopolized purchase and sales" has become so pronounced, one way to reform the current enrollment source plan is to make it clear that the state will not be held fully responsible for the placement of graduates and that they must seek jobs themselves. If this is in the interest of selecting the best through college enrollment and other reforms, it should also be taken as a topic for intense study.

Another educator who is concerned and worried is Yan Chaojun (1986). He is very critical of this educational system. He argued that the present system has overlooked the purposefulness of human life and intentions, and, on the foundation of a narrow and myopic comprehension of the so-called "needs of the society," has emphasized the slogan of making education serve the interests of society and the interests of politics. Students have come to be considered, indiscriminately, raw material for the society. With a system of spoon-feeding, it has molded and produced, out of this "raw material," batch upon batch of "products" that do not have any independent ability to think for themselves. The student's autonomy and self-awareness have been stifled, and they are unable to work independently or creatively, and are even less able to adapt to changes and to compete.

The discussion on the enrollment system drew the

attention of several top national leaders who expressed their concern over the college admission policies on several occasions. Deng Xiaoping, the supreme leader of China, while confirming the necessity of examination and its achievements, pointed out on April 22, 1978: "Of course we must not have blind faith in examination, regarding it as the only method to examine the result of study.... We must seriously study and experiment on how to improve the content and form of examination so that it can play a better and better role." (Zhao Sheng, 1984)

Another leader, the former Premier Zhao Ziyang pointed out in his report on the work of the government delivered at the fourth session of the Fifth National People's Congress at the end of 1981: "Recently our fellow deputy Ye Shengtao wrote an article entitled 'I appeal', criticizing the secondary schools as well as some of the primary schools for their current error of unduly stressing increased rates of admission to higher schools. Sincere and to the point, the article speaks the mind of the students, their parents, and teachers and the broad masses of people. We hope that all those concerned will pay due attention to this problem and solve it." (Zhao Sheng, 1984)

On Examination Procedures

Examination procedures was another area under heated debate, and the debate covered all aspects of the issue. The

aspects ranged from applicants requirements, examination methods and questions, minimum test score, to the enrollment methods.

Pointing to the "wide gap between the minimum test score requirement of various provinces", a matter which attracts extensive concern among the candidates and society as a whole, Ye Zhaoyang (1984) listed three drawbacks of the existing method of setting the minimum test score requirement by various places in college enrollment.

First, it fails to fully implement the principle of selecting the best. Due to a variety of factors such as the enrollment quota and different test scores, the test score requirement varies greatly among the provinces. In some areas candidates with a total test score of just over 300 may be admitted, while in some other areas candidates with a total test score of 480 are eliminated. This means that on a national scale, large numbers of candidates with good scores seem to have become "bad" students and are barred from the door of colleges while another batch of candidates with poor marks suddenly become "good" students and are selected and enrolled.

Secondly, in a certain sense, the nationwide unified examination has lost its actual meaning. In the present college entrance examination, the questions, the examination, and the grading standards are all set in a unified manner on a nationwide scale, consuming large

amounts of manpower, material and financial resources. In enrolling new students, however, the minimum test score requirements are set by the provinces separately, and the difference among them can be as much as 100 points. Whether the results of the unified examination are good or bad does not have much effect on the enrollment in different provinces and municipalities. Nor do the results have a decisive effect on the enrollment of colleges enrolling students from the whole country.

And thirdly, students of colleges enrolling from the whole country come from all corners of China. When the new students whose total test scores differ by over 100 points are placed in the same class for study, this will inevitably cause difficulties for teaching. Also it is unfavorable to the improvement of teaching quality and the training of personnel.

More doubts were expressed over the examination subjects and questions. The format for all the tests is generally composed of both objective and subjective items, the former in the form of multiple choice and/or filling in the blanks, the latter in the form of essay and/or short answers. Kuo Weifan (1983) pointed out that the preparation of these tests is not an easy job since there is neither an item pool as a reference for the test writers, nor an opportunity to make a pretest to determine the validity, reliability and the discriminative power of the items. It

has been asserted that in the present examination-oriented schooling, the use of multiple-choice tests will lead the students to focus their attention on fragmental information and rote memorization. This would suffocate the creative thinking, logical reasoning and inquiring process of the youngsters.

A parallel debate in test preparation concerns whether the test construction for the subjects should be an achievement test based on the estimation of what has already been learned in high school or a scholastic aptitude test aimed primarily at forecasting a student's success in his future study at college. The focus of this debate is centered on whether test construction should be totally dependent on the high school curriculum or be allowed to go into a broader realm of cognitive skills beyond the range fixed by the school curriculum.

Questioning the necessity and validity of the Politics Examination in college enrollment, Ding Er (1984) claimed that the evaluation of candidates' political thinking and oral character can hardly be achieved through a written test. He regrets the fact that some candidates who have a future for training in science and engineering were eliminated in the college entrance examination because of their inadequate general knowledge about politics. He thinks that the content and form of the politics examination involves too little integration with reality. The

examination relies too much on memorization, making it possible for students to anticipate the questions and memorize answers to simulated questions on the eve of the examination. The role the politics examination plays in the selection of qualified new students is not so ideal. The college entrance examination after all is a competitive selection. If the politics examination cannot play its proper role, then the necessity to list it as a subject in the college entrance examination becomes questionable. Therefore, he called for a total omission of the politics examination.

Liu Simei, however, does not agree with this view of total omission of the politics examination. Liu (1984) argued that some candidates who have a future for training in liberal arts are often eliminated because of their poor scores on the mathematics or foreign language examination. He contends that the politics examination should be reformed rather than abolished, though he admits that politics courses are very unpopular among both the teachers and students.

On the Impact and Consequences of the Enrollment System

Though candidates take the entrance examination at the end of the 12th grade, competition begins as early as the elementary years. Good grades enable one to enter a good high school, which in turn promises access to college.

Competition, naturally, is fierce. As a popular saying describes it, like "thousands of armymen on horseback in a rush to cross a single-plank bridge," most would have to fail and fall, though all want to be among the lucky few. For the majority of the millions of high school graduates each year, their future is solely dependent upon those three examination days in hot July when they desperately struggle to pass. Psychological tension, physical exhaustion, achievement motives mingled with chronic anxiety, overwhelming pressure of the expectations by family, the hope for success, and the despair of failure are all examination syndromes that are characteristic of students.

Theoretically, the existing admission policy is supposed to be a fair and efficient way to select college candidates throughout the country according to the same criteria, intended to enroll the best qualified among them. In recent years, however, some critical issues have been raised concerning its deficiencies and drawbacks. One deficiency of this policy, critics argue, lies in evaluating the candidates. Undue emphasis has been laid on their examination scores to the neglect of considering their practical working ability, creativity, and capabilities in other areas.

Many more people point to the serious consequences resulting from it. Schooling of the graduating students is for the sole purpose of scoring high on the entrance

examination, and the graduating students receive excessive attention at the expense of students in other grades. The use of the examination results as a sole criterion may not be very reliable as the competition and psychological pressure to succeed are so intense that an anxiety attack or a slight illness on the test day may put even bright students at risk.

Also, the examinations put a premium on the ability to memorize facts and formulas. Students and their teachers feel compelled to concentrate on the areas of knowledge and the "right answers" that are likely to be required on the exams, to the detriment of other kinds of learning. The normal school curriculum and instruction give way to the preparation for the examination, and most students feel crushed both physically and mentally by the endless homework. According to a recent survey, over one-third of China's secondary students have poor eyesight. (Deng, 1987)

Kuo Weifan (1983) pointed out that the current university admission policy has a powerful effect upon secondary and even primary education. The higher school curriculum and teaching are greatly influenced by the particular framework of the admission policy. Children are exposed to the pressure of the entrance examination early in their education. They are conditioned to view schooling as truly relevant only when it helps them to climb up the education ladder and to be successful in the next level of

the entrance examination. In an effort to upgrade the enrollment ratio to college, teaching and learning in high schools have been turned into a cramming machine in one form or another. Intensive drilling of the various types of test questions has become the main feature of such an examination-oriented schooling system.

The phenomenon of one-sided pursuit of higher rates of student promotion to a higher level of education is another major issue of concern. Yang (1987) offers the criticism that, contrary to people's hopes and expectations, the pernicious effects of this phenomenon have become even worse than before. It has brought about a whole series of disastrous effects, namely, the abandonment of or slackening of attention toward the vast majority of ordinary middle schools and classes, concentration exclusively on a small minority of key schools and key classes and "tip-top" students, and abandonment of or slackening of some important subjects of the curriculum.

Liu Bin, vice minister of the State Education Commission, admitted the serious problems resulted from the tendency of this one-sided pursuit of higher rates of promotion in schools. He (1987) criticized practices in some high schools where teacher's salaries would be reduced if the planned promotion rate were not reached. Under the pressure for a higher promotion rate, various administrative officials press schools, schools press teachers, teachers

press students, and parents press their children, to such an extent that many students with lower scores lose hope for the future, lose respect for themselves, and lose confidence for life. Some were so depressed that they ran away from home or even committed suicide. Some schools devote great effort to training a small number of top students while neglecting their lower or average students. This is done in a bid to increase the number of graduates who go on to higher education. This practice also results in a higher dropout rate in some schools.

The current methods of examination also produces significant gaps in the students' knowledge structure, argued Yang, (1987). Students who sit for examination with a science concentration learn nothing about history and geography, while those who sit for the examination with a liberal arts or humanities concentration have given up studying physics, chemistry, and biology. Furthermore, there are also other violations of the principles and laws of teaching such as promoting the style of teaching that is called "stuffing the duckling," spoon-feeding and learning by rote memorization. As a consequence, the majority of students do not receive the education they deserve, causing a lowering of ideological and moral standards and the quality of science and culture.

Due to the fact that competition is carried out primarily in the examination, examination scores have become

a symbol of the right to go to college. Therefore, the higher education entrance exam became an all-powerful "conductor's baton." Due to technical restrictions, it is very difficult for examinations, particularly large-scale unified examinations, to avoid producing negative effects such as rote memorization among high school students. Also, it is easy for the admission process to come under the influence of the mentality that "examination scores determine everything else."

Fang (1987) is especially worried about secondary education and sympathetic towards school kids. Because the present system uses one written examination as the only method for selecting students for college, it causes the students to devote all their efforts and energy to memorizing textbooks. It also results in rampant publication of Guides to Exams and reference materials. For all these high school students, there is no joy in life. Some teachers grasp the main characteristics of the examination and become masters of guessing the exam questions, which often leads the students astray in their exam preparation. Some others are very enthusiastic about running after-school classes and charge high fees for enrollment. All these practices, he laments, have seriously sabotaged the normal order of secondary education and harmed the students' ethical, academic, and physical growth.

Anxiety about the children's academic career is

particularly evident among intellectual families. One Beijing father said, "The only way for my child is to enter college. I've never even considered anything else. I was a college graduate, and if my child can't make it to college, it will prove I have a flaw. People will sneer at me."

(Deng, 1987, p. 25)

Deng (1987) also cited a letter written by ten students from a secondary school in the Shandong Province which was published in a newspaper. The letter said,

We are at a joyous age, but instead all we 'enjoy' is one exam after another. This heavy burden has demolished our weekends and holidays. We are exhausted, we have over-used our brains, and we are growing more and more heavy-hearted. Now the decisive college entrance exam is approaching. What we want more than anything is that you, parents, understand the pain we are suffering. (p. 25)

This situation has also drawn attention from some American educators. After his visit to China, Bardon (1986) noted that Chinese teachers frequently confirmed the view that "there are too many tests, too much homework, and that schools compete with each other to be the best in academic standards, putting great pressure on students, and that pressure begins at the kindergarten level for students to get into the good (key) schools." (p. 3) And the method of teaching and learning is "parroting what is taught. In other words, teaching equals telling." (p. 5)

Swanson (1987), after his return from China, reported that in China the examination system that governs access to

higher education has been criticized both in concept and in construct. Some critics charge, he wrote, that this system contributes to an overemphasis on book learning and develops respect for authority to the detriment of creativity, inquisitiveness, and an enterprising spirit. The impact of the examination system is doubled by the fact that examination results are used not only to evaluate the student, but also to evaluate their teachers and schools. Moreover, the results affect teacher pay. Furthermore, reliance on a test score alone to determine academic advancement ignores other important indicators of academic success, such as academic record and an assessment of character.

Matalene (1985) cited a few stories from her Chinese students' composition:

- One of my middle school classmates, before she got her notice, was anxiety-ridden. She couldn't fall asleep and she lost her appetite. She felt dizzy all day long and her blood pressure went up. Lying in bed, she said she was dying. Just then, the news of admission came. She jumped out of bed with joy. All her illness was gone.
- It was so tragic for the weaker. A young girl who had a strong sense of self respect failed 3 times in competition. She was so depressed and shamed that she committed suicide by drinking DDT.
- Competition between pupils has expanded to that between teachers, schools and even parents of those who take part in competition. Every parent hopes his children will be successful, and yet they are afraid that the children will be ruined by endless exercises and hard work. So children are the "king" of the family and are given the best treatment. His mother buys him meat and milk powder, his father offers his sausage and

chocolate, another serves fish and malt. Especially when the exams are drawing near, there is even a "nutrient crisis" in the market.

- Competition for college study even worries some very young pupils. From primary school, one is trying to get good marks so as to enter the best secondary schools which is the first step of the ladder to a first class university. At an early age, one is told to study harder and harder and forbidden from playing. A lively deer becomes a silent sheep. They are deprived of a teenager's innocence and fun. (pp. 799-800)

As Sidel (1982) remarked, the continuing changes and increasing requirements of the examination and enrollment process will not diminish but will only increase the Chinese political debate over university admission and methods of enrollment. Chinese officials have been extremely successful in quickly re-establishing an enrollment system which selects students based on academic criteria, but they have been far less successful at limiting the heavy burdens this system puts on applicants, on secondary school personnel, and on others involved in the process. While only time and the Chinese political process will determine how the social and educational repercussions of the Chinese examination model will affect Chinese society and further alter methods of examination and enrollment, the effects of the examination and enrollment system reinstated in 1977 on students and tertiary institutions are already being felt throughout China.

In order to redress the serious negative affects on secondary education, the State Education Commission in 1988

issued two regulations which demand the high schools to teach strictly in accordance with the curriculum and syllabus and prohibit schools from putting extra burdens on students. Schools should not give too many tests, do any simulation examinations, have extra classes for the purpose of increasing promotion rate, hold week-end review seminars, force students to buy and do the previous years' examination questions, and force students to do homework during students' hours for sleep, rest and physical exercise.

(People's Daily, 05/22/88)

However, as many critics point out, as long as the current university admission policy remain unchanged, it is highly unlikely that these regulations would have practical effect on secondary education.

Summary

Chapter II provided an overview of the development and change of the Chinese university admissions policies over the past years, and a review of literature on the Chinese university enrollment system, examination procedures, and the impact and consequences of the enrollment system on secondary education. The next chapter will present a discussion of the methodology and procedure of the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A Critique of the Methodology

This study was an interpretive inquiry into the reflections of a select group of Chinese educators who are studying in U.S. universities. The data sources were a series of interviews. An interview, as distinguished from an ordinary conversation, has purpose. Fenlason (1962) suggested that the purpose of the interview in research ordinarily is to gain information, acquire insight, or give help or counsel. The interviewer may be considered a professional worker in this area if he has had special preparation for this work, encompassing knowledge of environmental forces, human behavior, and interviewing processes and skills, all focused on meeting the particular needs of the interviewer.

Potential advantages

The interpretive inquiry methodology has distinct advantages. Bingham and Moore (1959) noted that the kinds of information sought in the interview cover not only observable, objective facts about conditions or events but also subjective facts such as opinions, interpretations and attitudes of the person being interviewed. The interview is often the only means available to obtain subjective facts

regarding attitude, preference, and opinion as well as objective facts known only to the individual being interviewed.

Goertz (1983) suggested that one primary advantage is the utilization of the thick description in which the researcher strives to pick his way through piled-up structures of inference and implication. Thus an experiential perspective of the case under investigation is provided which is holistic and lifelike. The conversation-like format of the report makes it understandable to nontechnical readers and focuses a reader's attention while illuminating meaning. The researcher can communicate beyond propositional knowledge and build on the tacit knowledge of the reader. These factors make the case-study methodology a unique technique for understanding an issue in question.

Interviewing, according to Gorden (1975), has the following advantages: the interview 1) provides more opportunity to motivate the respondent to supply accurate and complete information immediately; 2) provides more opportunity to guide the respondent in his interpretation of the questions; 3) allows a greater flexibility in questioning the respondent; 4) allows greater control over the interview situation; 5) provides a greater opportunity to evaluate the validity of the information by observing the respondent's nonverbal manifestations of his attitude toward supplying the information; and 6) allows the interviewer to

gather and analyze large amounts of data from small samples of respondents.

Potential limitations

This methodology has the distinct potential limitation of yielding to the biased interpretations of the writer.

Bingham and Moore (1959) point out:

Discrepancies due to a personal bias of the interviewer, a bias of which he may be unaware or at least unaware of the ways it affects his interviewing, can be matched by inaccuracies due to the unwillingness, prejudice, ignorance, or inarticulateness of the interviewee. Another source of error lies in the interviewee's misunderstanding of the interviewer's questions. (p. 6)

This is a factor that affects qualitative studies to varying degrees in all reporting. Clarification of the biases of the writer is an essential aspect of any responsible reporting.

This methodology has been criticized as not being sufficiently scientific. Sources of unreliability inhere in the interview, in the person interviewed, and in the relationship between the two. Paradoxically, it is precisely these same elements which make the interview a valuable instrument (Bingham, 1959). However, Stake (1986) contends that it is the task of the researcher to demonstrate the care and thoroughness of the procedures utilized.

With regard to the questions of reliability and validity that are normally addressed in the quantitative

approaches, Guba (1981) described an alternative issue of trustworthiness for qualitative studies. In place of validity, one establishes credibility and transferability through thick description and participant checking. Dependability is addressed in place of reliability and confirmability in place of objectivity. Both of these are confirmed through rigorous auditing. The rigor with which the study is conducted and the care given to detail and the thoroughness of process permit the qualitative analysis of these factors.

Another potential limitation is that the inquiry may provide only a partial account of the target population. This limitation is acknowledged and may be offset by the fact that the depth of the inquiry into the issue under investigation permits a level of understanding which is unobtainable in the quantitative-type methodologies.

The problem of ethics must be addressed most carefully when utilizing this technique. Gorden (1975) suggested:

The major way of protecting the respondent from harm resulting from information he gives is to keep that information confidential or anonymous. Confidential means that no one except the interviewer knows from whom the information came. Anonymous means that not even the interviewer knows from whom the information came. (p. 158)

Confidentiality and anonymity are two crucial factors and demand the highest level of integrity of the researcher. Other major weaknesses are that it is quite time-consuming, and skills and experiences of the interviewer are important.

Interviewing techniques

Success in interviewing is attained by discovering, mastering, and integrating the many specific skills and techniques required in order to clearly formulate the purpose of the particular interview, to plan its course intelligently, and to carry through its successive steps from first approach to final write-up. Fenlason (1962) suggested the following rules of procedure formulated for interviewing: 1) Any show of intellectual brilliance or superiority on the part of the interviewer should be avoided; 2) Any show of haste is to be avoided, and an easy, unhurried manner is one of the best ways of showing your interest in the subject; 3) Reference to the interviewer and his private affairs is to be avoided; 4) The use of an illustration from another case history should ordinarily be avoided because it is often a violation of confidence; and 5) the technique of questioning has fallen into disrepute, and greatest objection to suggestion is that it is a superficial method of correcting evils and is likely to impose an interpretation or an explanation on the interviewee.

Bingham and Moore (1959) also provided useful suggestions for interviewing, such as: decide what is to be accomplished; provide for privacy; practice taking the interviewee's point of view; know your own personality; establish a relationship of confidence; establish pleasant

associations; help the interviewee to feel at ease and ready to talk; listen with interest; allow enough time; do not dawdle; keep control of the interview; ask only one question at a time; keep on the subject; avoid the role of teacher; be straightforward and frank rather than shrewd or clever; avoid implying the answer to your own question; avoid impertinence; get full meaning of each statement; and practice separating facts from inferences.

Data collection

Two aspects of data collection warrant specific attention. The first aspect incorporates the major characteristics of the investigator as an instrument of data collection, and the second aspect involves the major techniques of the investigator as researcher.

Guba (1981) suggested that it is essential that the investigator be responsive to people and the environment. The adaptability of the human instrument to aesthetics, relationships, non-verbal cues, emotions, and style provides a richness in data which is unobtainable from structured inflexible instruments. The investigator as instrument is also able to expand the knowledge base of the case by utilizing propositional knowledge to reveal tacit knowledge and thus having both of these function simultaneously.

A unique aspect of the investigator as instrument is the immediacy of the data processing capability. As the

investigation unfolds, themes, patterns, unique differences, and omissions may be revealed and permit fuller inquiry before the period in question has culminated. This provides opportunities for clarification and summarization through additional exploration of typical and atypical responses.

Burgess (1984) discussed the thought processes of the investigator as data collection strategies. As schemes, patterns, and key linkages are discovered and identified, the investigator as researcher may increase selectivity in the choice of properties to be subjected to further inquiry.

Data analysis

The collection, analysis, and interpretation of data involves both skill and artistry. In the analysis of the data, the investigator seeks to discover themes, patterns, unique differences, and omissions within and between individuals and/or groups involved in the study. A technique unique to qualitative studies in contrast to most quantitative research is that the data collection and data analysis occur somewhat simultaneously. The researcher immerses himself in the data following each collection session in order to gain a greater understanding of the situation and enhance further investigation. This immersion may involve both intense and frequent reading of all notes and data gathered and an initial coding and sorting.

Burgess (1984) discussed practical techniques for the

coding and referencing of data as well as schemes for logical presentation of the themes and patterns which emerge. Devising a system to code all data sources is advantageous to the investigator. The use of wide margins and multiple copies permits the identification of preliminary categories, such as common patterns or responses, special situations, and theoretical constructs of the researcher (Burgess, 1984). Files can then be constructed according to the categories defined.

Presentation of the data takes on three dimensions: descriptive accounts, analytical accounts, and substantive theoretical accounts. Descriptive accounts provide a context for readers and help them toward fuller understanding of the natural experiences acquired in ordinary personal involvement. A technique which can be used to enhance the utilization of interview data is to compose a synthetic rendition of a collection of participant interviews into a single composite interpretation. This technique generally involves the following procedures: a) read and re-read interview transcripts; b) note initially recurring topics within the data; c) group these recurring topics within the framework of the individual research questions; d) list explicit statements within theme categories and analyze them according to tacit or implied meanings; and e) compare themes among and across subjects to determine commonality and uniqueness.

After identifying themes and reorganizing the texts according to common topics, skill and artistry are needed to weave a minimal number of connecting words and phrases into the composite interview so that continuity of expression and time reference is maintained while preserving the integrity of the original dialogue. Most essential is the technique of utilizing the creative imagination to "listen to the speaker" during the actual writing of the interviews.

Analytic accounts detail specifics of the description. Themes, patterns, unique differences, and omissions across time, within and between people, and within and between places are detailed with references to specific substantiating instances.

Substantive theoretical accounts enhance generalizations which develop as a product of experience. The descriptive and analytical accounts may also suggest new hypotheses. When combined with the results of other studies, they enhance a body of knowledge which may lead to generalization.

Conclusion

The interpretive inquiry methodology, due to its versatility and potential for depth of inquiry into issues in question, provided an effective research framework for this study. The purpose was to fully investigate the reflections of a select group of Chinese educators studying

at U.S. universities on the Chinese university admission policies as compared with that of the U.S. universities they were attending at the time of this study.

The Procedure of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to do an in-depth interpretive study of the reflections and perceptions of a select group of Chinese educators studying in the United States on the Chinese university admission policies compared with U.S. university admission policies at which they were studying. The study of the Chinese university admission policies was limited to the period between 1977 and 1988 since the admission policies were most consistent and stable during those eleven years. The U.S. university admission policies were limited to those published in respective university catalogs because the investigator realized that the participants may not be familiar with admission policies of other institutions. This study used the following procedures.

Selection of participants

Due to restrictions in transportation, finance, time, and other restraints, this study was limited to selected universities in the Northeast and Southeast region of the United States. The selection of participants was based primarily on availability and willingness to participate in

this research rather than on other criteria. Other methods of selection were virtually impossible because there were no records of any kind available that showed how many, what, and where the Chinese educators were who were studying in the United States.

Consequently, the selection of participants was based on the Chinese geographical regions in which their Chinese universities are located. China has traditionally and customarily been divided into eight geographical regions. (See Appendix E) The three regions in the northwestern part of the country are inhabited primarily by minority nationalities, namely, Tibet by Tibetans, Xinjiang by Uygurs (Moslems), and Inner Mongolia by Mongolians. Each of these minorities speak an entirely different language other than the official Chinese language. High school graduates in these regions normally go to local colleges where the native language is used for instruction. Special admission policies have been adopted for those who choose to go to universities in other parts of the country. As the current Chinese university admission policies do not apply to them, these three regions were considered in sample selection.

The other five regions are primarily occupied by the Han nationality, the overwhelming majority which constitutes ninety-five percent of the Chinese population. They all speak the same language, share the same culture, and receive education under the same system. The regions were so

delimited because each region has its own characteristics such as geographical features, climate and temperature, language accents, living and eating habits, and educational standards. Participants in this study were selected to represent these five regions.

In China, there are tremendous differences between big and small cities with regard to educational opportunities and standards. Therefore, one teacher from each region was selected to represent those in the big cities and one to represent those in small cities. In all, ten Chinese educators were selected to participate in this study. The locations of their Chinese universities are indicated in Appendix B.

The potential participants were identified through the help of friends studying in various universities across the United States. First, friends were contacted and the objectives and requirements for the interviewee selection were explained through phone calls and letters. Then, each produced a list of the potential participants who met the requirements and who were willing to participate in this study.

Through screening according to the standards mentioned above, ten were selected, and each was contacted through telephone or correspondence and cordially invited to participate in this study. Once verified and confirmed, they were given a detailed written account of the nature,

style, and length of the interview and an outline of topics and questions to be discussed. They were assured of complete anonymity and confidentiality with regard to anything they might say during the interview. The interview dates and places were arranged for the convenience of both the interviewer and the interviewee. (See Appendix F)

Data Collection

In order to test the appropriateness of the procedure, smoothness of the interaction, length of the interview, and method of probing, the investigator conducted a pilot study with two Chinese teachers who were selected with the same standards. The data collected from the interviews were used as a reference for adjustment of the interview process but not for the final analysis.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner as this approach gave the interviewer some choices as to the order of the questions, freedom to attempt alternative wordings of the same questions, and the freedom to use neutral probes if the first response to a question was not clear, complete, or relevant. It also enabled the interviewer to branch off where necessary to pursue responses in depth. Using this interviewing approach, the interviewer has control of the progress of the interview process. (Gorden, 1975)

The pilot effort was extremely beneficial as a

preparation for the study. Some insights were acquired:

a) the language used for the interview. (Though the interviewees had been studying in the United States for some time, they found it easier to talk in their mother tongue though from time to time English was used.)

b) the importance of tape recording. (When both the interviewer and the interviewee were fully engaged in conversation, it was very difficult to keep notes. Tape recording freed the interviewer from this burden so that he could be more attentive to the conversation.)

c) the importance of the initial conversation with potential participants of the study. (As the interviewer and the interviewee met for the first time, the initial conversation about other subjects, such as his or her family, study, daily life, etc, helped to eliminate the distance felt by both the interviewer and interviewee at the beginning.)

d) the necessity of probing. (Often the conversation branched off to some topics that had little to do with the current issue. The interviewer had to give appropriate probing in a tacit manner so that the interviewee came back to topic without feeling embarrassed or upset.) and

e) relaxed atmosphere. (In a relaxed and informal atmosphere, the interviewee generally talked freely and vividly, thus providing more information.)

The actual interviews for this study began a week after the pilot study, but the projected ten interviews lasted for several months. This was because all of the participants were busy with their studies and it was not appropriate for them to divert their precious time and attention to the interview at a time when a paper was due or an exam was near.

Each participant was interviewed for approximately two hours. All the interviews were conducted in Chinese and the whole interview was audio-taped to provide a precise and

accurate record. During the interview process, the interviewer discretely used probing questions that were listed in the outline, not necessarily following that order or strictly limiting to it. Effort was made to create an atmosphere that was relaxing, harmonious and comfortable to both parties.

The interviewer normally began by asking the subject to share his or her educational background and educational experiences. Also, a few questions were asked to get some idea of how much the subject knew about the undergraduate admission policies of the university he/she was attending. Then at a proper time the questions of investigation would switch to the following four areas as listed in the interview outline sent out to them:

1) how did he/she perceive the current Chinese university admission policy in regard to

- (a) its effectiveness and fairness in enrollment;
- (b) applicants' qualification requirements;
- (c) use of test scores as the single criterion;
- (d) examination methods, questions and grading;
- (e) state mandatory enrollment plan; and
- (f) the enrollment process?

2) how did he/she perceive the impact of the current Chinese university admission policies on secondary education in regard to

- (a) purpose of secondary education;
- (b) method of teaching;
- (c) curriculum planning;
- (d) pressure on students, teachers and parents;
and
- (e) social impact on the general public?

3) what changes would he/she propose in regard to all the above mentioned issues?

4) how did he/she compare the Chinese university admission policies to the admission policies of the university that they attend as published in the university catalog?

These questions covered the critical issues under investigation, and answers to them provided significant insight into the understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the current Chinese university admission policy.

Data Analysis

The method that was used to analyze data was the "Informal Content Analysis" approach. Carnye (1972) defines content analysis as a "technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specific characteristics of messages." Informal content analysis provides qualitative summaries of documents and involves no statistical data analysis. Through cross and between subjects analysis of various responses to the same questions, Chinese educator's perceptions of the current Chinese university admission policies could be inferred and generalized.

Data analysis was prepared and analyzed in four phases as follows:

Phase 1: Preparation of Data

All audio tapes were transcribed and translated into English, and all notes taken during interviews were typed. A coding system was devised to categorize the commonality

and differences across and between subjects as suggested by Burgess (1984) and Patton (1980). When the audio tapes were being transcribed and then translated on the paper, a wide margin was left on the right side of the page on which to write down category names and analytical codes. Depending on the specific nature of the question, different responses to a particular question were coded either as critical, supportive, or neutral; or coded either as strong, weak, or unsure. This coding system has tremendously facilitated later descriptive and analytical accounts of the interview data.

Phase 2: Subject-by-Subject Analysis

A descriptive account was given of the perceptions of each subject based on the interviews. This descriptive account, however, did not follow the exact order of the interview, since the interview conversations usually jumped back and forth from one topic to another. A presentation of the interview in its exact order would sound illogical, confusing, or even misleading.

Then an analytical account of the perceptions and reflections of the participants based on the interviews was prepared. These accounts were organized according to the themes established by the research questions and those which emerged from the interviews.

Phase 3: Between Subjects Analysis

Using a comparative method of analysis, the

investigator searched for and reported on themes, patterns of common perceptions, and experiences between all the subjects as well as their differences. In this study, a theme refers to a recurring, unifying idea that either received similar or different perceptions from all the participants, for example reflections on age restriction or on political qualifications. A pattern refers to the phenomenon where a variable is found to have influenced the participants' reflections in a predictable and generalizable form, for instance, how difference in age or difference in the length of stay in the U.S. has affected the participants' reflections.

Phase 4: Interpretive Inquiry

The investigator interpreted the implications of the participants' perceptions in order to gain a better understanding of the issue under discussion, to suggest ways for its improvement, and to provide a fresh and meaningful reference resource for further studies. The discussions and suggested implications are presented in Chapter Five.

Trustworthiness of the study

Guba (1981) suggested that, in a qualitative study, credibility and transferability can be established through thick description, and that dependability and confirmability can be established through rigorous auditing. In this study, the combination of detailed presentation and the

analytical account of the interviews provided a thick description of the reflections of the participants on the issues under investigation. This study was conducted with vigorous efforts, meticulous care to detail, and thoroughness of process. Thus, the investigator believes that the trustworthiness of this qualitative study was sufficiently established.

Summary

Chapter III has provided an overview of the interpretive inquiry methodology, its advantages and limitations, interviewing techniques, methods of data collection and analysis, as well as an introduction to specific design and the procedure of the study. Chapter IV will provide the data and an analytical summary of each of the ten interviews in the study. The last section of the chapter will provide a across-subjects analysis.

CHAPTER IV
REPORT OF THE DATA

Introduction

Presented here are the ten participants' reflections on the current Chinese university admission policy and its impact on secondary education, as well as their suggestions for change. A summary of main ideas follows each presentation of the interview and a cross-subjects analysis is given at the end of the ten presentations.

The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. All the participants were willing to talk freely about their thoughts, though some were more fluent and more knowledgeable on a certain topic than others. The interviews were carried out in Chinese for the benefit of the interviewee and were audio taped for the benefit of the interviewer. They were then transcribed and translated to the best ability of the researcher.

The ten interviews are presented in the order by which they took place. To be completely confidential and anonymous, pseudo names are used for all the ten participants. A brief introduction to the participant is given before the presentation of his or her reflections. As all the interviews basically followed the Guidelines for the Interview, the participants' reflections are presented under

three headings, namely, their reflections on the current admissions policy, their reflections on its impact on secondary education, and their suggestions for change. The interviewer's questions and remarks have been omitted from the presentation, as well as the irrelevant conversations and digressions. The first person is used throughout the presentation so that the reader can easily follow the participant's flow of thoughts. In the cross-subjects analysis, a brief demographic analysis is given before the actual analysis of the reflections.

The method of data analysis is "informal content analysis." It is a qualitative and interpretive method which seeks to objectively and systematically identify and report on themes and patterns, common perceptions and unique thoughts, and differences and similarities between and among all the participants.

Presentations and Analyses

Zhu

Introduction to Zhu

Currently a visiting professor at a northeastern American university, Professor Zhu came to the United States in August 1989 from a university in the Northeast of China, where he served for thirty years as a full time faculty member. With a total enrollment of about 1000, this

university is small in size, but because of its high academic achievements, rich resources of teaching faculty, and high quality of graduates, it is acknowledged as one of the most prestigious institutions of its specialty in the Northeast Region. Every year hundreds of graduates holding a BA degree are assigned to work in various provincial departments, universities, and other enviable positions.

Zhu's Reflections

On the current admission policies

The present admission policy requires that an applicant be a high school graduate or have an equivalent diploma, be under 23 for most universities, 21 for foreign language colleges and 25 for normal universities, be unmarried, have good political standing, and be in good health. Most of these requirements are unnecessary. For example, nowadays, most high school graduates are between the ages of 18 and 20. Under the present policy governing marriage, nobody can get married under the age of 25. I haven't heard any case where even a college student was permitted to marry. So this "must be unmarried" requirement is absolutely unnecessary as far as high school graduates are concerned. The reason why it is clearly stated as a requirement, I think, is to preclude those who graduated earlier and married, from competing in the university entrance examination.

The age requirement has deprived many young people of the right to go college. If a high school graduate failed the first time, he will have only two more chances to try. If he should fail again two more times, he will lose his chance to go to college forever. By then he should be well over 23. The only alternatives are that he may choose to go to Adult Education Programs, Television University, or After-Work Open University. Though all these alternatives could provide him with an opportunity to further his education, open universities carry much lower social prestige. More importantly, they were only authorized to offer a Graduation Certificate but not a university degree diploma. And graduates from these open universities normally would not be accepted to graduate studies in universities.

The so-called "equivalent diploma" is actually none existent. In China today, there is no place for one to get a high school education without going to a high school. One cannot obtain a high school diploma except by graduating from a high school, unless, of course, through cheating and forgery.

Political behavior generally includes good moral character, love of the socialist motherland, love of the Communist Party, observation of school regulations, respect of teachers, and an absence of no criminal records. Most schools do not take these measures too seriously and the

principals generally give good comments to all the students except those few who have committed some kind of mistake or crime, such as stealing and fighting. Those students who were considered to have taken an active part in counter-revolutionary acts would not be permitted to apply. For example, during the students movement in May and June 1989, a few students from my wife's high school were very active in supporting the movement. They went into the street to distribute leaflets and help get donations. After the movement was suppressed, they were detained in custody. Though they were released a few days later, they were stripped of the right to take the university entrance examination which was to be held in July. Their principal, their teachers and their parents all tried to beg the local government for lenience, but when the city was still under Marshall Law, nobody wanted to shoulder this responsibility. Of course last year was a special year. Normally, if a student applies to remove a bad record from his file, the school would do it very leniently because the school does not want to preclude anyone from taking the exam.

Some of the contents stipulated in this political requirement are necessary, such as the observation of school regulations and respect of teachers. Other requirements, such as "good moral character, love of our socialist motherland, love of the Communist Party," are too abstract and there is no way to measure it truthfully.

There is a set of national health standards that the high school students must reach in order to graduate. They include eye-sight, long jump, high jump, 1000 meter race, sit-ups and push-ups. It is clearly stated in the university admission documents that applicants must pass these standards in order to be eligible for graduation. As far as I know, no one was denied because of the failure to reach these standards, though there are many who could not reach all the stipulated standards. All the schools observe these rules very loosely. They don't want to see any of their students denied simply because he or she failed, say, to run 1000 meters as fast as others. But those with terribly weak health, with serious illnesses such as heart trouble and tuberculosis may not be permitted. Every year there are cases where enrolled students in some universities were rejected because of tuberculosis, infectious diseases, or even neurasthenia.

And for the handicapped, the situation is even worse. Handicapped kids in China either go to special schools, which are very few, or stay at home. Since they use special teaching materials and special teaching methods, there is no way they can pass the current entrance examinations. And even if they do pass, they won't be accepted, because the competitors are so many in number that no university would want to face a future burden of assigning a handicapped graduate that is not welcomed anywhere.

This practice and policy, of course, is unfair because like age restrictions, health can also preclude one from obtaining a higher education. But I think under the present situation, this is perhaps necessary. Since higher education in China is free, and the enrollment is so small, chances should be given to those with brilliant intellect and good health so that when they graduate, they can do more work and serve the country better.

Using test scores as the criterion for selection is much fairer than using other criteria. The policy for admission during the cultural revolution was recommendation and selection. Backdoorism was terrible. It was not a fair competition. But at the present time, the education standards are not on the same level across the country. The academic achievement of the applicants from different regions are not on the same level, and using test scores alone for selection is not absolutely fair. For instance, in Beijing, the average test score of the enrolled students were lower than the coastal provinces such as Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Fujian. With the same test score, some applicants may get enrolled in one province but may be rejected in another province, simply because of the set enrollment quota of the enrollment source plan.

So, using test scores as the sole criterion for selection looks fair enough because it gives the impression that every body has an equal opportunity to compete, but

when considering the different educational opportunities across the country, there is no fairness to talk about. People from the remote areas or from rural areas are at a disadvantage.

The grading method also adds to its unfairness. Throughout the country, the examination questions are the same, but the grading involves a great deal of subjectivity. These few years saw a growing tendency of regional protectionism. Graders, who were often teachers from various high schools and universities tended to give high scores to applicants from their own regions and give stricter scores for applicants from other regions. This was done in a hope that their own regions would send more students to college. This practice resulted in what is popularly called "students with high score but low intellect". Qinghua University, for instance, enrolled a few students with very high test score from a remote region last year. Teachers soon found that after a semester of study, these students lagged far behind the others. This was attributed to the regional protectionism, or that their high school teachers were good at "guessing the exam questions."

Since so many applicants compete for so few enrollment quotas, the majority of them had to be eliminated through this process of examination. Every year there were some kind of catch questions or odd questions for the six or

seven courses students were being examined on. These questions were far beyond the teaching syllabus and caught most students by surprise. But there were still many who happened to know the answers. In this way, differences in test scores were established. Last year the average test score for the history exam was below the pass line because the questions were too difficult. For instance, there was a question about a meeting of the British House of the Commons in the 16th Century. That meeting was only briefly mentioned in the textbook, and was not considered an important point of review. Most teachers and students neglected it and consequently failed to answer the question correctly. But in one school in Beijing, a teacher who was very experienced in guessing exam questions happened to have mentioned this meeting during the review, and all his students got this question correct.

The politics examination was a real headache to all. It required reciting the text in its exact order and with its exact wording, or otherwise points would be deducted. There were five books for this course: Political Economics, Philosophy, History of International Communism, History of the Chinese Communist Party, General Knowledge of Law, and current news. Teachers always advise their students to write their answers exactly as written in the textbook and not to try to rephrase the wording or alter the sentences. Even if the meaning is the same, points will be taken out if

the wording is wrong. If the meaning should be the opposite of the standard answers, this might be considered a problem of political attitude which may result in a re-evaluation of this individual's qualifications. So during the review period, the politics teacher, for fear of getting his students and himself involved in a political whirlpool, would repeatedly beg the students not to create new answers and not to write what they really thought, but just write what was in the text. There was no creativity and independent thinking to speak of. Students simply hate this course, but they have to read and remember. Therefore, it is common to find that, during the whole semester before the examination, students will give no attention to the politics course, but two weeks before the examination, they almost devote their entire time to politics texts. Their principle was to recite, write, and forget, which has proven to be an effective way to deal with this unpopular test.

People generally don't comment much about other subjects like math, physics and chemistry, because they know very little about them. The test on the Chinese language some times has strange questions, but some times has very good and interesting topics. This year the composition question has won wide appraisal. The scenario was two twins talking about roses. One of them said "Every flower has a thorn on it." and the other said "Every thorn has a flower on it." Students are asked to comment on the perspective of

the twins. This was a very good example because it really tested the students' creative and analytical abilities.

How many students a university can enroll each year depends entirely on how much money is allocated to it by the government. Budget dictates enrollment quota. The mandatory enrollment plan results in some problems. In educationally advanced regions there are always many applicants with high test scores, whereas in educationally backward regions, the enrollment quota would not be fulfilled if the same criterion had been used. In order to balance the enrollment quota, different minimum accepting scores are used, and the result is that the minimum accepting scores in the remote regions may well be below that for the coastal regions.

Considering the present situation in China, this policy is still necessary. Without this quota balance, it is quite possible that very few students would be enrolled from the remote areas to key universities. As the university graduates normally go back to where they came from to work, that would result in a vicious cycle. Backward regions would remain backward. Also, because of this mandatory plan, every university would get a chance to enroll some of its best students from different parts of the country.

The advantage of this policy is that by training talented young people for these remote areas, it helps to

push forward the national education standard as a whole. One obvious defect in this policy is that students lose freedom of choice. They can only apply to those universities that are assigned to enroll students in their region. And once lost, it is never to be regained.

The enrollment process changes from year to year. You never know what will happen the next year. Personally, I would prefer taking the examination before filing applications, as this process helps the applicants to realize where they stand as far as their test score is concerned. In some places they practice preliminary examinations. If a student failed in this preliminary examination, he or she will not be permitted to take the national examination. This practice, to me, is even more absurd. Those students are even denied the chance to try just once. This practice occurs most often in places where there is extremely high competition. The purpose is to reduce the number of applicants to reduce the expenses and pressure. Beijing practiced "simulated examination". Results of this simulated examination did not prevent one from taking the national examination, but it did serve the purpose of encouraging promising applicants while discouraging others. It also helped the students to get to know themselves better, and helped them to make a realistic choice when choosing universities.

On its impact on secondary education

The purpose of secondary education should be to raise the cultural and educational quality of the whole nation, and should not be to train talents for universities. In the past, the government blindly called on the whole nation to develop senior high schools. But since the enrollment was so small, lots of high school graduates who failed in the exam went into society without any skill to support themselves. The unemployment ratio was very high. That policy was not successful. In recent years, technical and vocational schools have begun to develop in large numbers. These schools function very much like the community colleges in the United States. Some junior high school graduates whose academic records are not so promising go to these technical or vocational schools instead of going to senior high schools. There they can learn a profession or skill they like, and after two or three years, they can go to the society to be employed or to do a business of their own. This new development not only reduced the number of competitors for college and saved expenses, but it also tremendously relieved them of the pressure for competition.

The teaching method used is still the traditional method of "duckfeeding", "spoonfeeding", and giving "a mountain of exam questions to solve". As the examination method is still traditional, the teaching method must also be traditional to match it. The test score is the most important thing for the student. Though the teaching

syllabus says that the curriculum should be for the holistic growth of the student, the real practice is to put the test score above everything else. Entering the 11th grade and in some schools 10th grade, students are allocated either to the category of liberal arts or to the category of natural science. The former will not study physics, chemistry, or biology, and the latter will not study geography and history. This is because students applying for specific majors will be exempted from tests on these subjects during the entrance examination. Consequently, students generally know the to-be-tested subjects but know very little about those subjects that are not to be tested, even though all these subjects, according to the secondary education syllabus, should be learned and mastered by the time of graduation.

Although students are supposed to choose between the two categories at their own will, the teachers play a decisive role. Generally, majors in liberal arts have a lower enrollment ratio, about 1 in seven, whereas majors in natural sciences have a higher enrollment ratio, about 1 in three. If a student's record is average, the teacher would put him in the category of natural science, even though he may want to study liberal arts. The philosophy behind this assignment is that if the student were to apply for a liberal arts major, he would most probably fail. But if he were to apply for a natural science major, it is possible

that he may get admitted into a university. Once he gets admitted, he will be counted into the enrollment ratio of this school. If more students could get admitted this way, the school would enjoy a better reputation, and with it some substantial benefits such as financial bonuses and awards. This practice is illegal. Students and parents really hate it, but most schools use this method to boost their enrollment ratio.

Because this one-time examination decides the student's entire future, the pressure it produces on students, teachers and parents is almost unbearable. Cases of physical or mental collapse are many. Most students have private after school tutors. The victims are of course the students themselves. The majority of the high school students wear glasses. They study, read and write from morning till night, and for many reading the newspaper was their only rest. There is no time for movies and television. During the weekends and holidays, there is more homework than on school days. It is a common practice that during the senior year, graduating students will have completed doing the examination questions for the last five, six, or even ten years.

Every teacher wants his students to do well on the subject he teaches, and therefore gives a lot of exercises. A student normally has six or seven teachers. Put together, the total exercises can be a hundred pages long for a single

weekend. During the individual study hour, a classroom would be full of teachers, each wanting the students to do the exercises he assigned. The more students that get enrolled, greater the honor, the higher the reputation, and the bigger the awards.

Parents become especially worried too. All they can do is to provide their child with food rich in nutrition and protect him from any disturbances. For the marginal students, the situation is much more tense. Every year you would hear stories about failed students committing suicide or parents abusing their child because they failed to go to college. It is very tragic.

Cheating is another hot topic. Despite the fact that tremendous care has been taken to prevent cheating, cheating has never been stopped. Some cases sound like detective stories, interesting and mysterious. Last year, in an examination site in Henan Province, a package of a hundred examination papers were stolen from under the heavy armed guard the night before the examination. In order for the students to take the examination as planned, Paper B, which was prepared exactly for this event, was immediately transported by air from Beijing to the examination site. Then thousands of policemen were called on to solve the mystery, but weeks' investigation produced no results. Some of those who were responsible for guarding the papers were arrested but the real criminal was still at large.

This year, the newspaper reported another cheating case which sounds like science fiction. One day, which happened to be one of the three university entrance examination days, a science teacher came to school to fix a radio for a friend. While he was working on it, he suddenly tuned into a strange conversation heard over the radio. One voice was asking a physics problem and the other voice was explaining how to solve it, step by step. He immediately realized they were cheating through advanced electronic telecommunication devices. Shrewdly, this teacher kept silent about it, but reported it to the local office. The second day, when this radio cheating was going on again, the cheaters were caught red-handed. Though people were amused at this cheating case, it really made people think.

Suggestions for change

The requirement to remain unmarried is totally meaningless, because even the university students are not permitted to marry, let alone high school students. The purpose of the age restriction is to protect the graduating students and to discourage those who have already graduated a few years and have been employed. Because of the economic conditions of the country, better opportunities perhaps should be given to the young people. Older ones can go to other sources of higher education such as Television University, After-Work University and self-Instructional

Program. If the country were richer, or if the population were smaller, it would not be necessary to have all these restrictions.

Enrolling self-supporting students is another way out. The last two years, the government has permitted some universities to enroll self-supporting students. Those whose test score was slightly lower than required can go to college on a self-supported basis. The government is not responsible for their educational costs, nor is it responsible for their job assignment after graduation. Though self-supported students are at a disadvantage financially, they enjoy the freedom of looking for the kind of jobs they like, or going abroad to study without having to work for five years as the government-supported students have to. However, for most of the low income families this alternative is also out of the question.

As for the examination itself, reforms are certainly necessary. We recently learned that people were talking about the possibility of just testing three core subjects, namely, mathematics, Chinese, and Foreign language. But this year they are also saying that the Foreign language test will be replaced by Politics. Anyway, it may be better because it will tremendously reduce the students' and the teacher's burden and worries. But there are always side effects. I would like to wait and see.

Universities in the United States use a variety of

criteria for selecting candidates. Chinese high school students know this fact and envy this very much. How they wish they could be like the American counterparts who are free from all these burdens and worries. In recent years, questions have been raised about the possibilities of incorporating high school records into the selection criteria. Those records may include the student's academic achievement for all three senior years, class rank, various test scores, school activities, and teacher's recommendation letters. If a combination of the records could take up 50 percent of the criteria, it may produce several positive results. First, the pressure of the university entrance examination would not be as overwhelming as it is now. Secondly, it will encourage the students to study hard throughout all their senior high school years rather than just to study for the exam. And thirdly, teachers could do their best to help students obtain an all-around development rather than just teach to the text.

This policy sounds very tempting, but I can foresee some serious problems that would definitely arise. You know, China is a country governed not by Law, but by Power. Those with power have all the means to get what they want. Even at present when the examination system is so stringent and rigid, there are a large number of college students whose test scores are below the minimum passing line but got admitted anyway, simply because they came from families with

some kind of power, or came to the university through the "back door." If this new policy is practiced, backdoorism will run rampant.

If examinations become standardized as in the United States, they may be able to have more than one exam a year. Students can at least choose a time to take the exam when he feels at his best. Standardized tests have their own defects. For instance, they cannot test one's creative and analytical ability. But it may be the best alternative available so far.

Interview Summary

An Associate Professor and in his mid-fifties, Zhu came from a small but prestigious college in the Northeastern China. His reflections reveal that, having taught in the university for over 30 years and having been frequently involved in the admissions activities, he is very knowledgeable about the Chinese admissions policies and very eloquent in his responses.

Zhu thinks that most of the qualification requirements are unnecessary. The age limit requirement has deprived many young people of their right to go to college. The so-called "equivalent diploma" is actually none existent. The requirement of being unmarried is totally meaningless because even the university students are not permitted to marry, let alone high school students. Some of the contents

stipulated in the political requirement are necessary, such as observing school regulations, respecting teachers and not having criminal records. Other requirements which are really political propaganda and ideological indoctrination are too abstract and there is no way to measure them truthfully. The health requirement is too rigid and is therefore unfair because health conditions can preclude one from obtaining a higher education. However, Zhu admits that presently in China, since the higher education is limited to only a small percentage of the applying population and enrollment is so small, better chances should be given to those with brilliant intellect as well as with good health.

On the selection criterion, Zhu thinks that using test scores as the criterion for selection is much fairer than other criteria. The latter will foster backdoorism and cheating. However, this selection criterion is not absolutely fair, because the minimum passing score varies from region to region. The educational opportunities across the nation are far from equal, and candidates from remote areas or from rural areas are at a disadvantage.

For the examination questions, he says that, every year there are some difficult and odd questions that catch the students by surprise. The purpose of these questions is to reduce the number who qualify, which he believes is not a good practice for screening. The politics examination is a real headache to all as it is simply reciting the text.

Students hate both politics courses and politics exams. Other exams are acceptable. The grading involves a great deal of subjectivity.

The policy to balance the national enrollment quota under the present situation is still necessary as it helps to push forward the national education standard as a whole. But its defect is that students across the nation are not treated on an equal footing and a great many candidates lose freedom of choice because of the quota allocation policy.

Zhu thinks that the preliminary examination is absurd because a proportion of students will be denied the chance to sit in for the entrance examination if they failed the preliminary exam. As for the application procedure, Zhu prefers taking the examination before filling out applications because that will enable applicants to file realistic applications and reduce blind guessing and risk.

Zhu believes that the purpose of secondary education should be to raise the cultural and educational quality of the whole nation, and should not be to train students for universities. The teaching method is still the traditional method of "duckfeeding" or "spoonfeeding," and the test score is put above anything else at the neglect of the holistic growth of students. The practice of dividing students into two categories of study is illegal and students and parents hate it, but schools use this method to boost up their enrollment ratio. Consequently, students

master the subjects that are to be tested but discard those that are not.

The pressures on students, teachers and parents are almost unbearable. Cases of physical or mental collapses are many. The real victims are the students themselves. They have endless exercises and homework. Parents are especially worried. There have been too many tragic events of failed students committing suicide or parents abusing their child because they failed.

Zhu suggests that, to reduce the fierce competition, there should be other opportunities of higher learning, such as the television university, after-work university, and self-instructional programs. Enrolling self-supporting students is another way out, but at present, most families cannot afford that.

As for the examination itself, reforms are certainly necessary. Zhu thinks that testing on three subjects is better than on six because it will tremendously reduce the students' worries and burdens.

Comparing the Chinese university admissions policies with the American university admissions practices, Zhu acknowledges the advantages of the diverse admissions standards of American universities, but admits that, as China is a country governed not by Law but by Power, there will be serious problems if other criteria are to be used for candidate selection. For one thing, backdoorism will

run rampant.

For the examination method, Zhu believes that standardized testing is the best alternative available so far though there are certain defects associated with it. Examinations should be offered at least more than once a year. And it would be possible to achieve this if standardized tests are used.

Zhu has some general knowledge about the diverse standards of the U.S. universities in selecting candidates though he admits that he does not know much in detail about the specific requirements in a particular university. Taking the admission policy as a whole and considering the present situation in China, Zhu believes that the current Chinese university admission policy can be portrayed as fair, rational and effective, though there are aspects that are not absolutely fair when considering individual cases. But there are aspects that must be and can be improved. If there is no dramatic change in the political, social, economical and educational change in the society, the current admissions policy should continue to be implemented and reinforced, though changes and reforms are necessary.

Wang

Introduction to Wang

Mr. Wang graduated from a northeastern university in 1960 after 5 years of study, and has been teaching in the

same university ever since. His department, which is the largest department at the university, consists of 15 specialty concentrations with 170 full and associate professors. His university is one of the most prestigious universities across the nation, and is also the one with the largest enrollment.

Currently a visiting scholar at a northeastern American university, Mr. Wang is working on a joint research project between his university and this American university. Having been to the United States several times in the past few years, he seemed to be well-acquainted with the American educational system as well as the American university admissions policies.

Wang's Reflections

On the current admission policies

Age restrictions are quite unreasonable, because it purposefully shuts a great number of people out of consideration. Among those that are shut out, there are bound to be many who could otherwise become graduates with high academic and professional achievements. Under the present age restriction, these people won't have any chance to try. It is unfair to deprive anyone from receiving a higher education. However, the situation in China is different from that in the United States. Students in the U.S. have to pay tuition and fees. In China, higher

education is free. There are more than 300,000 high school graduates, but only a third can go to colleges and universities. On the one hand, those who are older have working and living experiences, but on the other hand they generally have families and other responsibilities. It is difficult for them to keep up with the present teaching methods in universities. Money should not be wasted, especially when the budget is so restrained these years. It is obvious that 40 years olds cannot compete against 20 years olds.

The political requirement is sheer nonsense. There is no necessity to include this as a requirement. The health requirement is necessary for some majors of study. With the present limited enrollment, the opportunity should perhaps be given to those without physical problems.

Generally speaking, using examination scores as the criterion of selection is fair and reasonable, though it may be unfair or unreasonable to some specific individuals. It is much better than recommendations, because there is an objective standard for every one. It is also normal if some of the best high school students fail to get higher scores on the examinations. It is not an ideal system. The enrollment methods in the U.S. universities are better. If you have a good score, you can apply to any university you want. Students can choose the time to take the SAT when they feel at their best. And there are also a variety of

standards for the university to consider when selecting candidates. This practice is only the "beautiful dream" of the Chinese students.

Under the present social conditions, it is much better to have the current examination system in order to objectively select candidates for college. The general academic and knowledge levels of the candidates selected by exams are obviously more reliable and much higher than those selected by recommendations during the Cultural Revolution. Of course, how it could be fairer is another question to be further discussed. Under the present situation, because there are so many students who want to go to college, if there is no exam, the backdoorism will run rampant. So considering this situation, it is really good to have the unified examinations as the standard criterion.

During some years, students had to fill out applications before they took the exams; during other years, students had to take the exams before they could fill out the applications. The State Education Commission was experimenting to find out which method was more appropriate, not merely to the benefits of students, but to the advantage of government management of the enrollment process. Examination before application is better than application before examination, because the latter involves blindness and risk on the part of the applicants.

Filling out the application form involves tremendous

strategy and consultation. It often occurs that if the application preferences were not carefully arranged once the first preference was rejected by one university, it is most likely the second preference would be rejected by another university. This is not because the score was too low for the second preferred university to consider, but because the latter had already fulfilled their enrollment quota when the student's file got to their office.

The scheduled time for the examination is really bad for the students, because July is the hottest season, and there is no air conditioning in any of the exam rooms. But the exams have to be scheduled for those three days because soon after the exam, the summer vacation begins so that teachers can be called to grade the exams.

The pressure on the students is terribly intense. A friend of mine has a son who was one of the best students in the school. But the night before the exam, he couldn't go to sleep, and several sleeping pills didn't help much. The second day he felt dizzy but still had to take the exam. As a result, he did not do well and failed to be admitted to the university that he had hoped to. Cases like this do happen every year, but they constitute only an insignificant percentage. Generally speaking, those who did well in high schools got high scores on the entrance examinations.

People say that what is really intense is not the exam itself but rather the social pressure for success. Who can

afford not to feel intense when his future is entirely dependent on those three days? For many, especially for those from the countryside, this success is the only way to get out of their low social status they were born into.

There are a lot of problems associated with the examination questions. Each year, the difficulty level of the questions varies from the previous years. There is no constant standard. Consequently, many schools ask the candidates to answer all the examination questions from the past ten years as a way of preparation. Some schools compiled the answers to the examination questions in pamphlets for sale. And some teachers became experts at guessing examination questions.

Grading costs a tremendous amount of man power and money. As long as this kind of examination method is used, the present grading method will have to be used. The examination for each subject consists of two parts. The first part consists of objective questions and the second part consists of subjective questions. Even though one teacher grades one question, there are still different standards toward different answers. The prejudice on the part of the grader is inevitable. With the compositions, analysis and commentaries, the discrepancies would be even greater. The grader's personal preference, temperament on a particular day, internal and external disturbances all affect his lenience or strictness on the student's answer.

The purpose of having the source plan for enrollment was to ensure that a certain percentage of candidates were enrolled from areas where the education level is low and backward. If only one selection standard was applied to the whole nation without making location assignment, it is most likely that no student would be enrolled from those areas. As most of the college students will be assigned back to where they came from, there would be no college students to go back to help promote education in those areas. And those areas would remain behind other areas in educational standard. This could produce a vicious circle. The source plan actually helps to balance the education level throughout the nation. One serious defect in this practice is that many candidates with lower scores are admitted from remote areas while many candidates with high scores are rejected from the educationally advanced areas. This is obviously unfair to many students. Perhaps at present the consideration will have to lean towards national balanced education level rather than to individual students.

Enrollment area and number of students to be enrolled are all stipulated during the planning stage by the Central Committee of Planning and State Education Commission. In the United States, candidates can apply to any university and apply to as many universities as they wish, though in the end they will select only one to attend. This is the fairest method on the part of the candidates. In China,

candidates in certain areas can only apply to those universities that are assigned to enroll students in those areas. The students' choice is extremely limited. It is really unfair to those students with high test scores who are ambitious to go to some prestigious universities but are deprived of the right of choice by this location restriction. This restriction is highly unnecessary.

The enrollment procedures differ year from year. Enrollment officials from various universities go to the local offices to check candidate files. At times all the files that reached the minimum admission score were handed over to the university enrollment officials. Some times the scores were grouped into different segments, and only one segment was handed over at a time. Either way, there were ample opportunities for backdoorism. Both the university officials and the local officials could "legally" enroll some who had a slightly lower score but whom they know at the sacrifice of others with a higher score. The human factor is a serious hindrance to a fair enrollment.

On its impact on secondary education

All high school students study for the examination, and even live for the examination. From their childhood and during their elementary years, they begin to feel the burden or pressure. Those from the rural areas study especially hard, because once they are enrolled to a college, their whole life will be changed -- from working on the farm in

the countryside to working in the city. If they should fail on the exams, they will have to stay and work on the farm for life. In recent years, the percentage of candidates from the countryside has been steadily increasing, because they saw the exam as a "life-death struggle".

The method of teaching is still what is called "ducking feeding," "spoon feeding," and rote memorization. Parents would teach their children to recite classical poems and lyrics at a very young age though they know that the children did not understand anything about the poems or lyrics. This is traditional "forced learning without comprehension."

Teachers teach to the test. Though there is not much discrepancy between the principal syllabus and the exam range, teachers devote most of their instruction time to the study of possible examination range and questions to the extent that the principal syllabus is entirely neglected. Looking at these young kids bearing such heavy mental and physical burden, you really feel pitiful and sympathetic for them. Teachers and parents feel the pressure too, but they cannot afford to do otherwise. A child's future is more important than anything else. This is one of the reasons why tragedies occur every year.

It is really absurd to judge a teacher's competence and performance by the ratio of his students enrolled in college. Enrollment ratio is associated with the teachers'

pay raise, bonus, honor, and promotion. The teachers' knowledge and experience are being used as commodities for sale.

The secondary education curriculum stipulates that the purpose of education is to foster an overall development in every student. The practice now is just a partial development. From the first senior high school year (10th grade), students are divided into liberal arts classes and natural science classes. Students have to set their aim from the start of their first senior high school year. And in many cases, the teachers make decisions for them, some against their will. Those attending liberal arts classes do not study subjects in natural sciences, and vice versa. Students have to give up some learning in order to gain more time to study other subjects better. As a result, students are knowledgeable about some subjects but destitute about other subjects which they should otherwise have learned in high school.

Most high schools finish the three years' curriculum within two years so that the third year is exclusively used for preparation of the unified entrance examination. The examinations of previous years are generally assigned as homework. For the graduating students there is virtually no difference between weekdays and weekends, workdays and holidays. This is probably the busiest, most worrisome, and most difficult year in their whole life.

Suggestions for change

In China, the educational system is closely connected with the social and political system. If the educational system remains unchanged, very little can be done to reform the university admission policies, though every aspect of it needs change and reform. But under the present educational system, only some of the technical aspects are possible.

As far as the examination is concerned, we can probably try standardized tests. Time should be flexible so that students can choose the time that best suits their interests. Political and ideological qualifications should be abolished from the qualification requirements. In the past, students from the families of "five bad categories" were not permitted to apply. Today, the so-called "bad elements" and "counter-revolutionaries" are not permitted to apply. This is one reflection of the so-called "proletarian dictatorship."

The politics course is entirely unnecessary. The purpose of the course is not to gain knowledge but to learn the Party's political lines and government policies. Both the teaching and learning aspects are just memorizing the texts. That's why the politics course is sarcastically called the "parrot learning to talk" course. It is purely a waste of time, waste of resources, waste of money, and waste of intelligence. From elementary schools to graduate studies, the same topics are repeated again and again. The

materials on Current News and Events are especially disgusted by all because throughout, there is only one theme, that is, how correct the Party and the Chinese Government are and have been. During the politics examination, students are not allowed to write what they really think, but only what they are taught to think. Subjects like Marxist Theories and the History of International Communism are a headache to both the teacher and students. This policy is nothing but a policy of obscurantism.

The examination is necessary. All the subjects, except the politics, should be tested on. Under the present condition, the examination is perhaps the only effective way to eliminate or reduce enrollment through bribery, corruption, backdoorism, filthy patronage, and abuse of power.

Self-supported enrollment is now being practiced on a small scale on a trial basis at some universities. This is a good start, but problems have already appeared. Our salary is terribly too low, and farmers do not have salaries at all. With the exception of those with money and power, most families cannot afford the proposed tuition and fees. The present distribution system is unfair, and people are seriously exploited by the government. Unless the distribution system is changed, other changes are virtually impossible.

At present, the government decides how many and where a university will enroll new students. The university only has the authority to decide whom to enroll. The plan is really made by the State, and the State allocates the budget according to this plan. The university should be granted more authority in the whole enrollment process.

Interview Summary

An associate professor and in his mid-fifties, Mr. Wang seems to have profound knowledge about the current Chinese university admissions policies as well as the U.S. university admissions procedures and standards. Well-versed and eager to talk, Wang readily expressed his views in a straight-forward manner.

On the current admissions policy, Wang gave many negative remarks. He believes that the age restriction is unreasonable because it purposefully shuts a great number of people out of consideration. The political requirement, to him, is sheer nonsense, and there is no need to include this as a requirement. The health requirement is necessary only for some special majors of study but not for all.

He thinks that using the examination score as the criterion for selection is fair and reasonable because this is an objective standard for every one, though it may be unfair or unreasonable to some specific individuals. It is much better than using recommendations. Under the present

situation, it is really good to have the unified examination as the standard criterion.

He prefers taking the examination before applying because this procedure reduces the blindness and risk on the part of the applicants.

The time of the examination is really bad for the students, but it is difficult to set the exams on other times. The pressure on the students is terribly intense. He believes that, generally, the examination score reflects one's ability and knowledge.

There are a lot of problems associated with the examination questions. The difficulty level varies year from year, and there are no constant standards. Grading costs a tremendous amount of man power and money. The bias and prejudice on the part of the grader is inevitable.

Wang thinks that the source plan policy is necessary because it helps to balance the education level across the nation. Otherwise there would be a vicious cycle. But he admits that this policy is unfair to many. The location restriction is highly unnecessary, as it extremely limits the applicants' choices. Throughout the enrollment process, the "human factor" interferes and proves to be a serious hindrance to a fair enrollment.

The purpose of secondary education should be to foster a holistic development in every student. The impact of the current admissions policies is that all the high school

students are studying for the examination and even live for the examination. Students feel the pressure from their childhood and elementary years. To many the exam really is a "life and death struggle."

The method of teaching is "duckfeeding" and rote memorization. Teachers teach for the test and students learn for the test. Students are bearing a heavy mental and physical burden. The principal syllabus is entirely neglected.

Wang argues that it is really absurd to judge a teacher's competence and performance by the ratio of his students enrolled to college. The teachers' knowledge and experience are being used as commodities for sale.

As for changes, Wang admits that as long as the educational system remains unchanged, very little can be done to reform the current policies, though every aspect of it needs change and reform. At present, only technical aspects can be considered for a change.

As for the examination, Wang prefers standardized tests over the current method. Time should be flexible. Political and ideological qualifications should be abolished from the qualification requirements.

The politics course is entirely unnecessary and it is purely a waste of time, waste of money, and waste of intelligence. This policy is nothing but a policy of "mind control."

The examination is necessary. All the subjects, except the politics, should be tested. Using the test score for selection is perhaps the only effective way to eliminate or reduce enrollment through malpractice. Self-supported enrollment is good but unlikely, because people's salaries are much too low to afford the tuition and fees. Wang hopes that universities should be granted more authority in the whole enrollment process.

Feng

Introduction to Feng

Mr. Feng went to a southwestern teachers university in 1984 and graduated in 1988 with a BA degree in social sciences. He was then assigned to teach as a full-time faculty member in at the same university. With a total enrollment of over 3000, this University is the second-largest in the province. Every year, the university enrolls between 750 to 800 new students. This university is basically a provincial university. All the students are provincial residents, and upon graduation, they will be assigned to work in various schools within the province.

Enrollment in the University in the recent years has run into serious difficulties. Because of the low salary, poor living conditions, limited benefits for the teachers as compared with other professions, high school graduates are very reluctant to apply to various Teacher's Colleges and

Universities. Applicants from the cities are especially rare as they don't want to be assigned to teach in rural areas. Consequently, most of the applicants are from the countryside.

Feng has taught for three years, and came to the United States in the Spring of 1990. At age of 28, he is now pursuing an MA degree in social sciences in an American southeastern university.

Feng's Reflections

On the current admission policies

The age restrictions are really for the benefit of the graduating high school students. Because all the high school graduates are well under the age limit, only the earlier graduates will be eliminated from applying. Graduating students generally welcome this age limit because it reduces enrollment competition. But of course it is unfair. Once someone passes the age limit, he will never have a chance to compete, let alone be enrolled. However, in reality, even without the age limit, the competition will not increase much. The fact has been that the longer it has been since one has graduated from high school, the less likely that he will get a high score in the exam and the less likely he will get admitted by a university. Therefore, it is unnecessary to set it explicitly as a qualification requirement.

The political requirement is really absurd and ridiculous. How can the teenagers understand the Marxist Theories and Dialectic Materialism, and why should they when there is so much basic knowledge to learn? It has no practical use. It is the method of the Communist Party for ideological indoctrination. Instructors teach and students memorize, all for the sole purpose of passing the politics exam. It is really boring and suffering to read the Politics textbooks, but every one has to study hard in order to get a good score.

Physical conditions are important. Graduating students must pass the health standards. But virtually all the students will pass whether they can really pass or not. No school is so stupid as to preclude any of its own graduates from applying to college simply because he or she has failed to jump high enough or far enough to reach the standard. But it's necessary to set certain standards. Those with serious illnesses should be discouraged to apply. The limited opportunities should be given to those with good health. Handicapped applicants with extreme talents should be permitted to apply to some majors that are appropriate for their physical conditions.

Using only the test score for selection is not an ideal method, and there are a lot of problems associated with it. But it is probably the most applicable, realistic, and fairest method that could be employed in the present China.

Other methods or criteria are virtually non-existent. Take recommendation for example. Wide discrepancies exist between schools with regard to standards of education, quality of students, and strengths of faculty. There is no standardized criterion for evaluating students' academic and social performance. Backdoorism will run wild. Also, it is most likely that teachers will give good recommendations to all the students with the hope of increasing enrollment rate. Some teachers will perhaps give good recommendations to low academic achievers for fear that their parents may otherwise come to school to make trouble.

It's impossible to keep records of students' GPA, as at present there are no standardized tests. Even if there were, the reported GPA would not be reliable for the same reason that teachers would deliberately assign a higher GPA to every student in order to beat other classes or other schools once the GPA is used as part of the selection criteria.

However, the award of bonus points to excellent students is an applicable method of encouraging students to study well throughout their high school years. Excellent students of the province could be awarded 20 bonus points each, and excellent students of the district could be awarded 10 bonus points each. These points would be added to their total exam score so that they would get a better chance to be admitted. But the percentage of the excellent

students to the graduating population will become another topic for debate.

Because the educational levels across the nation differ widely, it is rare to find applicants with very high scores in remote areas. As key universities are required to enroll a certain number of students from some remote areas, they have to choose between those whose total test score is above the minimum acceptance score requirement. Consequently, enrolled students from remote areas may be 100 or even 200 points below the applicants from advanced areas who have been rejected due to quota limitations. This is obviously very unfair on the part of the latter. But on the other hand, students from remote areas got lower scores, not because they have lower intelligence or inferior IQ, but because they did not have the opportunity to experience a better education as those from advanced areas did.

In remote areas and provinces, educational opportunities, instructional facilities, teaching qualities and cultural environments, are all inferior and inadequate. Students, however, may be as brilliant as others. Given equal opportunities, students from remote areas may do as well as those in advanced areas. Once enrolled in college, these students may compete from a disadvantageous position. But facts show that background would no longer be a factor affecting one's academic achievement, and no differences could be detected between students from different locations

by the time of graduation. So the score difference is partly caused by individual student's intelligence, and partly caused by the specific local educational conditions.

On its impact on secondary education

Upon entering senior high school, students bury themselves in books day and night. One purpose of secondary education is supposed to promote intermediate education so that graduates will be able to find appropriate jobs and establish themselves in the society. For that purpose, students should get an all-around basic education as well as some necessary knowledge and skill, enabling them to find a place in the society. But in reality, secondary education exists virtually for the sole purpose of promoting students to college. The higher the promotion rate, the better the reputation of the school and the higher the honor for the teacher. Promotion to college is the focus and everything else receives little consideration.

Teaching methods are also adjusted to serve this purpose. Whatever method of teaching that could obtain the highest promotion rate would be adopted. Spoon-feeding is the universal method. Teaching to the test and for the test is a common practice in all the senior high schools. It is also an established practice that exam papers of the previous years are compiled together and assigned as homework for the graduating students. It is impossible to

finish the endless homework, reference materials and examination guides. You can imagine how hard it is to finish three years's work within two years. The third year is spent exclusively on preparation for the exam. Students suffer terribly. They are victims of the current admission policy.

Parents feel the pressure too. Seeing their children working so desperately, the parents have mixed feelings. On the one hand, they encourage their children to study hard and hope their children exceed, because this is the only way to get access to a better future. On the other hand, they feel guilty and heart-broken and wish they could do otherwise to reduce their children's suffering and pain.

Schools and teachers are also affected by the pressure to succeed. Teachers' income and bonus pay, the reputation of the school and future enrollment of the school, are all closely related to the promotion rate of the school. That's why the District Bureau of Education puts pressure on schools, principals on teachers, and teachers on students. Students naturally have to shoulder the multi-dimensional pressure.

The impact on the society is both positive and negative. For the positive side, the competition stimulates education and learning. For the negative side, it produces a heavy burden on all people involved. The competition has caused so much effort, involves so much man power, brought

about so much impact on secondary education, and produced so much harmful pressure on students' mental and physical growth.

This is a helpless situation. Just like thousands of men trying to walk across a narrow bridge at the same time, everybody wants to squeeze others down the river so that he can safely pass through. Unless the bridge is rebuilt wider and more bridges are built, there will be no way to reduce the competition.

Suggestions for change

The unmarried status requirement is meaningless and therefore unnecessary. It is unlikely that a senior high school student has even gotten married. It is really far-fetched to use this requirement to discourage an early marriage. The politics exam can be entirely abolished. Attitude to and understanding of the Party's ideology and government's policies should not be used as standards to judge applicants' eligibility to college education. Even general philosophy is not an appropriate subject on the test because it is in not everybody's interest. What's more, politics tests only force students to tell lies against their conscience. Other subjects test students' basic knowledge and problem-solving skills, and should be retained.

The practice of dividing students into liberal arts and

physics-engineering classes is not a good practice because it encourages students to give up certain necessary knowledge which they should learn in their high school years. Modern science development has shown that different areas of knowledge are now integrated and affect each other. One cannot be a good scientist or professional if he does not understand anything outside his main area of specialty. The early division into specialty classes could result in a rich knowledge in one area and an extreme poverty of knowledge in other areas. This won't do any good to both the individual and the society as a whole.

The state mandatory enrollment plan often lacks rationality. However, due to the present conditions, there is no other good alternative. Without this plan, some regions would never have high school graduates that could be admitted to college. This plan aims at a national balance. Candidates from the remote areas or countryside normally have lower scores, not because they have lower IQ or did not study hard enough, but because their educational conditions were very inferior to other areas. They are victims of the present educational and social system. Though the enrolment plan has certain blindness and subjectivity, it is a necessary means to reduce the error resulting from the test score differences.

The memory of those examination days are still fresh in my mind. Those were the most memorable days of my life, but

not in a positive way. During the whole period of preparation and examination, most students lost lots of weight. The pressure is immense. Parents share the same pressure. The teachers both put pressure on students as well as shouldering the pressure put on them by the competition. The examination method itself adds to the pressure, and students have to be mentally and physically strong to survive it. The time of the exam is very bad, because the three examination days are the hottest of the year. It is difficult for many people to imagine how miserable it is to sit in a fanless classroom for five hours a day for a total of three days, struggling to do their best to survive the ordeal.

Using the test score as the only criterion for selection is not an ideal way of selecting good students. Other qualifications should be considered too, such as achievements during all the three high school years. However, this is extremely difficult if not entirely impossible. Using the test score alone for selection has already involved a tremendous amount of work. If other difficult-to-judge criteria were added, the amount of work and cost involved would go well beyond anybody's imagination. With millions of students competing for college, and with a very low enrollment ratio, the state has more than enough candidates to choose the best for college by using the test score alone. Why should the State take

the trouble to consider the other criteria?

It would be ideal if China could follow the way of the American universities for admitting students. College entrance examination and college enrollment should be separated. Once students get their test scores, they can apply to whichever university they want to, and the university decides who to admit or reject. However, just like any other change, problems will come up. Backdoorism, cheating, bribery and threat, would be very difficult to deal with. Also, it is not easy to be fair and efficient.

In the U.S., students have complete freedom to choose where and when to go to college and what to study. In China, everything is restricted. If a person failed or missed this year's exam, he will have a very slim chance of success if he tries again next year. Once the major is chosen prior the exam, the major can never be changed. This is closely related with the social system. In college, one cannot change his major, and after graduation, one cannot change his work. There is no freedom, only restrictions.

In the U.S., everybody has an equal chance to compete. In China, equality to compete does not exist. The social system has favored some and restricted others. For example, according to the present law, people born in the countryside have to stay and work on the farm their entire lives. It is illegal to try to go to work in the cities or in other places. For these people, there is only one way to get out

of the farm and that is to go to college. That's why farmers have to try extremely hard to compete against the fate which is unfavorable to them whereas sons and daughters of high officials enjoy privilege in life and also enjoy advantages in going to college, even with a very low test score. The backdoor is always open to those with power and authority.

Just as there is no fairness and equality in the social system, there is no fairness and equality in the entire college admission process. If the political, economical, social, and educational systems remain unchanged, very little change can be expected on the university admission policies.

Interview Summary

Under 30 and a degree seeking student, Feng came from a small provincial university that enrolls all its students from within the province. The majority are from the rural regions. He has taught at the university for two years, but has never been personally involved in the university enrollment process. Thoughtful and outspoken, he seems to be quite critical on various topics of concern.

He thinks it is unnecessary to set the age limit so explicitly. The political requirement is really absurd and ridiculous, and has no practical use. It is only a method for ideological indoctrination. Politics classes are really

boring and suffering. The unmarried status requirement is meaningless and therefore unnecessary.

He is of the view that physical conditions are important and it is necessary to set some health standards. Those with serious illnesses should be discouraged from applying, and the limited opportunities should be given to those with good health.

Using only the test score for selection is not an ideal method, but it is probably the most applicable, realistic, and fairest method at present. Other methods, such as recommendations, GPA and high school records are not reliable. He feels strongly that excellent students should be awarded bonus points as an encouragement of their involvement in school activities.

As for the examination, Feng laments that the method produces too much pressure and the timing is very bad. Most student cannot perform their best under such conditions. He prefers standardized tests which can be offered several times a year. The suffering is still fresh in his memory, and he thinks that students should take three tests as opposed to six.

The quota allocation policy is very unfair as far as the individual is concerned but the policy aims to improve the educational conditions of the poor regions. The discrepancy in test scores is not due to the students' intelligence but to educational opportunities. It is

necessary to have this quota allocation policy to remedy this imbalance.

Fen feels very strongly that the purpose of secondary education should be to promote intermediate level education so that graduates will be able to find appropriate jobs and establish themselves in the society. Now, secondary education exists for the sole purpose of promoting students to college.

The spoon-feeding is the universal method of teaching, and the purpose of instruction is to the test and for the test. There are endless homework and exercises. Students suffer terribly under pressure to succeed. Parents have mixed feelings. Schools and teachers feel great pressure too because their reputation and personal interest is closely related with the enrollment rate. The impact on society is both positive and negative. For the former, competition stimulates education and learning; for the latter, it produces a heavy burden on all people involved. The practice of dividing students into two categories is not a good practice because it encourages students to give up basic knowledge.

Feng feels strongly that the state mandatory enrollment plan lacks rationality, but at present he can't think of another alternative. The quota allocation policy aims at a national balance. Because of the different educational standards, it is necessary to give consideration to remote

and rural regions.

Using the test score as the only criterion for selection is not an ideal method. Other criteria should be considered too. But this is extremely difficult if not entirely impossible at present. Too many problems will arise, and it will be difficult to make it fair and sufficient.

In China everything is restricted, and students don't have much freedom. Feng speaks highly of the college admissions policies in the United States, where everybody has an equal chance to compete. In China, the social system has favored some and restricted others. Feng concludes with a helpless feeling that, just as there is no fairness and equality in the social system in China, there is no fairness and equality in the entire enrollment process. Very little change can be expected if the political and social system remains unchanged.

Ji

Introduction to Ji

Mr. Ji went to a southeastern teachers' university in 1978, and after four years of study, was assigned to teach at the same university. This university has thirteen departments with a total enrollment of over 5,000. Every year, the university enrolls about 1,000 freshmen as well as over a hundred in-service elementary and high school

teachers who come to the university for academic improvement. This is a big local university. All of its students come from the municipal region, and when they graduate, they will be assigned to work in local schools. Mr. Ji taught for four years until 1986 when he came to the United States to pursue a Master's Degree.

Ji's Reflections

On the current admission policies

In China, applicants have to meet the specified academic, physical, and political qualifications in order to be permitted to sit in for the entrance examination. From the point of view of the State, the purpose of the higher educational institution is to train advanced personnel for the country. It is therefore necessary to select the best from the qualified population in order to achieve the best results. As far as learning efficiency is concerned, younger and unmarried candidates are superior than older and/or married people. The best age for professional achievement is after the age of 40. If one goes to a university under 23 years of age, then after 4 years of undergraduate study, 2 years of Master's study, 4 years of Doctoral study and a few years of transitional and experimental work and research, he would just reach his golden age for professional achievement. If one goes to college after 30, marries and has a child, it would be very

difficult for him to compete with his young colleagues.

The purpose of education is different from culture to culture. Here in the United States, the purpose of learning is for self-enrichment and self-enlightenment, whereas in China the purpose of learning is for training talented personnel for the country. As the government supports all the college students, it is natural that the government should establish a set of standards for selecting candidates for college, though these standards seem rather unfair from the point of view of the applicants.

Using the test score of only one exam for candidate selection is certainly not the best method, but at present it is perhaps the most applicable. School grades are an important factor, but it is difficult to incorporate them into selection criteria. Under the present admission policy, the enrollment rate of a school is extremely important to its reputation and benefits. Every school is already competing fiercely to increase its enrollment rate. If a student's school grades are to be incorporated into selection criteria, it is predictable that every school will give high grades to every student in order to increase his probability of getting enrolled. The case is similar with GPA. What's more, there is no national norm or unified standards for reference. As the educational level differs from school to school and region to region, a "B" in this school may actually be better than an "A" in another school.

So, if school grades or GPAs are also used for selection, they can only help to create a mess rather than be an improvement.

The present method of examination is really harmful to students' health as well as ability to learn. The three examination days are extremely intense. It actually tests students' mental and physical strength to withstand pressure. Many collapse right after the examinations. The time of the examination cannot be worse. Those are three of the hottest days of the year. There are no air conditioners and no fans in the examination rooms. It is not rare to see some students faint during the middle of the examination. Of course, from the government's stand, this is the best time because the summer vacation has just begun, school classrooms become available to be used as examination sites, and teachers can be mobilized to supervise the exam and then grade the papers before they start their vacation. This timing has saved the government lots of trouble and money. However, students become its victims.

Generally speaking, the enrollment plan never works satisfactorily. It has long been a problem that under the enrolment plan, some areas of specialty have more college graduates than the society needs while some other areas of specialty fail to provide enough graduates to meet the needs of the society. Under the present economic and educational system, nothing can be well planned, but everything is

planned. The result is an imbalance of supply and demand in every aspect of life. For example, if a university has a strong faculty team in a specialty, it normally enrolls more students for this specialty. But the demand of the society for this specialty happens to be small, and some of the graduates cannot be assigned an appropriate job. As a result, they will have to be assigned to a job that has little to do with their specialty. This is one of the negative consequences of the planning.

The mandatory enrollment plan, naturally, could affect the quality of the enrollment as candidates enrolled from backward areas may not be as good as those rejected from advanced areas. But it helps to balance the national education level and helps to improve the conditions of the backward areas. So the question becomes which is more important, the former or the latter. Obviously the latter. A recent survey shows that some counties and regions in remote areas don't even have one candidate enrolled in college. In addition, they don't have one college graduate working there. So, it is necessary to take some mandatory measures to help these backward areas develop.

The present enrollment method has certain advantages. For one thing, the candidates are not involved in the process. Universities send admissions personnel to various provinces to examine candidates' files and, based on the test score and with reference to school performance, the

personnel decides whom to enroll. Though cheating and backdoorism cannot be entirely eliminated, they are actually reduced to a minimum. The methods that U.S. universities use to admit students, unfortunately, cannot be practiced in China. There would be no way to deal with cheating and backdoorism if such methods were adopted.

The present process is that the candidates fill in the Application Form before taking the examinations. In the Application Form, the candidates have to declare their majors of study, and once the Application Form is approved, the declared majors can never be changed. The declaration of major involves a certain degree of blindness and risk. For instance, if one wants to major in chemistry, he would declare chemistry as his major on the Application Form. Then if he fails to get a high score on the chemistry exam, but instead, gets a very high score in physics, he will not be accepted to study chemistry, because of his low test score in chemistry. He will not be accepted to study physics either, because he did not declare physics as his major. As a result, he will be rejected by all, though his total score well passes the minimum enrollment requirement.

On the impact on secondary education

The college entrance examination functions like a conductor's baton, and everybody involved must follow its direction. Every year soon after the examination, high

school teachers will come together to discuss and analyze the examination questions in order to better prepare their students for next year's exam. The methods of learning and teaching have been seriously influenced by it. The last year of the senior high school is generally devoted to a sea of exercises. No school follows the normal syllabus, because if it does, the students will not do as well on the entrance examination as others who don't follow the syllabus.

Students and teachers only pay attention to those subjects on which they are to be tested. Rote memorization is the most widely used method, and perhaps the best method to deal with the present entrance examination system. The system being such, you cannot blame the teachers and students for giving up their normal syllabus.

The division of students into liberal arts and physics-engineering classes is for the sole purpose of getting a better score on the examination. This is certainly not good for the holistic growth of the students. Students do not study the subjects that are not going to be tested on. Consequently, students in one category know little or nothing about subjects taught for students of other categories. It is a common phenomenon for a liberal arts student to be entirely ignorant about basic chemistry or physics, or vice versa.

Where there is competition, there is pressure. And the university entrance examination is perhaps an extreme case,

as its result determines the future of one's whole life. However, one can take the exam for the second time if he failed the first time. The problem is that the second try generally promises much less chance of success than the first try. That's why the pressure is so heavy and so tense.

The teachers feel the pressure too. The society judges the quality of a school by its enrollment rate. Junior high school graduates compete to go to senior high schools with a higher enrollment rate. If a normal high school can considerably improve its enrollment rate, it will be promoted to the key school status, which means more honor, a higher salary, and better working conditions. Money is not the main stimulation for improving enrollment rate. To most teachers, honor and reputation are more important.

Parents both share the pressure and put on the pressure at the same time beginning from their children's early school years. They want their children to go to a good elementary school in order for them to go to a good high school later. Every parent wants his child to get all A's and to be at the top of the class. Those whose children have a lower intellect or IQ have the same high expectations and put on the same pressure, which often results in tragedy when their children fail to reach the goals. Much ado results in nothing. This has become a social question.

Theoretically, everybody has an equal chance for

competition, and everybody is equal in front of the test. But the fact is, not everybody has an equal access to a good education, and the starting point of the competition is not the same. Those from the countryside, from the mountains, from the remote areas, from the backward regions, and from low-income families, generally have inferior educational opportunities and learning conditions. Therefore, they are at a great disadvantage against those from the cities. In essence, the present enrollment system is unfair. Another unfair situation is produced by the mandatory enrollment plan. Many city candidates with higher scores are rejected while rural candidates with lower scores are accepted. This is because of the mandatory enrollment plan which sets specific quotas for specific areas and regions.

Suggestions for change

The State's enrollment plan should be adjusted to reflect the real conditions of qualified candidate sources as well as the social demands. The enrollment quota for the advanced areas should be increased so that more students with high scores can be enrolled. For the interests of the whole country, it is necessary to set aside a quota for backward areas and regions. There are actually no absolute standards to judge the fairness or unfairness of a system or practice.

Age restriction should be extended. Twenty-three years

of age is not rational. There is a sound reason for requiring unmarried status, but it should be flexible so that exceptions could be made for those who did not have the opportunity to go to college in the past but have now though married. The political requirement is entirely false and meaningless. It makes the politics examination politicized, and the result is that students dare not say what they really think but only say what the government wants to hear. It should be either abolished or modified. The health requirement should be flexible too, so that more students can be permitted to have a try. There are some handicapped people who are really talented. They should be permitted to compete for some appropriate majors.

Other criteria other than the test score are difficult to be used for selection even if they account for only 40 or 30 percent. Cheating and favoritism are unavoidable if such factors as yearly grades and GPA are used. Nobody can deny that an A average through all the high school years is a much more reliable indicator than the one-time test score for judging a student. Unfortunately, there is no possibility in the near future to see this factor fully implemented during the enrollment process.

Standardized tests have certain drawbacks. Students who are weak in creativity and expression benefit tremendously from multiple choice questions. A variety of types of questions should be used so that various abilities

of the students are tested. However, this has defects too, as it costs lots of money and man power to grade the subjective portion of the paper.

The present syllabus is applicable except for the politics course. At present, this course centers mainly around the Party's ideology and policy. Students can only memorize and recite the textbook but can not say what they think. It does not test one's ability in observation, argumentation and analysis. All it tests in one's memory. It forces students to tell lies, and it has been a headache for both the instructor and the learner. For example, nobody dares to deviate from the official version on such topics as the History of the Chinese Communist Party, History of the International Communism, Marxist Theory, and Dialectical Materialism, though these topics are quite controversial. The word Politics in the minds of the Chinese only means an ideology to suppress the dissident voice and therefore a tool for class struggle, rather than the science to manage the government. Since the politics course does the students no good, it really should be abolished or at least reformed. For instance, those topics that serve the Party's ideological indoctrination should be removed, and topics such as basic ethics, major historical, current events, and science of government management, should be added.

Division of students into the two categories should not

be too early. Students should choose their majors and minors during the second year. The third year would be most appropriate for division, because by then students would have learned the basic knowledge of all the minor subjects. Those students who fail the minors should become ineligible for the college entrance examination. In this way, students would be required and encouraged to study all the subjects, while laying due emphasis on their majors.

Reducing the examination subjects from six to three, as is suggested by some people in China, would not be a good idea. It would have no obvious positive effects, as it would not reduce the pressure on students because competition is still as fierce as before. Rather, it has some obvious defects. First, it encourages students to abandon more subjects; second, the exam questions of the three subjects will become increasingly difficult; and thirdly, students whose interests are outside the three subjects will be at a great disadvantage. So, if the exam is necessary, six subjects are better and fairer than just three.

The present examination system is closely related to and based on the present political and social system. The method of the examination has hundreds of years of history. These two factors make any change extremely difficult. There is no denial that the present university admission policy and practice has many defects and shortcomings, some really serious. But considering all the present political,

social, economical, and educational factors, one must admit that there is really no better alternative at the moment. As far as higher education is concerned, the United States practices universal education, while China practices elite education. In the U.S., an individual chooses whether to go or not to go to college, while in China an individual is chosen, or not chosen, by the State to go to college. Of course, the former has overwhelming advantages over the latter, but unless the Chinese social system changes, or China becomes rich and developed economically, no major changes can be expected in the future.

Interview Summary

A little over thirty, Mr. Ji came from a teacher's university which is a big regional institution for training teachers for secondary and elementary schools. Most of the students are enrolled from the Southeast Region of China. Ji has taught for four years, and has twice participated in grading the entrance examinations.

As for the candidate qualifications, Ji explained that as the government finances all the students, it is natural that the government establish a set of standards for selecting candidates for college. From the point of the view of the applicants, however, these standards seem rather unfair.

Using the test score of one exam for candidate

selection is certainly not the best method, but at present it is the most practical. As educational qualities differ so widely from region to region, other criteria, such as high school grades or GPA, are difficult to compare. Also, there is no national norm or unified standard for reference.

Ji asserts that the enrollment plan never works satisfactorily. Under the present economic and educational system, nothing can be well planned, although everything is planned. The result is the imbalance of supply and demand.

The mandatory enrollment plan affects the quality of the enrollment, but it is necessary to take mandatory measures to help backward regions to develop.

The present method of selection has certain advantages, such as the elimination of backdoorism. The process of declaring a major involves a certain degree of blindness and risk on the part of the applicants. The selection methods used in the U.S. universities cannot be practiced in China at present.

The division of students into two categories is certainly not good for the holistic growth of the students to the point that many important subjects are neglected. But it is necessary. However, the division shouldn't occur too early.

The university entrance examination puts extreme pressure on students as its result determines one's future. The pressure is also very heavy on teachers, as the society

judges the quality of a school by its enrolment rate. Money, however, is not the main stimulation for improving enrollment rate; honor and reputation are more important. Parents both share the pressure and put more pressure on their children at the same time.

Theoretically, everyone is equal in front of the test but in reality, not everyone has an equal access to a good secondary education. From that point of view, Ji thinks that the present enrollment system is unfair, and the state mandatory enrollment plan also sets up unfair conditions for selection.

However, Ji thinks that quota allocation is necessary in order to help the backward regions develop on the same pace as the cities. He suggests that the state enrollment plan be adjusted to reflect the real conditions of qualified candidate sources as well as social demands.

Age restriction is necessary but should be extended and flexible. There is a sound reason for requiring unmarried status but it should be flexible too. The political requirement is entirely false and meaningless, and it should either be abolished or modified. The health requirement should be flexible too.

Other criteria besides the test score are difficult to incorporate into the selection standard, though they might be more reliable. The standardized test has certain drawbacks. A variety of types of questions should be used

so that various abilities of the students are fairly and objectively tested. The present secondary syllabus is applicable except for the politics course which should be removed or reformed. Reducing the examination subjects from six to three is not a good idea, as it won't reduce the pressure on students because the competition is still the same. Rather, it has obvious defects. Because of the social and political system and its historical background, the current examination method is extremely difficult to change. At the present time, there is no better alternative or substitute.

The United States practices universal education whereas China practices elitist education. In the United States, candidates choose and decide for themselves but in China government makes decisions for the students, from their enrollment through their graduation. Ji concludes that unless there is change in the larger system, no major changes in the admissions policy can be expected in the near future.

Jia

Introduction to Jia

Mr. Jia went to a southwestern university in 1978 and graduated in 1982 with a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Management. Since then, he has been teaching at the same university. With an enrollment of over 6000 and an

admission rate of about 1000, his university is considered one of the best in the southwest region of China. Most of the students are enrolled from the southwestern regions of the country, and are assigned back to their original regions to work. Mr. Jia has been personally involved in the enrollment processes a few times in the past and is well acquainted with the Chinese admission policies and procedures. He came to the United States in 1989 as an exchange scholar.

Jia's Reflections

On the current admission policies

It has been a consistent policy of the Party and the Government that students must be qualified "ethically, intellectually, and physically." It is necessary to set some general requirements on students' moral character such as no crime records and no violation of disciplines. As far as politics is concerned, high school students are too immature to understand the full meaning of those abstract theories. As for the Party's policies, as long as you do not voice your opposition aloud, you will be considered as endorsing, supporting, and complying with them. A person's ethical character and his political awareness are two entirely different things, but in China, especially when evaluating candidate's qualifications, these two concepts are often mixed into one.

According to the current admission policy, candidates must be politically qualified, which means that they must "love the Communist Party, uphold the socialist system, and adhere to Marxist world outlook." This also means that they must criticize capitalist ideology and do away with individualism and liberalism. In reality, however, this requirement has no concrete effect on candidates. As all the teachers want their students to go to college, all recommendation and evaluation letters are well-versed so as to head off any political troubles.

What really matters is the test score. Normally, the enrollment personnel would look at the total test score first, then the test score of particular subjects. The next thing they would look at is whether the candidates have had any awards or disciplinary punishments. These factors are more important than the so-called "political conscience" or "political behavior" of a candidate. In recent years, honor students are awarded 10 extra points that can be added to their total test score. I think this is a good policy. Honor students, who generally achieved top academic standing and at the same time took active part in school activities, have sacrificed their time for the benefit of the school. They should be encouraged and acknowledged.

Age restriction should be extended and flexible. Facts show that age is not an absolute factor in predicting a person's potentiality in achievement. However, what

actually happens is that students normally graduate from senior high schools at 18, and after three tries and failures, it is highly unlikely that they will try for the fourth time though they are only 21. Those who have passed the age limit but want to have a try constitute a very small percentage. They should be encouraged rather than discouraged. Their efforts deserve support rather than denial.

No high school student can get permission to marry. The requirement for unmarried status is still in effect simply because the State wants to discourage early marriage. It is widely believed that married students, apart from their own family burdens, would also have negative influence on other students. This is a misconception. These people generally have higher expectations and work harder than most of the younger students. To preclude them from competition is unreasonable and should be changed.

Some specialties of study have their characteristics and often demand physical fitness, such as geology and exploration, and therefore it is necessary to set some special requirements for candidates' physical conditions. But for many other fields of study, I don't think health condition is of tremendous importance. Candidates with some physical defects such as a high degree of near-sightedness, facial scar, low height and slight, would most likely be rejected. This is too prejudicial. These people may have

already been prejudiced against in high school. They are not handicapped. The handicapped people won't have any chance at all.

However, the universities' position is easily understood. If they take the courage to enroll these people, they will face tremendous difficulty at the time of graduation and job assignment. To avoid this trouble, all the universities would rather select candidates without these physical defects. But as far as the policy is concerned, physical requirements shouldn't be too harsh.

The test score is used as the only criterion for selection at the present time. Of course this is not ideal, but it's really the best means available to select candidates on a fair basis. For many years, there have been debates on what is the best method to use. People tend to agree that the test score is the most reliable, most objective, most effective, and also the fairest single criterion. It has tremendously reduced, if not entirely avoided, unhealthy practices such as backdoorism, cheating and bribery.

Of course this method of selection is not without drawbacks. The candidates' school performance and academic achievement are virtually ignored. One test determines an entire future. It has produced enormous pressure on students, teachers and parents. A high score on the test does not necessarily predict one's ability and potential.

Just as there are many who have high ability and potential but unfortunately get a lower score on the test, there are many who make a higher score on the test but prove to possess poorer ability and potential.

During the last few years, some high schools began to recommend some of their top graduating seniors to certain universities and colleges that were permitted by the State Education Commission to accept recommended candidates. The recommended candidates must stand out well above the rest, and will be waived of the entrance examination. But the restriction is that they will only have to go to the recommended universities to study the recommended subjects which might not be the one they really want to. Of course they can refuse to be recommended, but most of them would want to be on the safe side accepting the recommendation. They only constitute one or two percent of the total graduating population, and all the rest would still have to go through the normal enrollment procedure.

Recommendation letters or evaluation forms from teachers are not very reliable. It is a common practice that, for one reason or the other, teachers give good recommendations to all the students except for those who have committed crimes or disciplinary violations. When you read the recommendation letters, you would find that one recommendation letter can be applied to everybody else, and there is no distinctive characteristics of the individual.

The once-a-year entrance examination is virtually a life-and-death struggle for the candidates. The examinations are set on the hottest days of the year. With two exams a day, three hours each and lasting for three whole successive days, the exam process is nothing less than an ordeal. No one would want to go through this suffering were it not so significant to one's future.

The examination questions nowadays have a greater percentage of subjectivity. The grading involves too much human factor. If standardized tests can be used, it would be more objective. However, standardized tests have their own shortcomings. Multiple choice questions restrict the answer to a limited range. Students cannot freely express and demonstrate their ability and creativity. For instance, one who made a correct choice in a standardized test, may not necessarily be able to write out the correct answer for the same question if there were no choices provided at all. It is necessary to include both parts into the examination so as to test candidates' knowledge as well as analytical, creative, expressive, and writing abilities.

However, it is arguable whether it is necessary to have so many subjects tested during the entrance examination. For instance, biology is essential to candidates of medicine majors but has little relation with engineering majors. Therefore it is highly unnecessary to include a biology score as a criterion to select engineering major candidates.

Different majors should set different selection criteria. But now, the same criteria are applied to all the fields of study. Though this is the easiest way to solve the criteria problem, it has created extra pressure on students and wasted lots of precious time and effort on the part of students and teachers.

The politics examination is probably the most controversial subject. If you have a look at the student's answers, you will find them almost identical in idea and expression. This is what they were taught to do. It is the result of mechanical memorizing. No one knows what the politics examination is testing on: students' political ideology or their knowledge about politics, or both? No matter what the government intends it to be or to do, to students and teachers, it just means more things to memorize. As long as you memorize it and write it out, you can get a good score, no matter whether you really understood it, agreed or disagreed with it.

Of course, it is unreasonable for one to be rejected simply because he scored low on the politics examination. For teenagers it is unnecessary, and perhaps impossible, to fully understand abstract concepts like Marxist Theories and Dialectical Materialism. It is absurd to demand students to give satisfactory answers to questions which even the professional theorist failed to answer satisfactorily.

In China everything is, allegedly, planned. The annual

enrollment is planned according to the State's education budget. As the State finances every college student, enrollment has to be limited. The quality of education varies tremendously across the nation, hence the wide discrepancy in test scores. For every province to have a certain number of college graduates, the State allocates an enrollment quota to various provinces so that the whole nation can achieve a balanced development. This allocation is necessary, but the question is how to make the quota more realistic as well as rational.

The discrepancies in test scores, however, do not truthfully reflect students' intelligence. Students from rural and backward areas could be as smart as their counterparts in the cities, given the same educational opportunity. They may have been enrolled with a lower test score, but they will soon catch up with, if not surpass, those with a higher test score at the time of enrollment. Because of this policy of quota allocation, some candidates from remote areas with lower scores would be enrolled while candidates from advanced areas with higher scores would be rejected. This phenomenon is certainly unfair, as it violates the principle that "every body is equal in front of the test scores." But this inequality is the consequence of the unequal opportunity in education across the nation, and quota allocation can be thought of as a remedy for the inequitable situation.

What's more, coastal regions and big cities have proportionally more universities than remote and backward areas. These local universities normally enroll more local candidates than out-of-province candidates. So, even though the required minimum enrollment score is much higher in the coastal regions, their actual ratio of enrolled students is still much higher than in remote regions. Consequently, the quota allocation only affects a small number of candidates who want to go to the key universities in other places. The majority would prefer to go to local universities.

Another merit of quota allocation is that most of these candidates will be assigned back to their native provinces to help improve local economic and educational conditions. This has saved the university and the State lots of assignment troubles.

Admittedly, this quota allocation policy has deprived many candidates of the right to choose the universities they wish to attend. But generally speaking, the candidate's first worry is not whether they cannot go to the university they want to, but whether they can be admitted to any university at all. Despite some complaints and disappointment, most candidates will willingly and happily apply to the designated universities, hoping only to get admitted. So we can say that from an individual's point of view, this policy seems to be unfair, as it deprives them of their freedom of choice. But considering the situation in

the whole nation, it is really necessary and reasonable.

On the impact on secondary education

The entrance examination has an immediate and direct impact on secondary education. The normal curriculum is virtually ignored. The universal practice is to teach what is to be tested on. The courses that are not part of the exam are discarded. The three-year lessons are finished in two years or even in one year and the rest of the time is devoted exclusively to the preparation for the entrance examination. It has done more harm than good to the candidates' over-all development.

The purpose of secondary education, to the secondary teachers, is to serve the examination. To increase their enrollment rate, schools have used whatever methods possible. Using tremendous amount of exercises and doing frequent mock examinations are the two most universal methods. Admission to a university is the aim of the study and is also the impetus of their study.

The pressure on the teacher is heavy too. The teacher would feel disgraced if his students failed to do well. Therefore, the teacher tries all means necessary to make his students study as hard as possible.

Suggestions for change

The age limit and marital status requirement has no

practical meaning and need not be there. The political qualifications should be changed to ethical qualifications. Those highly abstract qualifications really have no binding force on candidates, but they will probably remain as long as the Party is still in power. As to the health qualifications, they should be more flexible so as to give those with health problems a chance to have a try. However, I don't think the handicapped will be permitted to compete at least in the near future.

The examination method is far from ideal. Students become completely exhausted, both mentally and physically, after the three days of hard work under pressure. Every year and every where, you see or hear about candidates fainting in the examination room, either because of the stifling heat or because of the unbearable pressure. How about having one test a day or having two exams every other day so that students can relax for a day before they go to the next exam? People generally believe that it does not matter whether the exams last for six days or ten days; the pressure is still the same. Perhaps it is better to concentrate during three days and then totally forget about it.

Testing on three rather than on six subjects is not a better idea. As the entrance examination functions like a conductor's baton, if a subject is not to be tested, it virtually means dropping it from the normal curriculum.

More time will be spent on the three subjects that are to be tested on. Pressure could be reduced a little bit, but again it will bring about more problems. I believe that secondary education should focus on having students learn basic knowledge and abilities. Its purpose is not to train professional talents for universities. Training professionals is the university's job. After all, only a small percent of applicants are lucky enough to go to universities. The rest would have tremendous difficulty coping with the reality if they do not possess basic knowledge and skills that are essential in the modern society. I would prefer for more subjects to be taught and more subjects to be tested on if the government is willing to provide more money.

Interview Summary

An associate professor and over 40, Mr. Jia came from a regional university with a strong reputation. Despite its regional nature, it is designated as a key university and enjoys the same status as other national universities.

On the political qualification requirements, Jia point out that a person's ethical character and political awareness are two entirely different things, but in China these two concepts are mixed into one. In reality, however, this requirement has no concrete effect on candidates.

He contends that age restriction should be extended and

flexible. The unmarried status requirement is unreasonable and should be changed. Health requirements are largely prejudicial and they should not be too harsh.

He believes that using test scores as the only criterion for selection is not ideal but it is really the best means available to select candidates on a fair basis. However, he points out that this method of selection is not without drawbacks. The candidates' school performance and academic achievement are virtually ignored. One test determines the future. It has produced enormous pressure on students, teachers and parents.

Other criteria such as recommendation letters or evaluation forms from teachers are not so reliable.

The examination questions have a great deal of subjectivity, and the grading involves too much "human judgement." However, it is arguable whether or not it is necessary to have so many subjects tested during the entrance examination. Different majors should set different selection criteria.

The politics examination is the most controversial subject. It is really unreasonable if a person is rejected simply because he scored low on politics examination. It is absurd to demand students to give satisfactory answers to questions of controversy.

The quota allocation is necessary, but the question is how to make the quota more realistic as well as rational.

The discrepancies in test scores from different regions do not truthfully reflect students' intelligence. Given an equal educational opportunity, candidates from backward regions could do as well as candidates from other regions. Though the quota allocation policy seems unfair, it is the consequence of the unequal opportunity to education across the nation, and the quota allocation can be thought of as a remedy for the deformed situation. Another merit of quota allocation is that graduates will be assigned back to their original regions to work.

The entrance examination has an immediate and direct impact on secondary education. The normal curriculum is virtually ignored. To teachers, the purpose of secondary education is to serve the examination, and to raise the enrollment rate.

Jia suggests that the age limit and marital status requirement has no practical meaning and need not be there. The health requirement should be flexible. The political qualifications should be changed to ethic qualifications. The test on three rather than on six subjects is not a better idea. He believes that secondary education should focus on learning various basic knowledge and basic abilities. Its purpose is not to train professional talents for universities.

Yao

Introduction to Yao

Mr. Yao graduated from an eastern university with a major in natural sciences. He began teaching at the same university in 1980. This is a regional teacher's training institution and all the students came from within the province. However, as this university is considered the best in the eastern region, it also helps other adjacent regions to train pre- or in-service teachers. Between 1981 and 1985, he participated several times in the whole process of grading college entrance examination papers and selecting new students for his university. He came to the United States in 1986 to pursue a Master's Degree.

Yao's Reflections

On the current admission policies

To restrict the maximum age eligible for college admission to 25 is unfair. How can age be used to preclude one from obtaining a higher education? Many talented people have been shut out simply because they have passed the age line. For instance, my wife was one of the best students in her school. However, when the University Entrance Examination System was resumed in 1977, she had passed the age line, and was not permitted to sit in for the examination. As a result, she has lost her chance to go to

college forever. This has happened to many.

However, under the present situation, some sort of age restriction is necessary. China is different from the United States. In the U.S., university admission decisions are made by the university, not by the central or state government. In China, everything must be done according to government planning. Schools only have limited authority. The process of enrolling new students and then assigning graduates to jobs is administered and controlled by the government. The government of course wants young people to go to college.

Health requirements have blocked many talented people from going to college. Some requirements are arbitrary. For example, some majors in some colleges require some standards in one's appearance, height, weight, and gender ratio. I don't see the necessity of being so strict. Slightly handicapped candidates should be accepted to all the fields of study as long as their physical conditions permit. It is easy to understand why the State and the university don't want students of poor health or handicapped students to go to college: as there are so many "normal" candidates on the waiting list, why give the highly competitive opportunity to those who will demand more service than the normal students?

There is no simple answer to whether there should be age restrictions or what the maximum age limit should be

drawn. This age restriction and other requirements such as marital status, health acquirements are really minor questions. There are many other more important questions to be solved that are closely related to these minor questions.

First, what is the purpose of education? In China, everyone knows that the purpose of education, according to the Party slogan, is to "train workers with socialist consciousness and knowledge," and "education must serve the proletarian politics and must be integrated with productive labor." This is sheer distortion of the purpose of education. Education should not serve class struggle, nor should it serve a particular political party. The purpose of education should be for people to realize their potential, creativity, interest and talent, and to improve them to perfection. Education should not be used for political and ideological remolding. While in the U.S. students are taught how to think and how to do, in China, students are taught what to think and what to do; While in the U.S. students are taught to be independent, in China students are taught to be submissive to Party's decisions. Fortunately, students and teachers are not so stupid as to blindly believe and follow what the Party dictates. Otherwise, the whole nation would be serving the interests of a handful of dictators.

Of course the present examination method has many advantages; otherwise it would not have such vitality so as

to have lasted for thousands of years in China. Equal competition, for instance, is one thing that is especially important in today's China where power supersedes law. Despite the fact that backdoorism still exists, the great majority of candidates have to compete on an equal basis. From an academic point of view, students enrolled through this examination process generally have more or less the same level of talent and knowledge, and therefore are easy to teach once in college. In some of the U.S. universities, we sometimes found that some students are brilliant and knowledgeable, but some are a distance away.

The examination time and method are really awful. Candidates and parents refer to those three examination dates as Dates of Final Judgement or Dates of Life and Death Struggle. These popular sayings reflect how important these examinations are and also how tense the situation is. It is no wonder people feel that way. Their fate is determined not by the three years of hard work in school but by the three days of performance during the examinations. Competition being so fierce, no one can afford to take the matter lightly unless he does not feel strongly about going to college. While most good students get good scores and therefore eventually get admitted to college, there are always cases year after year where some excellent students failed either because of extreme anxiety or poor health. Some consideration should be given to remedy this situation.

There are two committees, one in Beijing and one in Guangzhou, that are doing research on standardized tests. But there are doubts about whether the standardized tests are a better alternative. Personally, I don't think it is much better than the present method. Standardized tests are all multiple choice, which restricts students' creativity and expression. Because the papers are graded by machines, there is no communication between teachers and students. The Standardized test is an effective and fast way to test students' ability to analyze and select the correct answer from four choices. It best serves the developed countries where man power costs more than anything else. It saves time and money. However, it cannot explicitly reflect and discover students' strengths and weaknesses.

Of course I don't mean the present method is good. It is quite the contrary. The present method of examination really tests the students' memory. The politics examination is especially the case. What is the purpose of the political examination? Should it test one's knowledge or one's political consciousness? There should be a distinction between politics and ethics. Now the two concepts are combined into one course and one exam. The party's political ideology is forced into kids' mind from their early years. Marxist Theories and the History of Communism are considered equivalent to ethical standards. If one failed in the former, it means one failed in the

latter. This is really ridiculous. How can one be judged as having poor ethical values when he failed to remember a particular quotation of Marx or Mao on a particular question? The consequence of this exam is that students have to say that Marxism is correct, Communism is good and capitalism is bad. They are not allowed to have their own views; they are not permitted to express their minds. Whether you believe it or not, the Party's ideology is forced on you, and you have to accept it. Even if you do very well in all the other subjects, once you fail in the politics exam, you are finished. No university would dare accept you because if they do, there will probably be political troubles for them later. "Politically safe" is still many people's motto.

The test score is the only criterion for selection. According to the present situation, other criteria seem to be quite impossible. If, for example, school grades and GPA were to be used, lots of new problems will come up. Cheating and forgery will become normal practice. Teachers don't want to give anyone low grades, don't want to offend anybody, don't want to face trouble, and don't want to be blamed for a student's failure. Teachers' offices would be flooded with parents who come to plead, beg, bribe, or to intimidate. As a result, either out of teacher's sympathy or out of teacher's surrender, every student's grade would be good. As the government does not respect the State's

Law, nobody can seriously blame the teachers for this illegal practice. This is a major difference between China and the United States. In the U.S., Law is respected by all. In China, the government issues policies which override the State Law. Also the policies change much too frequently.

Generally speaking, the test scores can realistically reflect and predict one's ability and potential in academic achievement. Good students normally get higher scores and under-achievers get lower scores. But the test score is not a hundred-percent accurate. Good students sometimes fail to get good scores either because of sickness or nervousness or carelessness. With a lower score, these good students cannot go to the universities they want to attend, or they cannot choose the subjects they want to major in. There is a certain degree of blindness in the test score criterion.

How about the fairness of the admission policy? Of course it is not fair. City candidates enjoy many privileges and priorities. Rural candidates are at a great disadvantage. For instance, with the same test score, a city candidate will be admitted while the rural candidate would be rejected. This is because the minimum enrollment score is different for them. Rural candidates need 30 to 50 points more to pass the minimum enrollment score. Under such a policy, more city candidates will be admitted and fewer city candidates rejected in order to reduce the city

unemployment ratio. Rural candidates can always go back to farms to work if they get rejected. Their number never counts when the government calculates unemployment ratio. But this is obviously unfair. As the educational conditions and educational levels in the rural areas are inferior to the cities, rural candidates with the same test scores mean that either these candidates studied especially hard, or they are especially bright. They deserve more consideration rather than discrimination.

How about its effectiveness? Of course it's effective. Just imagine that thousands of prospective students are selected from millions of candidates in a short period of three days. I guess no other method could achieve the same efficiency and effectiveness. Despite its unfairness and shortcomings, generally speaking, the best students can be selected from this process. Though there are many cases where strict "A" students failed to do well and get rejected, the low- and under-achievers normally don't get admitted by luck, backdoorism being an exception.

On the impact on secondary education

How universities enroll new students directly influence education in elementary and high schools. It is an unstated fact that, at present, the sole purpose of secondary education is to prepare students to go to college. As long as it helps to increase the possibility of success, whatever

method of teaching could be used is accepted. Teaching to the test and serving the examination has become the principal guideline for secondary education. Like the conductor's baton, the entrance examination directs the whole performance of secondary education. The normal curriculum and syllabus has been entirely ignored. The quality of instruction of a teacher or a school is ranked by the number of students enrolled in college. This practice has many serious defects. It discourages rather than encourages quality teaching.

Though unified textbooks are used throughout the nation, the teaching qualities and standards are different. City schools have stronger teaching faculty than rural schools. Key schools have better facilities than non-key schools. Discrepancy in achievement is obvious between city and rural schools and between key and non-key schools. This inequality was created by the present social and educational system.

The fierce competition has produced tremendous pressure on students and teachers. Over-work and over-exhaustion are a common phenomenon among graduating students. Entering the second senior high school year, students are divided into liberal arts and physics-engineering classes. Entering the third year, they are further divided into top-achiever classes and normal-achiever classes. All these practices have serious drawbacks. Students suffer both

psychologically and physically. Going to college means a good future. This objective has priority over any hardships or concerns. Tragic occurrences are frequently heard of. To get a higher enrollment rate, the school puts pressure on teachers, and teachers put pressure on students. At home, the candidate is the center of attention and the object of protection. Success is followed by long and extravagant celebration while failure is followed by embarrassment and humiliation. These could be the most memorable or the most disastrous days of a person's entire life.

The Chinese students really envy their American counterparts. Here in the U.S., high school graduates never feel such pressure. They enjoy ample opportunities to choose where and when to go for a higher education. A low SAT score can only prevent one from going to a first-rate university but cannot preclude one from getting a higher education in college. In China, unfortunately, the opposite is the reality.

Suggestions for change

Age restrictions and marital status should not be used as qualification requirements. Or, at least age restrictions should be extended for those who want to apply to teacher education. These candidates should be encouraged as teaching nowadays has become a less-popular occupation. And for this reason, married candidates should be accepted too. Maybe the government wants to use this requirement to

encourage late marriage but it is really unnecessary.

The entrance examination score alone cannot objectively judge one's overall achievement and potential. I still think that high school grades and GPA should be used. As these and other criteria cannot be incorporated right away, there should be a transitional period for experiment. The experiment could be carried out in some well selected areas. For instance, the experiment could be carried out in some areas with a high enrollment rate and some areas with very low enrollment rate to see how different the results could be. Then adjustment is made so that the criteria can be better adapted to reality. Then the experiment is carried out again in some more areas. After a few years of experiment, some kind of acceptable criteria may be possible. Gradually, a variety of criteria would become regularized. Of course, during the process of experiment, there are bound to be problems and difficulties, but as long as we are determined to reform the existing admission policy, there would be no unsurmountable obstacles. Honor students for three successive years, national and regional academic competition winners, and exceptionally gifted students should be exempted from exams.

Enrollment quota and location restrictions are closely related to job assignment. Both enrollment and assignments are done according to the mandatory plan of the State. Under this plan, graduates have to go where they are

assigned, and the institutions have to accept whoever is assigned to them. As all the college students are supported by the government, they are the property of the State. The graduates have no freedom to choose where to go and what to do. According to the present situation in China, this seems to be necessary. If graduates were free to choose where to go and what to do, those from ordinary families would not find good jobs, whereas those from privileged families or related families with various authorities and power would occupy all the good positions regardless of whether they are qualified or not. This is one aspect of the inequality in today's China.

Candidates should be given more freedom to choose the universities they want to attend. At present, candidates have only a limited choice. They can only choose between a few universities assigned to their area to enroll new students. There is no absolute necessity to have this restriction. All the universities should be open to the whole nation. Candidates should be free to choose whichever university they prefer to go.

This change demands some changes in the enrollment process, too. The present process of "application, examination, and selection" involves some kind of blindness on the part of the candidates. This process forces the candidates to make the most important decision before they know how well they might do on the exam. It all depends on

one's self-perception and self-confidence. It is certainly not a good process. Instead, a better process should be "examination, information, application, and selection." Candidates should be informed of their test score before they begin to fill in their applications. As the universities are open to all, candidates will choose universities according to their scores rather than choosing blindly. By knowing one's own score and also knowing the university's requirement, one has a better chance of success.

There is an increasing tendency nowadays for good candidates from big cities, such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shengzhen, not to want to go to good universities in other parts of the country for fear that when they graduate they might be assigned to work elsewhere. They would rather go to local colleges or even technical schools so that they would stay forever in their home cities. Their talents may well be wasted. But their idea is that, as the graduates from even the best universities won't be paid as much as anybody else, why should they give up their enviable city life to take the risk of going to other places? Again, this is one of the negative results of the mandatory enrollment and assignment policy.

Under the present system, I don't think much can be done to make any fundamental or noticeable changes. Universities have lots of responsibilities but have little

power. The State controls too much of the university's affairs, including appointment of the president to recruitment of faculty, student enrollment to graduate assignment, curriculum to discipline, as well as ideology to activity. Any change has to be permitted by the State Education Commission. But I'm quite optimistic. In a few years, a great number of Chinese educators who have earned degrees in foreign countries would go back to China. There will be some gradual social changes which will make it possible to reform the educational system. We could then incorporate the merits and advantages of various systems into our Chinese educational system to make it better and better.

Interview Summary

Mr. Yao came from a regional university which enjoys status as a key institution of teacher training. He taught at the university for five years, and lived and studied in the United States for five years while pursuing a Doctoral degree.

He believes that restricting the maximum eligible age for college admission to 25 is unfair, but under the present situation, some sort of age restriction is necessary. Health requirements have blocked many talented people from going to college, and some requirements are arbitrary. However, he thinks these are minor questions. The important

question is what is the purpose of education. The Party and government have distorted the purpose of education.

Education should not serve class struggle and should not be used for ideological remolding. Purpose of education should be for people to realize their potential, creativity and talent.

The present examination method has many advantages. Equal competition is one thing that is especially important in today's China where power supersedes law. The examination time is really awful. The three examination days are just like the Dates of final Judgement or dates of a life and death struggle. Competition is very fierce, because the student's fate is determined not by the three years of hard work in school but by the three days of performance during the examinations.

The standardized test is an effective and fast way to test student ability. It best serves the developed countries where man power costs more than anything else. But, it cannot explicitly reflect and discover students' strengths and weaknesses.

He doesn't think that the present method is good. The present method of examination really tests students' memory. There should be a distinction between politics and ethics, but now the two things are combined into one course and one exam. It is incorrect to judge a candidate's ability by his memorization of political dogma.

He believes that test scores can realistically reflect and predict one's ability and potential in academic achievement, though not a hundred-percent accurate. Other criteria seem to be quite impossible at the moment.

The current admission policy is effective but not necessarily fair, as city candidates enjoy many privileges and opportunities and rural candidates are at a greater disadvantage. The latter, because of their inferior conditions, deserve more consideration rather than discrimination when they achieve the same standards.

University enrollment directly influences secondary education. It is now believed that the sole purpose of secondary education is to prepare students for college. Teaching to the test has become the principal guidelines for secondary education. It discourages quality teaching when teachers are evaluated by the enrollment rate. The normal curriculum and syllabus have been entirely ignored.

The fierce competition has produced tremendous pressure on students and teachers. Overwork and over-exhaustion are a common phenomenon. Tragic occurrences are frequently heard of. Many practices in high schools have serious drawbacks.

Yao thinks that it's better not to use age restrictions, marital status and health conditions as qualification requirements. Or, at least they should be flexible, and exceptions should be possible.

The test score alone cannot objectively judge one's

overall achievement and potential. High school grades and GPA should be used. There should be a transitional period for experiment. Quota allocation policy is necessary but the candidates should be given more freedom to choose the university they want. All universities should be open to the whole nation.

The present application process is not a good process, as it involves some kind of blindness on the part of the candidates. Candidates should be informed of their test score before they begin to fill in the applications.

The Chinese students envy their American counterparts, but as the two countries are fundamentally different in their political and social systems, it is difficult to make sensible and useful comparisons.

Finally, Yao predicts that, under the present system, not much can be done to make any fundamental or noticeable changes. However, he is optimistic, believing that some day China will be able to incorporate the merits and advantages of various other systems into the Chinese educational system to make it better.

Ma

Instruction to Ma

Ms. Ma went to a university to study Science and Technology in 1977. After she graduated in 1981 with a BS in engineering, she was assigned to teach in a college in

the northeast of China. This college is a small provincial institution that has a total enrollment of about 1500 and an annual enrollment of around 400. Ms. Ma has taught courses on engineering process control and related computer technology since 1982. In 1988, Ms. Ma came to the United States to pursue a Master's Degree in Chemical Engineering.

Ma's Reflections

On the current admission policies

It is difficult to say which admission system is good and which is not good, as the educational and social systems are so different. In the United States, students pay for their expenses and the university hopes to admit as many students as possible that meet the admissions requirement. In China, the State pays for the expenses, and the number of higher institutions is quite disproportionate against the qualifying population. It is necessary for the admission to be highly selective.

As only a small number of candidates will be enrolled, the State naturally prefers for the younger candidates to go to college. That's why there is always an age restriction. From the stand point of the individual, age restriction is of course unfair, as some people are bound to be denied simply because of their age, even if they just pass the age restriction by one day. It is rather unfortunate that some talented people, who, for one reason or another, didn't have

a chance when they were young, are forever shut out by this age restriction.

The requirement for unmarried status has no practical meaning. No high school students can marry before the age of 23. Those who are married under the age of 23 are generally those who, having given up their hope for a higher education, have already joined the working force. But even so, consideration should be given to those who have potentiality and talent and want to have a try after marriage. There should be some guiding principles as well as some flexibilities.

The political requirement is definitely unreasonable. China is such a huge country with such a huge population that it is impossible for everyone's thoughts to be unified with the Party's or the Government's ideology. How can you judge one's talent by how he behaves politically and ideologically? In the past, one's eligibility to college is determined by his family background. Today, it is determined by one's political behavior. To people outside China, this really sounds like a joke or nonsense. But it is unfortunately a reality.

Health requirements are sometimes too restrictive. I think one's physical condition shouldn't be overemphasized. Unless one's physical conditions prevent one from doing normal study, handicapped students should not be prejudiced against. Troubles with one's leg or lung normally don't

affect one's intelligence. Some other physical shortcomings, such as deep near-sightedness and color-blindness should be restricted for some majors but not for all.

It is very undesirable that one set of examinations determine one's entire future. Using test scores as the sole criterion is perhaps the simplest and easiest way to select candidates. But it is definitely not the ideal one. It has many negative effects. However, we must admit that, under the present situation, this is probably the fairest method. When measured by the test, everyone is equal. If you fail, you can only blame your self. The phenomenon of going through the backdoor is greatly restricted though it cannot be entirely eliminated. If on the other hand, multiple or synthesized standards are used, power and backdoorism will be given full swing to interfere with the enrollment process. Contradictions and struggles between individuals, between universities, between regions, and between provinces, will be difficult to address. It is unrealistic to think of using other multiple standards at the present time.

Enrollment quotas and location specification seem to be part of a well-thoughtout plan, but, just like the planned economy, it is subjective rather than objective; it has produced more confusion than clarity, more contradiction than harmony. With such a huge country as China, it is

impossible to have an overall planning for everything, especially today when policies change so frequently and so fast. No one knows what will happen tomorrow. It is absurd for the State to try to plan everything, from strategic development to family planning, from what people should think to what people should wear.

The purpose of the enrollment quota and location specification is to try to balance the level of education throughout the country. Some areas are so backward in education that, without this specification, they may never have a student enrolled in college. And as no graduates want to go to these areas to work, the areas remain backward. In order to remedy this situation, the State mandatorily enrolls some students, even with low scores, from the backward areas, and then assigns them back after graduation. This policy means good, but it practically has no effect. It is naive to expect these few graduates to bring the educational level up.

Personally, I don't think this policy is necessary. Because of poor facilities and inadequate equipment, many graduates who were assigned to work there cannot carry out any projects or research programs. Instead, they were asked to do secretarial or routine work. This is a waste of talent. Symbolically assigning a few graduates to backward areas really won't help much. This is pure equalitarianism advocated by the Party and the Government. We should

encourage natural development in both the advanced and backward areas, with the former stimulating and bringing along the latter.

Many people are strongly against the present method of examination. The examinations are set on the hottest days of the year. To the candidates, it is a battle fought under pressure and fatigue. They cannot give their best performance. The result of these three days determines the future. This is not the best way to test student knowledge and intelligence. I think the way the American universities enroll students is much better as they use a variety of criteria for selection.

The politics examination should be abolished. Politics courses should be offered as a course of knowledge rather than a course of ideology indoctrination. Teachers don't believe what they teach and students don't believe what they learn. There are so many political and ideological questions which even the professional theorists cannot answer. Then, why should the high school students be forced to learn and remember out-dated dogma? Actually, nobody takes the politics course seriously. All they need to do is to spend a few days, right before the exam, reciting the text and then forgetting it after the exam. It is a waste of precious time for nothing. If you look at students' politics exam answers, you will find more than ninety-percent of the answers to a question used the same words,

same phrase, same order of presentation, and, of course, same points of view, to such an extent that you will be wondering whether one student has written this answer for all the thousands of others.

Except for the politics exam, tests on all the other subjects are necessary because they test students' basic knowledge and intelligence. Of course, the method of testing is another question that needs to be discussed.

There has been a popular saying these years that vividly describes the competitive situation: "Thousands of horsemen rushing across a single-planked bridge at the same time." With a small enrollment every year, you really need to be academically solid, mentally firm, and physically strong in order to survive the rigorous trial of the three examination days.

As to its fairness and rationality, I would say that it is not absolutely fair, but, at present, it is fairer than any other methods. It is not absolutely fair because candidates compete at a different starting point with candidates from rural and backward areas who are at great disadvantage. It is more fair than other methods, because backdoorism and favoritism are principally eliminated. Regardless of family background and social status, everybody is equal in front of the test. This is perhaps the most important merit of the present enrollment system. As long as the college students continue to be supported by the

State, this method will have to continue to be used. Once students have to pay their tuition and other expenses, other methods may be considered. But, self-support is impossible even in the near future, as most families cannot afford it.

On the impact on secondary education

The objective of the secondary education is simple and clear, that is, for a higher enrollment rate. Nobody cares what the general curriculum says about the objectives of the secondary education. The enrollment rate is directly related to the interests of every teacher and every school such as salary raises, bonuses, honor and reputation. The enrollment rate also determines the upgrading from ordinary school status to key school status. While students compete against each other for college, schools compete against each other for higher enrollment rates. You don't often see good relationships among schools. There is too much contradiction, competition, jealousy, dissatisfaction and animosity among schools for them to be on good terms.

To better prepare their students for the exam, all the teachers work overtime, day and night, during the last year. They give students enormous amount of homework and previous years' examination questions. Every student has a huge pile of review questions. Also, guessing the exam questions becomes quite popular. The last high school year is exclusively devoted to doing these endless exercises.

At home, parents take care of everything so that

students can concentrate on the preparation. There is a popular saying that these students "open their mouths when they need food and stretch their arms when they need clothes." Some students become capable at nothing else but doing exercises. Such a student is generally referred to as one "with high scores but low ability."

The pressure on parents is naturally heavy, as no parents want to see their children fail the exam and wander about jobless. The application itself involves a great deal of strategies and tactics. The parents consult as many experts as they can possibly find so that their children can have a better chance of success. Despite the fact that university graduates are extremely underpaid today, the traditional Chinese thinking that "Learning is noble, and every thing else is humble" still takes roots in the minds of many. To them, the future of their children only depends on whether they fail or pass the entrance examination. Therefore, in the families where there is a graduating high school student, the priority is always given to what he needs and what he wants. Once he passes and is admitted, he becomes the honor of the family, and a long series of celebrations follow. Presents pour in. He may also be given a luxurious vacation to visit other places. But if he fails, he becomes the disgrace and the burden of the family, and what follows is the worry for his future. The whole family has to discuss whether he should try again next year

or to seek other opportunities.

It is incorrect to divide students into liberal arts and physics-engineering classes. Once divided and assigned into a particular class, students naturally give up other subjects and concentrate on only a few. During my teaching, I found that many of my students who were physics-engineering students had very poor writing skills and could not write a good experiment report. Students from liberal arts classes know little about physics, chemistry and biology. I don't see any advantage of this co-called class-division in high schools. This practice was set up for the purpose of coping with the examination. It has serious drawbacks. It sounds ridiculous that one who wants to study geology in college does not study geography in high school, or one who wants to study architecture in college does not study art in high school. But this has been true in China for years, as geology and architecture belong to the engineering category and geography and art belong to the liberal arts category in high schools.

In the United States, universities and colleges require freshmen and sophomores to take courses on basic knowledge in a variety of areas. In China, the similar requirements are waived even in the high schools. Though this practice may have helped students to better deal with the examination, it certainly did them no good in the long run. They grew up with a lopsided body of knowledge.

The contents of various subjects are a bit too difficult. You often find that what is taught in the senior high schools in China is taught in colleges here in the United States. It is like "pulling the plant up to make it grow faster" and does more harm than good. It would be impossible for a teenager to grasp so many difficult concepts within so short a time. This is probably another reason why they have to be divided into particular classes just to study particular subjects instead of studying all subjects.

Suggestions for change

As far as the necessity of change is concerned, I think that age and health conditions are critical qualifications that should be highly flexible. The contents of the exam questions should include some questions to test candidates' ability to carry out experiments, not just questions to test their ability to do calculations. If possible, the examination should be offered at least twice rather than just once. The enrollment quota and location restrictions are not effective means toward helping the backward areas to develop. They should not be so strict. The respective provinces and regions should be encouraged to develop their own local colleges and universities.

As for the subjects of the examination, I think six is better than three. Since the students would still spend as much time on the preparation whether they have three or six

subjects to be tested on, six tests would be more beneficial to their overall growth in the long run. Testing on three subjects will still produce as much anxiety and burden as the original six because the enrollment ratio remains unchanged.

The present method of so-called minimum enrollment score lacks regularity across the nation. Different provinces and regions have their own minimum enrollment score though they are part of the national unified enrollment plan. There is confusion and contradiction among different regions. Generally, candidates in remote and rural areas get a lower score than those from coastal and city candidates. But it should be recognized that this difference does not mean that the rural candidates have lower intelligence or a lower IQ. Actually, these candidates could do equally well as city candidates if they were given the same educational opportunity and intellectual environment. If the absolute test score is used as the sole criterion for final selection, these rural candidates would be at a greater disadvantage. One way to remedy this unfairness is to add a corrective factor to the final test score. For instance, we can use, say, Xian city as the norm. Test scores in educationally privileged areas, such as Zhejiang and Jiangsu, can be multiplied by 1.15, Shanghai and Beijing by 1.1, other cities by 0.95, and remote areas by 0.9, rural areas by 0.85, and so on, all according to

their specific educational opportunities and qualities. Based on this corrective factor, a score of 90 in remote areas would equal 100 for the national norm and equal 110 in Beijing and 115 in Zhejiang and Jiangsu. Consequently, if the acceptance score for the norm city is 500, then the acceptance score would be $500 \times 1.5 = 525$ for educationally privileged areas and $500 \times 0.9 = 450$ for remote areas. This of course is only an idea. The real practice will involve tremendous investigation and research. Unquestionably, this method gives a much fairer consideration to both the subjective and objective factors that influence the performance and achievement of a particular candidate. And, if this method could be practiced, there would no longer be the need to set enrollment quota and location restrictions.

Candidates should not only be allowed to choose the universities they want to go to, but they should also be allowed to choose where to work after graduation. The policy of "going back to where they came from" needn't be so strict. If they can make better contributions in the cities, there is no absolute necessity to drive them back to remote areas to waste their time and talent. The remote areas should attract talented people by other means such as higher pay and better living conditions. Otherwise, even if they went they could not do their best.

The use of test scores as the sole criterion has certain defects. But considering the present situation and

all aspects, it has more merits than defects. If other criteria are used, new problems will come up which may be more difficult to handle than the present ones. The various unhealthy tendencies and practices will make the new criteria more unfair rather than fair.

Generally speaking, university enrollment is a complex issue. It involves the whole educational, social, political and economical system. It is the product of the system and it is also the reflection of the system. One change would bring about some repercussions from and for every walks of life. Its impact on the society is tremendous and wide spread. Unless the system and the structure changed, major changes in the university admission policy are unlikely. We are all helpless. The most conspicuous difference between the U.S. university admission policies and the Chinese university admission policies is that the former aim at attracting candidates and the latter aim at restricting candidates.

Interview Summary

Ms. Ma's university is situated in northeast China. Though the majority of its students come from the province this institution is authorized to enroll students from adjacent provinces in the Northeast Region. It is considered one of the top universities in the region. Ms. Ma taught there for five years, and has been in the United

States for three years to pursue a Master's degree.

Ma thinks that the age restriction is unfair as some people are denied simply because of their age. The requirement for unmarried status has no practical meaning. The health requirements are too restrictive. The political requirement is definitely unreasonable. It is incorrect to judge one's talent by how he behaves politically and ideologically.

It is very undesirable to use one set of examinations to determine one's entire future. However, under the present situation, this is probably the fairest method. The enrollment quota and location specification are subjective rather objective. It produces more confusion than clarity, more contradiction than harmony. It is impossible to have an overall planning for everything in a huge country such as China. She does not think this quota allocation policy is necessary and it is naive to expect few graduates to bring about changes. Rather, it is a waste of talent.

People are strongly against the present examination method. It is not the best way to test student's knowledge and intelligence. The politics examination should be abolished. Tests on all the other subjects are necessary.

Though the current admission policy is not absolutely fair, at present it is more fair than any other method. Regardless of family background and social status, everybody is equal in front of the test. This is the most important

merit of the present enrollment system.

The objective of secondary education is simply and clearly to gain a higher enrollment rate. Teachers work over-time day and night to prepare their students for the exam. They also give students an enormous amount of homework and exercises. The pressure on parents is heavy too. They all have high expectations on their child.

Ma thinks that it is incorrect to divide students into two categories of classes as this practice is only for the purpose of coping with the examination. It has serious drawbacks.

As for necessary changes, Ma thinks that age and health conditions used as qualification requirements should be highly flexible. The exam should include questions to test candidates' ability to carry out experiments, not just questions to test calculation abilities. To test six subjects is better than to test three subjects, and the tests should be offered at least twice a year.

The enrollment quota and location restrictions are not effective means to help the backward areas to develop, and therefore should not be so strict. The present method of minimum enrollment score lacks regularity across the nation, and there is confusion and contradiction among different regions. Candidates from backward regions could do equally well as city candidates if they were given the same educational opportunity. One way to remedy this unfairness

is to add a corrective factor to the final test score.

Students should be allowed to choose universities they want to go to, and also be allowed to choose where to work after graduation. The enrollment allocation and assignment allocation shouldn't be so rigid.

The use of test scores as the sole criterion has certain defects, but considering the present situation and all aspects, it has more merits than defects. If other criteria are used, the various malpractice will make the new criteria more unfair rather than fair.

Ma concludes that university enrollment is a complex issue. It's a natural production and reflection of the system. Its impact on society is tremendous and wide spread. It involves the whole educational, social, political and economical system. Unless the system and the structure changes, major changes on the university admission policy are unlikely.

When asked to compare the Chinese and the American university admission systems, Ma's reaction was that it is difficult to say which admission system is good and which is not, as the educational and social systems are so different.

Xie

Introduction to Xie

Ms. Xie went to a northwestern university in 1971 and graduated in 1975. She taught at the same university for

four years, and began her Master's studies in 1979 and her Doctoral studies in 1981. This university has a total enrollment of only about 2600, but it is, however, designated as a key university and rated as one of the top five in its specialty. Though most of its students come from the northwest region, it is authorized to enroll students from all over the country. After completing her Ph.D., she taught for another two years before she came to work as a Post-doctorate at an American university in 1987.

Xie's Reflections

On the current admission policies

Age restriction is necessary. If the age difference is too wide, it will cause problems in teaching. Older people normally have family burdens and cannot fully concentrate on their studies. As there are so many young people competing for the limited spaces, the opportunities should be given to younger ones who don't have any family burdens. However, the age restriction shouldn't be too rigid. Some flexibilities and exceptions should be made possible towards individuals that have passed the age limit but possess high academic talents.

It is also necessary to set some physical or health requirements. Those whose physical conditions might hamper their studies or affect their normal everyday life should be discouraged. Again, these requirements shouldn't be too

rigid. Candidates with minor sicknesses or with sicknesses that are unlikely to interfere or affect their studies should be permitted to compete. The same is true with the handicapped. They are already too unfortunate with their physical conditions and the admission policy shouldn't add further misfortune to them. For instance, one with a slightly crippled leg or a slightly scarred face should not be reviewed with prejudice as their physical defects won't affect their academic performance in any way.

It is quite understandable that in China candidates are required to meet the so-called political qualification. Under the present socialist system, every citizen is required to "adhere to the four cardinal principles", and so is true with the candidates applying for college. The Chinese people have been living with this kind of ideological indoctrination for more than 40 years and have gotten used to this propaganda. Nowadays, people don't care much about politics, but, afraid of political troubles, just keep their mouth shut. High school students care even less about politics. What they really care about is how to get to college. Political requirements are too abstract to be a real binding force as long as you don't openly state your opposition.

A candidate's political qualification actually has no practical meaning. It should be substituted with requirements on candidate's social and school behavior. As

long as one does not have any criminal records or disciplinary problems, he should then be considered qualified. High school students are not active in political activities. They are very naive in many respects and really don't have any critical ideas on important political issues. Before and during the cultural revolution, one's political attitude and family origin played an important role in determining one's eligibility for college education. Today, no one is too serious about political qualifications. Everyone can meet the political qualifications as stated in the enrollment document.

The enrollment criteria can be viewed as both fair and unfair. It can be said as fair because all the students are judged and evaluated according to the same kind of standard, that is the test score. All the examination papers use candidates' codes rather than names so that grading teachers do not know whose papers they are grading, thus avoiding favoritism or prejudice. It is the best way to give everybody an equal chance in front of the test scores. Backdoorism has been virtually eliminated, except in a few rare cases. This equal competition has provided a chance for those from underprivileged families to compete with others without suffering any disadvantage. This is the positive side. The negative side is that it may not be entirely reliable to use the total test score of the three days to determine one's eligibility, capability, and

intelligence. The tests have exerted tremendous pressure and produced many negative side effects. It is also possible that some talented students may fail the tests for one reason or another.

It would be more desirable if students' high school records could be incorporated, but since instructional quality varies so widely from school to school, from city to city, from region to region, and from province to province, it would be extremely difficult to be considered in the near future. In China, no attention has been given to this area and no effort has been made to try to set up a national norm or standard. Under the present situation, the test score is perhaps the best criterion available to select candidates on a fair and rational basis. Or at least, I don't think it is unfair or irrational.

The present examination method is too harmful to students both physically and mentally. After the three day exam, students are extremely tired and exhausted and need several days or weeks to recover. However, other methods are non-existent at the moment. If examinations were to be given twice a year, it would cost the government twice as much. The examination sites and personnel as well as grading teachers would be hard to arrange. Even though students could choose which time to take the examination, the pressure would remain the same.

Standardized tests could be a better alternative. If

the tests could be offered several times a year, students would have more options. If one should be sick this time, he wouldn't have to wait a whole year to take the next test. Standardized tests are highly beneficial to the students. But the question is that multiple choice questions are too narrow to test a candidate's creative and writing abilities. There should be some supplementary questions which may include composition, writing summary or synopsis, commenting, synthesizing, and describing.

The politics examination is absolutely unnecessary. It does not test either one's knowledge nor one's political awareness. It only tests a student's memory. Most people pay no attention to the politics class the entire year, as the class is so boring and useless. They only need to spend a few days, right before the politics examination, memorizing the texts or the review outlines to pass the examination. But many excellent candidates are rejected simply because their politics examination score was too low. To use the politics score to determine one's ability and talent is really absurd, as nowadays people regard politics class as pure nonsense. The government wants to control students' minds by forcing them to go through this ideological indoctrination. There are so many questions in the politics textbook that the teachers themselves cannot answer. And even if they do, they dare not say what they really think. They just pass on to students what's there in

the book. As long as students can pass the test or get a good score, their task is fulfilled. It is a common practice for teachers to remind their students not to tell their true thoughts when answering sensitive examination questions.

The enrollment plan is too rigid. All the key universities were appointed by the government instead of being recognized through free competition as here in the United States where top universities gained their academic reputation through competition. The government's decision on whether a university should be designated as a key university is not conducive to its academic improvement. Once a university has been granted key university status, it will forever remain a key university no matter how it performs academically in the following years or even decades. Other universities feel very underrated because no matter how well they achieve academically, they cannot get the recognition they deserve. Key universities enjoy priority in getting funds and getting the best candidates but don't have to work hard to keep their key status because the status is there forever. Academic excellence should be recognized through competition, not through government designation.

The enrollment quota allocation policy aims to help the backward regions. Under the present situation, I think it is necessary. Graduates who came from those regions should

be assigned back to their home region to work because they were enrolled with certain conditions attached. However, the Central Government shouldn't control too much of the specifics. Rather, it should give more assistance to help the local government to improve their own education at various levels to meet their own needs.

Of course this enrollment quota allocation policy violates the principle of fair competition. Those from advanced regions are required to achieve higher minimum passing scores than those from backward regions. Students from the former are at an advantage in getting a better schooling but at a disadvantage because of the need for a higher test score. In contrast, students from the backward regions are at a disadvantage in getting a better schooling but at an advantage because of the quota allocation policy. It's the opposite for the latter. Considering this fact, we can say that the quota allocation policy is unfair but reasonable.

On the impact on secondary education

The current university admission policy has an enormous impact on secondary education. The importance of the examination is all too obvious -- it determines one's future in just three days. To pass means to start a bright career and celebration; to fail means to face unemployment and disgrace. So, beginning their first senior high school

year, students have to think ahead about this harsh reality. The three senior high school years are definitely the most difficult and most pressured years of their entire life. The key to a good test score is mechanical memorizing. This is the traditional method of teaching in China. From their early childhood, students are taught to memorize classic poems and essays. The most common teaching method is teaspoon feeding. There is never an end of things to memorize and recite. Good memory would guarantee one with good test scores. While American schools emphasize library research and creative thinking, Chinese schools emphasize memorization; while American schools teach students how to learn, Chinese schools teach students what to remember; while American schools encourage independent thinking, Chinese schools encourage word by word recitation; while American schools teach students to say what they think, Chinese schools teach students to say what they are told. These are the major differences between American schools and Chinese schools.

All teachers, without exception, give a lot of mock tests and an enormous amount of exercises for the sole purpose of getting students acquainted with all kinds of possible examination questions. The teacher teaches to the test and for the test, and the students learn for the test and memorize for the test. It's mechanical and monotonous learning. It's very uninteresting but quite effective. It

has completely blotted out other objectives of teaching and learning. Getting admitted to a university is everybody's aim. In addition, the enrollment rate is used to judge a school's quality of teaching. And the teacher's salary raise is also indirectly related to it. There is no wonder why teachers are heavily pressured to make their students successful.

The purpose of secondary education should be to promote basic education instead of "training candidates for higher education" as is accepted today. After all, less than 20 percent will go to college (this is the interviewee's opinion). If the purpose is to train candidates for college, then what about the other 80 percent who are unselected? Because what they learn in high school is not the basic survival skills required in the society, they find extremely difficult to get a job. They become a serious burden both to the family and to the society. If the high school education had provided them with some basic skills, they would be able to get employed once they lost the chance to go to college.

A related issue concerns the times at which they must make a decision. When they graduate from the junior high school, they have to decide whether they want to go to normal senior high school or to go to vocational high school. If one chooses to go to the vocational school, he will never have a chance to go to college; he can go to work

right after he finishes a three year vocational study. If one chooses to go to a normal senior high school, he can have a chance to compete for a college education. But he won't be allowed to go back to vocational school if he should change his mind after a year's study in the normal high school because the two schools are on a parallel level. This policy is too strict and unreasonable. Students should be given opportunities to remake their decisions at different times as conditions and situations may change. If after a year's study one decides that he would rather go to vocational school than to compete for college, he should be permitted either to transfer or to reapply. This has many positive effects: first, it reduces the competition ratio; secondly, it reduces the pressure on the student; thirdly, it reduces the burden on the family and the society; and lastly, it eventually strengthens the social service force.

I think dividing students into Liberal Arts classes and Physics-engineering classes is feasible and practicable. If one is to make liberal arts as his career, physics and engineering won't be of any importance to his profession. And those things are also easy to forget if not used at all or not often enough. It would be waste of time to study things that are not to be used at all. The students' burden could be reduced when they study just the necessary subjects. However, the division shouldn't be too early. All students must learn the basic knowledge of all the

subjects before they can graduate. Otherwise, their knowledge would be too narrow and may eventually affect the further development of their majors in later years.

Suggestions for change

The positive impact of testing on the whole society is that fair competition is established and it poses a challenge to all students, forcing them to study hard. It also draws the concern and attention from the whole society toward secondary education. Its negative impact is that it encourages study for the test and the test score determines everything about a student. It produces too much pressure, and students don't have much choice during the whole process.

Students should be given more opportunities. Going to college should not be the only objective of one's life. Qualification requirements shouldn't be too strict and rigid. In American universities, admission is fairly easy, but one has to study hard and meet certain minimum requirements in order to graduate. In contrast, in Chinese universities all the screening is done before one is admitted. Once admitted, everybody will graduate with a degree regardless of their performance. This is not a good policy or practice.

Testing on six subjects is better than testing on three subjects. All six subjects are important ones that cannot

and should not be further reduced. Testing on three can only reduce the time spent on the examination but cannot reduce the pressure on students as competition remains stiff. What's more, students will abandon those subjects that they are not to be tested on.

So far the test score is the most objective and fair criterion for selecting candidates in an unbiased manner. In the near future, no other alternatives or supplements or substitutes will be available. As for the examination method, if standardized tests could be offered a few times a year, the pressure on students would be tremendously reduced. Or, it can be used as a supplement to the once-a-year entrance examination or constitute a certain percentage of the total score. Combined, the selection criteria would be more objective, more scientific, and more reliable.

Generally speaking, we cannot say whether the current admission policy is a hundred-percent fair or a hundred-percent unfair. Considering current social, economic, cultural, and educational conditions in China, it has to be this way. There is no other method that is more fair. In addition, no other method can give everyone a fair chance to compete regardless of their social and economic background. No other criteria could be more objective and reliable. But as we said earlier, fairness is only relative. There are many aspects of the policy that are not so fair, not so rational, not so reasonable, not so effective, or not so

necessary. Though the principal aspects cannot be changed, some technical reforms are quite possible. At the present time, the government may not be willing to do the reform, but sooner or later, the negative aspects of the policy will have to be changed or reformed.

Interview Summary

Ms. Xie came from a regional medical university that enrolls students mainly from the southwestern region of the country. Small as it is, it is ranked on top of others of its kind in the region. Ms. Xie taught for six years before she came to the United States to work as a Post-Doctorate in 1987.

Xie thinks that the age restriction is necessary because a wide age difference will cause problems in teaching. It is also necessary to set some physical or health requirements. However, these two requirements shouldn't be too rigid. While the government's demand on political qualification is understandable, it has no practical meaning. It should be substituted with requirements on candidates' social and school behavior.

The enrollment criteria is both fair and unfair. Students are judged and evaluated according to the same kind of standard, but there is a wide difference in education standards from region to region. It may not be entirely reliable to use the total test score of the three days to

determine one's capability and intelligence. It would be desirable if students' high school records could be incorporated; but, since instructional quality varies so widely from school to school and city to city, it would be extremely difficult to be considered in the near future.

The present examination method is harmful to students both physically and mentally. But other methods are non-existent at the moment. Standardized tests might be a better alternative. Then the tests could be offered several times a year so that the students have more options. But the problem with the standardized test is that multiple choice questions are too narrow to test a candidate's creative and writing abilities. There should be some sort of supplementary questions included that require writing. The politics examination is absolutely unnecessary. It does not test either one's knowledge nor one's political awareness. It only tests one's memory.

The enrollment plan is too rigid. The enrollment quota allocation policy aims to help the backward regions, but it violates the principle of fair competition. So, she thinks that this policy can be described as unfair but reasonable.

The current university admission policy has an enormous impact on secondary education. The three senior high school years are definitely the most difficult and most pressured years of the student's entire life. For the graduating students, there is never an end to the things for them to

memorize and recite.

Teachers teach to the test and for the test. They give a lot of mock tests and an enormous amount of exercises for the sole purpose of getting students better prepared for the exam. They are under heavy pressure to help their students be successful.

She believes that the purpose of secondary education should be to promote basic education instead of "training candidates for higher education" because less than 20 percent of high school graduates will go to college.

Students should be given more opportunities to remake their decisions at different times. The division of students into two categories is feasible and practicable but it shouldn't occur too early.

The positive impact on society is that fair competition is established and it poses a challenge to all students and forces them to study hard. Its negative impact is that it encourages studying for the test. It produces too much pressure.

Testing on six subjects is better than testing on three subjects. The test score is the most objective and fair criterion for unbiasedly selecting candidates at the present time, because no other alternatives, supplements or substitutes are available. If standardized tests are used, the pressure on students to succeed will be tremendously reduced.

It is difficult to say whether this policy is a hundred-percent fair or unfair. It has to be this way under the present social, economic, and political conditions. No other method could be more fair and no other criteria could be more objective and reliable. Fairness is relative, not absolute. There are many aspects of the policy that are not so fair, not so effective, and not so necessary. Sooner or later, the negative aspects of the policy will have to be addressed.

Ping

Introduction to Ping

Mr. Ping went to a technical college in eastern China in 1978 and graduated with a BS degree in 1982. Then he began to teach in the same college. This is a highly provincial college which enrolls all its students from within its province. Its graduates are assigned to work in various counties and cities within the province. Though it only has a total enrollment of over 1000, it is a fully accredited four-year institution that offers various B.S. degrees in engineering. Ping taught for three years before he came to an American university in 1985. He is now working on his Ph.D. in Economics.

Ping's Reflections

On the current admission policies

The age restriction is entirely unnecessary. In the United States, universities only look at the applicant's academic records. There is a federal law forbidding discrimination based on age, race, and marital status. In China, there are just too many restrictions on everything. The Chinese people don't have freedom of choice. The age limit has deprived many capable people of their rights to higher education. They traditionally believe that learning is young people's business. The older people are either knowledgeable or don't need to learn if they are not. People over 30 are regarded as having passed the prime time for study, and no longer accepted by any universities for undergraduate studies. This concept is wrong on the part of the people, and this is a flawed policy on the part of the Government. There should be no age limit at all. Whoever gets the highest test score should be accepted. Only then can the policy be regarded as fair, and the competition given on an equal basis.

It is stupid to relate one's marital status with one's intellect. There is no acceptable reason to require that every candidate be unmarried. What's more, under the present government marriage policy, it's unthinkable that a high school student be permitted to marry. I have never heard of a single instance where a high school student was married. Of course in the remote and mountainous areas, there are young people who marry early. However, those are

the people who may have never finished the sixth grade. If one wants to go to college, he must devote all his time and energy to the preparation because the competition is so tense. Marriage for high school students is absolutely out of the question. So, this policy really has no practical effect on high school students. Those who are immediately affected by this policy are the ones who finished high school earlier and worked for a few years and now want to pursue a higher education. Most of these people are probably married. There is no denying that there are many very talented people among these groups. These people should be given a chance. Anyway, this requirement is unreasonable.

Health requirements have been too rigid and some times too ridiculous. Many ordinary health problems are ruled out of consideration. I have a friend who got a very high test score one year, but when she was found to have congenital rheumatism, she was rejected. Her life was totally changed by that rejection. She can only find some temporary work. It is really unfortunate for her, because she had been a very promising student and would otherwise have a better future. This policy has ruined many talented people. The handicapped are treated even worse in this respect. They don't even have equal access to elementary and high school education, let alone higher education. The government and the society really should give more care to them. They are

already miserable physically, and should be provided with a chance to make up their losses in other aspects. However, in China today, where there are so many people with normal physical conditions that don't have a chance for admission, people seldom, if ever, give a thought to the handicapped.

Political qualifications are sheer nonsense. This requirement is the continuation of the legacy of the Leftist policy "putting politics in command" that dominated China for decades. Students and teachers hate this requirement but they dare not openly object. Political safety is deemed more important than anything else. There is no way to accurately or objectively judge one's political standing or political conscience. The only role this policy plays is to control people's minds or at least their words. Though this requirement has no practical binding force, it should not be listed as a qualification at all. It makes me sick to think of those disgusting words like "Love socialist system; Love Communist Party; Adhere to the proletarian dictatorship; and Persist in socialist road." But the students and teachers are helpless. They have to be careful to avoid any political troubles.

Using test scores as the selection criterion is better than any other method because it is the fairest way to select among thousands of competitors. Nowadays, backdoorism prevails in every walk of life. University enrollment is probably the only realm where backdoorism has

become largely checked. Except for a small number of people who were admitted with lower scores, candidates are required to compete on an equal basis. If other intangible criteria were used for selection it would be a total mess. You would see all kinds of unlawful events such as cheating, bribery, threat, favoritism, prejudice, and falsification. Because there is so much of a discrepancy between schools and provinces, a national unified standard would be impossible. Recommendations are bound to be subjective and unreliable. Those who benefit from this method are those whose families are associated with power or connections, and those who suffer are those from under-privileged families. Because going to college is the only way for those born into poor or under-privileged families to change their social status, they should be given a fair chance. At present, the entrance examination is the only selection method that is fair to everyone.

However, we must admit that the present enrollment plan is not absolutely fair as candidates from remote and rural regions have a slightly lower minimum passing line. But this is the result of the present social and educational conditions. The enrollment plan aims to help the poor regions to develop. Without this consideration, the poor regions would remain poor while advanced regions would keep on progressing at a faster speed. The result would be a vicious circle. So at the moment, this mandatory quota

allocation policy is necessary, although it is against the equal opportunity principle.

However, candidates from rural or remote regions are not necessarily poor in academic achievement, nor are they inferior in intelligence. The test score is not an absolutely reliable indicator of one's intelligence, ability or even potential. Coastal regions, for instance, have a long tradition of scoring higher than other regions, and inland regions traditionally score lower than other regions. But once enrolled into college, students from the inland regions do as well as other students, and often they do better. So, given equal educational opportunities, students from the inland region could probably score as high as other regions.

The mandatory enrollment plan indeed casts a shadow of unfairness in the enrollment process because it seemingly gives more favor to inland regions and enrolls some candidates with lower scores. But, if we look at a particular region, there is still fair competition among its own candidates. Only those with the highest scores are to be admitted, though their scores may be lower than the rejection scores in other regions. So, this quota allocation policy can be described as a fair and rational policy.

The present examination questions have too much subjectivity. The grading teachers' personal bias may

seriously interfere with the objectivity of the grading. Standardized tests could solve this problem. However, the test on writing skills is still necessary. Efforts should be made to try to formulate questions that require writing so that grading could be as objective as possible.

The examination dates couldn't be worse. I still remember those terrible days when we were shut in a hot and humid classroom without electric fans or cold water. There were always one or two from one classroom who couldn't stand the pressure and temperature and fainted. They were carried away to a clinic. It may be difficult to arrange for different dates, but I really wish the exams could be held at some better dates when it is not so hot. The pressure on students is already too heavy and the hot temperatures add to making their life more miserable.

The present enrollment policy is closely related to the graduate assignment policy. As the living conditions vary so widely, students from big cities and advanced regions do not want to go to work in small cities or rural regions. Even if they were assigned there, they would try all means necessary to return, though they may not find a good job when they return without authorization. The quota allocation policy partly solves this assignment problem as graduates are generally assigned back to where they came from. But there is one side effect to this go-back-to-where-you-came-from policy. Many excellent graduates would

have made greater achievements and contributions if they had been assigned to work in research institutions with better facilities. But they were forced to go back to their local or remote regions where, with poor facilities and support, their talents were wasted.

The enrollment procedure causes problems too. Filling out the application before taking the examination involves a great deal of risk and self-confidence. Every candidate must list six major preferences. The theory is that if the first preference is rejected, the second preference would be considered. If rejected again, the third, fourth, and so on will be considered in sequence. After the first preference is rejected, the student's file would then go to the second preferred university for selection. But what really happens then is that by the time the student's file gets there, that university has already completed its selection from candidates who have chosen this university as their first preference. So, the first preference is of utmost importance. If the first preference fails, 90 percent of the chance is probably gone. Because of this, many top candidates dare not apply to good universities for fear that they may get rejected and lose the opportunity all together. Instead, they choose a less prominent university for the sake of safety. If they had taken the test and got the test score back before applying, they would be more realistic about themselves.

Offering the examination only once a year puts many unselected candidates at a great disadvantage. They have to wait a whole year to take another test. It is difficult to offer a nation-wide examination like the present one twice a year because it cost lots of money and man power. If standardized tests are used, this problem could be easily solved. Then the tests could be offered four times a year so that students can choose the test to take scheduled for when they feel at their best. I think China has the capacity to do this. The question is that the leadership, which is always very conservative in making reforms and changes, has not realized the advantages of standardized tests. Despite its shortcomings, the standardized tests are a better alternative if the tests could be more objective, more economical, more effective, and offered more than once a year.

On the impact on secondary education

Secondary education should aim to help students develop their thinking and practical skills and acquire the basic knowledge. Ethics education is important too. Ethics and disciplinary behavior is not politics. Politics shouldn't have a place in secondary education. But at present, schools universally take admission to university to be the purpose of teaching and learning. To increase the enrollment rate, schools have tried all means, for the

benefit of a few but at the dispense of many. In every senior high school, there is an elite class composed of the top 10 percentile of the graduating population. These students are given extra attention and care because they are the hope of the school. This kind of practice has strongly hurt the self-confidence and self-esteem of the rest of the students. Many of them would become pessimistic and gradually lose impetus of study, thinking that they probably don't have any chance even if they tried hard. The school leadership may have meant well in doing this, but the effect on the majority is negative.

The pressure on students and teachers is tremendous. For students, the outcome of the test determines their future; for teachers, the outcome of the test affects their reputation and promotion. Every parent has high expectations and wants their child to be the best. To them, the only glorious future of their child is to go to college. Other alternatives are unthinkable. This is especially the case with intellectual families. They simply cannot accept the thought of their child doing physical labor. "Everything is inferior except scholarly learning." This traditional concept still guides people's thinking. As a result, everybody is putting pressure, explicitly or implicitly, on the students. What the students and teachers all have to do is to practice more and more mock tests and complete more and more exercises. Wish and hope, anxiety

and depression, desperation and exhaustion; all these are characteristic of every candidate, even days and weeks after the examination. These characteristics continue to prevail through the whole enrollment process. When the final enrollment outcome becomes known, these characteristics will be replaced with relief, excitement, celebration, or in other cases, with disappointment, disillusionment, and despair.

Suggestions for change

Generally speaking, the present admission policy has more positive impact on the society as whole. This is perhaps the only place where there is fair competition, and where power and position don't count. Students have to study real hard in order to succeed. This competition has pushed forward the quality and standard of secondary education. As a matter of fact, the Chinese senior high school students are learning what the American freshmen are learning in college. The negative impact is its enormous pressure on students, teachers and parents. We can say that it's just like the law of the jungle and the most suitable survive.

As we said earlier, most of the candidate's qualification requirements are not absolutely necessary. Or at least they should be very lenient and flexible so that more people can be permitted to try their chance or luck.

The division of students into two categories is one way to cope with the examination. It is not a good practice to divide students into liberal arts classes and physics-engineering classes. Students should learn all these subjects, as these are basic knowledge. As a consequence of the present practice, we often find that students majoring in liberal arts are very poor in mathematics and logic, and students majoring in engineering are poor in history and geography. They really should have learned all these subjects in high school. However, the entrance examination does not have to test every one of these subjects. I would suggest that, in addition to the three basic subjects, that is, Chinese, Mathematics, and Foreign Language, there should be a general knowledge test. This general knowledge test should include the basic concepts of all the other untested subjects, such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, and Geography. In this way, students wouldn't have to memorize so much. At the same time they should have learned what they are required in high school.

But the politics exam should be done away with. There is too much ideological indoctrination and too little knowledge. Nobody knows whether those theories are true or not. Students just need to memorize what's in the text book. Just like the political qualification, the Party and government want to use this subject to control people's minds. If it cannot be done away with, the content of the

exam should be changed. Such topics as political economy, philosophy, and even Marxism, should be taught as schools of thoughts rather than as guiding principles. Nobody really likes the politics classes. It's just dogma that is boring, stereotyped, useless, and blind-folded to reality. As a substitute, a course on ethics or psychology and physiology should be offered, as the high school years are the most sensitive years of the students' growth.

Under the present educational and social system, what can be done to improve the current admission policy is perhaps quite limited because the government is not in favor of change. However, there are quite a few areas that can be reformed without offending the government's and the Party's political and ideological principles. For instance, if we want to change the candidates' qualification requirements, we can safely extend the age limit, remove the requirement on unmarried status, and make the health requirement flexible. However, we'd better not remove the political requirement. Nobody wants to get into trouble suggesting its removal despite its complete uselessness and absurdity. Other technical questions, such as whether and how to use standardized tests, when and how often the tests are to be offered, what enrollment procedures to follow, and what to be tested on, could be good issues to start experiment with.

Interview Summary

Mr. Ping came from a local technical college with a small enrollment. He taught there for three years. He has been living and studying in the United States for six years.

Ping is strongly against some of the qualification requirements. He maintains that the age restriction is entirely unnecessary and it is stupid to relate one's marital status with one's intellect. As marriage for high school students is absolutely out of the question, this policy really has no practical effect. Health requirements have been both rigid and ridiculous. The handicapped are treated even worse. Political qualifications are sheer nonsense whose only role is to control people's minds, or at least their words.

The practice of using test scores as the selection criterion is better than any other criteria, because it is the fairest way to select among thousands of competitors. Recommendations are subjective and unreliable. The examination is the only selection method that is fair to everybody.

The present enrollment plan is not absolutely fair with the mandatory quota allocation policy. But, this is the result of present social and educational conditions. He thinks that this mandatory quota allocation policy is necessary though it is against the equal opportunity principle. He points out, however, that candidates from

rural or remote regions are not necessarily poor in academic achievement, nor are they inferior in intelligence. Given equal education opportunity, the inland regions could score as high as other regions.

The present examination method puts too much pressure on students. It is not a good practice to divide students into two categories. The examination questions have too much subjectivity and grading teacher's personal biases could seriously interfere with the objectivity of the grading. Standardized tests could solve this problem. But the test on writing skills is still necessary. The politics exam should be done away with because there is too much ideological indoctrination and very little knowledge. The examination dates couldn't be worse and the humid and hot weather adds to the suffering of the candidates.

The enrollment procedure needs to be improved too. Filling out the application before taking the examination involves a great deal of risk and self-confidence. Offering the examination only once a year puts many unselected candidates at a great disadvantage as they have to wait a whole year to take another test. If standardized tests are used, tests can be offered four times a year. Then candidates could choose the time they think they could give their best performance.

Ping believes that secondary education should aim to help students develop their thinking and practical skills

and acquire basic knowledge. Ethics and disciplinary behavior are not politics. Politics shouldn't have a place in secondary education. Nowadays, the purpose of teaching and learning is merely to prepare students for college.

The pressure on students and teachers is tremendous. The outcome of the test determines the students' future and also affects teachers' reputation and promotion. He maintains that if three subjects are to be tested rather than six, there would be no need to divide students into two categories of classes. Everybody would have to learn everything.

On the whole, Ping believes that the present admission policy has more positive impact on the society than negative impact. This is the only place where there is fair competition and where power and position don't count. The negative impact of the admission policy is its enormous pressure on students, teachers and parents. It's like the law of the jungle and the most suitable survive.

He admits that under the present educational and social system, what can be done to improve the admissions policy is quite limited because the government is not in favor of change. However, there are quite a few areas that can be reformed without offending the government's and Party's political and ideological principles.

Bai

Introduction to Bai

Ms. Bai went to a southeastern university in 1980 to study social sciences. She graduated in 1984 and was assigned to teach in a college of industrial technology. This institute is a small four-year college with a total enrollment of about a thousand, and all of the students are from the province. The graduates are normally assigned to work as engineers in various companies, business firms, or factories. After she worked for two years, she came to pursue a Master's Degree in Adult Education at a southeastern American university in 1986. She is about thirty years of age.

Bai's Reflections

On the current admission policies

In China, people have to keep themselves in accord with the Party and the Government. They cannot express any different views, especially on political, social, and ideological issues. Educational and economic issues are components of political issues. When people talk about educational and economic reform, they have to be careful not to offend the basic principles of the Party and the Government. The political checkup is an important and inevitable procedure for any kind of employment in China.

Also there is no exception for students applying to college. They have to be "politically fit", to use the Party's jargon.

Applicants have to fill in a form which asks all kinds of questions concerning their political attitude and behavior, family background, overseas' relations, and relatives who have committed political crimes. Though the political qualification requirement is not as rigid as before, it poses a direct threat to candidates who have had or whose families have had some political problems in the past. For instance, my father, a scientist, was wrongly labeled as a "rightist" in 1957, and was sent to work on a farm. Only after 25 years, when the Government formally admitted that thousands of patriotic intellectuals had been wrongly persecuted and my father was rehabilitated, was I permitted to apply to college. The Party and the Government are using this political qualification to control people's minds. Those who are considered politically unfit don't have a chance in the society.

To require applicants to be politically qualified is the most absurd requirement. This only serves the government purpose of political and ideological control. The requirement grew out of the fear that, if not tightly controlled, these students will behave in a manner that runs counter to the Party and the Government. This is self-deception. The tighter the control, the stronger the

resistance. That's the universal law. However, in order to keep from being disqualified for applying to college, no one dares openly oppose the political qualification requirement. Everyone will say what they are told to say and write what they are told to write. As far as the political requirement is concerned, it is mutual deception, pure and simple.

It is understandable for the Government to want to set an age restriction on the applicants. As there are so many brilliant young men competing every year, why spend the limited monetary resources on someone over 30 instead of on someone just 20 years of age. Every college student is supported by the Government. The Government really has the right and reason to set age and health requirements. But from a personal point of view, I'd rather there be no such restrictions. There are many brilliant people who do not have the opportunity, for one reason or another, to go to college. By the time situations permit, they may have already passed the age limit. For instance, I was twenty-two when I was permitted to sit in for the examination. One year later, I would have become disqualified, though the delay was caused not by my own fault but by the Government's fault. I believe there are many cases like mine. These people should be given a chance to try even though they have passed the age limit. Whether or not they could pass the exam is quite another matter. The issue is whether or not they should be given this basic human right.

At the time of application, every prospective candidate must go through an unnecessarily exhaustive physical checkup. The health requirement is very rigid. Physical problems such as heart disease, heavy asthma, hepatitis, facial scars and heavy pockmarks, limp, nasosinusitis, and so on, can disqualify the candidates for admission. And if not disqualified in the first place, the candidates would definitely be rejected by the university, even if they have had a good score on the exam. These people are treated in a prejudicial manner openly and officially. The handicapped people are treated even worse. But when people talk about the defects of the current university admission policy, they don't even think about this health requirement. After all, these people only constitute a tiny percentage of the total applicant population. In spite of this fact, I think this health discrimination is wrong, unnecessarily rigid and arbitrary. If these people successfully withstand the pressure before and on the examination, they can definitely withstand the study load of the college if they are enrolled. The pressure of the latter is much less substantial than the former on the students. And, those with a physical deformity have already suffered from their physical defects. The government policy further adds salt to their wound.

The requirement on unmarried status is ridiculous. The policy forces one to choose between "Family or Career" as if

the two things are the opposite of each other. Its purpose, like the age limit, is the same, that is, to cut the number of candidates to the minimum to save government money. This policy has no practical meaning for graduating high school students because the marriage policy (not the Marriage Law) forbids high school students to marry. In reality, I have never heard of a case where a high school student got married. Its primary target is on those who graduated earlier, worked for a few years, married, and now want to go to college. For one reason or another, these people did not have the opportunity. Now, circumstances may have changed that permit them to pursue a higher education. If they had decided to try, they must have made arrangements in the family. It is a personal decision. The government does not have the right to make this decision for them. Though this policy may only affect an extremely small number of people, this is really a matter of principle, that is, equal rights to education.

As for the present enrollment selection criterion, it is really hard to say whether it is absolutely fair or not. But we can say that the test score is the only available criterion that people have trust in. For the great majority of candidates, the opportunity is equal. Whoever gets the high score gets admitted. Backdoorism and other various forms of unhealthy and unlawful conducts have been reduced to the minimum. Regardless of their background, privileged

and underprivileged alike compete on the same basis. This provides those from underprivileged families a golden opportunity to change their future. That's why people generally endorse this method more than any other method of selection. Otherwise, children from the underprivileged families will never have a chance.

However, considering the nation as a whole, this selection criterion is obviously not absolutely fair. To start with, people in the remote and rural regions receive an inferior education. When competing against their city counter-parts, they are at a great disadvantage. For instance, children in the rural regions generally have to spend most of their time in the fields helping their parents while children in the cities spend their entire year in school. The test score of the former is naturally, and actually, lower than the latter. If the same standard is applied to both, the former certainly would have no chance. However, given the same secondary education, many of them could be as capable as, or even better than, those from the cities.

Another shortcoming of the total test score is that it cannot give an accurate and objective measurement of the candidates' ability and potentiality. What really matters now is the total score of the six tests. If one's total score is below the cutting line, he is automatically rejected even though he may get an extremely high score on

one of the subjects. This policy may stifle real talents in a particular academic discipline. For instance, I had a classmate who was extremely good at mathematics but hated politics class. Before the examination, when everyone was busily memorizing the so-called "politics review guide", he buried himself in mathematics exercises. As a result, he nearly got a maximum score in the math exam but scored poorly on the politics examination. As his combined total score was not high enough, he was rejected from consideration. He was very disappointed but not disheartened. He decided to go to a remedial class to make up for the politics class so that he could try again the next year. Fortunately, there was going to be a national mathematics competition to select candidates to participate in the International Mathematics Olympics. He was recommended. Out of thousands of participants, he scored among the top fifteen. The National Mathematics Competition Committee was shocked to learn that he was still in a politics remedial class. Though he did not participate in the International Mathematics Olympics, he was accepted to Hefei Science and Technology University upon the recommendation of the Competition Committee. That university is particularly fond of this kind of single-subject young genius. This is only one extreme example but I believe there are many brilliant candidates who are rejected simply because one weak score in a disliked subject

lowered the total score.

Again, it is hard to say whether the quota allocation policy is fair or not. For the candidates from the educationally advanced regions, it is certainly unfair compared to candidates from other regions. They would have to score ten or twenty points more in order to be enrolled. Strictly speaking, this policy is against the principle of equal competition. On the other hand, you can't say this policy is wrong. Objectively, this policy aims to achieve a balanced development throughout the nation. The inland regions have been traditionally backward and need the government's special and favorable support. Without special policies, these regions would probably lag far behind in social and economic development. But the government does not grant this policy unconditionally. Candidates from various provinces are normally assigned back to their local provinces to work. This avoids the problem of assigning graduates from cities to work in rural regions or inland provinces. Because of this assignment-related enrollment, people normally don't have much opposition to the allocation policy.

Of course candidates from the remote and inland regions still have to compete against each other. Because the allocated quota is still limited, the intense nature of the competition remains the same. The top scores may not be as high as the top scores of other areas, but they are still

the top score in the region. Only those with highest scores get accepted. Therefore, as far as a particular region or province is concerned, candidates can only get enrolled through a fierce but fair competition.

One most outstanding merit of this selection criterion is that it gives everybody a fair chance to display his own worth. Though there are some excellent students who fail due to various reasons, the great majority of candidates get what they deserve. If other methods are used, you are bound to see all kinds of unlawful doings to get one's child to college such as cheating, forgery, bribery, and intimidation. In China today, just as the Government does not abide by the law, people don't abide by the law either. The test score is the only reliable indicator. All other documents are very susceptible to distortion. Before law can be forcefully implemented and strengthened, it will not be possible to use other standards for a fair selection.

The examination method is perhaps the worst aspect of the whole matter. Though the timing of the exam is perhaps the best for examination administration and management, it is the worst for the candidates. I still remember the ordeal of those three examination days. Every day there were students who fainted on the spot and were carried out. All the examination supervisors had buckets of ice ready just in case. The atmosphere was very stifling. You really have to be physically and mentally strong in order to

survive. Generally speaking, the candidates of the top fifteen percent are not too worried because they are confident that they will pass successfully. The lower fifteen are not too worried either because they know their chance of success is very slim. The middle 70 are the ones who are the most worried and anxious. If they do well, they could get a better score. If they are not so lucky, they are finished. Three days' performance determines the future of these students. The significance of the examination is more dramatic in China than anywhere else in the world.

The most unnecessary test is the politics test. It requires so much time to memorize nonsense. The politics questions are so closely related to the Party's and Government's policies that no one really dares to say his real mind. The purpose of the politics examination is to test candidates' ideological and political consciousness. But actually, it tests nothing but the candidates' memory. It all depends on who could memorize what's in the textbook as much and as accurately as possible. You often hear the Party leaders say that politics should be regarded as the most important class in all the schools and universities. In reality, everybody hates it. But as people often say, by living under the leadership of the Communist Party, you have to obey its orders. Otherwise, you are inviting trouble for yourself. To deal with the politics examination, teachers would collect hundreds of possible questions and then write

the standard answers for the students to copy and to memorize. Consequently, the candidates' answers to a specific question would read fundamentally the same, if not exactly the same. This kind of answer would be considered as plagiarism or cheating here in the United States, but in China, this is what the Government expects all the candidates to write. Again, it's mutual deception.

On the impact on secondary education

The purpose of secondary education should be to give young people an all-around basic education. But now, everything centers around admission to the university. The normal curriculum exists only in name, and the teaching is totally for the preparation of the university entrance examination. Teachers and students only pay attention to those subjects that are to be tested. The teaching method is universally what's called spoon-feeding and the learning is by rote memorization. Mock tests are frequent and exercises are endless. For the graduating seniors, there is virtually no holiday, no weekend, and no relaxation whatsoever.

Students are really miserable and pitiful. You can imagine how their parents feel when they see their sons or daughters suffer so much during the last few months before the exams. But the parents don't have any choice either. They feel the pressure too. They are afraid that their

colleagues and neighbors will look down upon them should their children fail. The pressure is the heaviest on marginal students. Those who don't have much chance don't feel as pressured though they hope to be lucky. For teachers, their personal honor and benefits are related to the enrollment ratio of their classes. If their students do not do well, their salary raise may be suspended or they may be transferred to teach a lower grade. So while the success or failure of a student directly determines his own future, it also indirectly affects the well-being of his teacher.

Suggestions for change

Students shouldn't be divided into two categories of classes. The purpose of the division is to increase the enrollment rate. A correct way would be for schools to conduct their instruction according to the normal curriculum and let the students take care of their own reviews and preparations. But this is clearly wishful thinking. When every student is studying desperately and when every other school is trying all means to help, how can one school afford not to help or stand by with folded arms? The real situation is that while students compete against students, teachers compete against teachers and schools compete against schools. Also, parents compete against parents. As a result, everybody is putting pressure on the student. The higher the reputation of the school and of the teacher, or

the higher the expectations on the student, the greater the pressure on him.

If the examination could be offered several times a year, the pressure on students and teachers would be tremendously reduced. This option is possible only when standardized tests, rather than the present examination method, is used. The tests should be administered by a special agency or a department of testing. The testing could be offered at least four times a year so that students could choose the time when they feel they could perform their best. The standardized tests should cover all the subjects that students have been required to study, with appropriate breadth and depth. Again, the politics test should not be included or it should be substantially modified so that its content includes social sciences rather than political propaganda and ideological indoctrination.

One benefit of a machine-scored test is that it could reduce the cost and bias. The current method of examination demands hundreds of thousands of paid university and high school teachers to grade the papers for several days. With so many people grading the same kind of question, bias and discrepancies are a certainty. When a machine is used to grade, objectivity is assured, and it's also cost-effective. Of course, administering standardized tests requires a large reserve of tests. This can be easily achieved if the government is determined to adopt it. In China today, we

have rich resources of professionals to make it a success.

The primary selection criterion should still be the test score, as this is the only criterion that gives everybody an equal consideration. Recommendations should be limited to only the top few so that this method is not abused. The high school grades and GPAs are generally reliable when they are not used as selection criteria. However, they would immediately become unreliable if they were to be used as selection criteria. It will be a long time before any other method can be used for candidate selection.

Generally speaking, the current admission policy can be judged as fair and rational from the point of view of the whole nation. However, from the point view of certain individuals it is not very fair. In principle, everybody is equal in front of the test, and everybody has an equal opportunity to be selected based on the test score regardless of family background and social status. It eliminates the chances for malpractice. It can effectively and objectively select the best candidates for college. The competition demands that the students devote most of their time to study rather than engagement in other activities. The negative impact is that its pressure is too heavy and too devastative. The high competitive nature of the examination seriously affects the normal secondary education, and many courses on basic knowledge are

essentially neglected or abandoned. The significance of the examination has been pushed to such an extreme that it virtually determines one's entire future. It has a tremendous psychological impact on those who fail.

It is difficult to compare the United States with China on the university admission issue. In the U.S., high school students never feel such pressure. Their parents and teachers don't put any pressure on them. For them, going to college is just a matter of when and where, and there is no such thing as "success" or "failure" at this age. A low GPA or a low SAT score only limits their choices but does not preclude one from getting a higher education. If they can't go or don't want to go to college at the age of eighteen or twenty, they can go later, at any age they want to. There is always an opportunity open to them. And once enrolled, they can transfer from one major to another or transfer from one college to another fairly freely and easily. All these privileges have been taken for granted here, whereas in China, they can only be dreamed of and wished for. All the Chinese high school students, teachers and parents are wishing that some day this could become true in China. It may occur some day, but certainly not in the near future. The national economy has to be highly developed and educational opportunity has to be expanded. But if the Government is unwilling to make social and political changes, fundamental educational reform is highly unlikely.

At present, the basic educational system is untouchable; what can be changed is the technical components. And there are a lot of "technical components" concerning the university admission policies that we can begin to change. I believe students, teachers, and parents will sincerely welcome any effort on this matter.

Interview Summary

Ms. Bai came from a local technical college in the southeast of China. The students of this college are exclusively from within the province with the majority coming from the rural areas. Ms. Bai has taught at this college for two years, and has been studying in the United States for four years.

Ms. Bai seems to have strong negative reactions toward the political environment in China, saying that people cannot express different views on many important issues. She contends that to require applicants to be politically qualified is the most absurd requirement, only serving the government purpose of political and ideological control. As people dare not openly express their minds, this requirement is, in reality, mutual deception.

Though she admits that the age restriction is understandable, she personally prefers no age restriction. The health check up is unnecessarily rigid and exhaustive. The unmarried status requirement is ridiculous. These

requirements are meant to cut the candidates to the minimum to save government's expenses.

It is hard to say whether the present enrollment selection criterion is absolutely fair or not, but the test score is the only criterion people trust. The opportunity is fair for the great majority, and unhealthy and unlawful conducts have been reduced to the minimum.

However, considering the nation as whole, the present selection criterion is not absolutely fair because students in the remote and rural regions receive a much inferior elementary and secondary education. The test score alone cannot give an accurate and objective measurement of the candidate's ability and potentiality.

It is also hard to say whether the quota allocation policy is fair or not. Though this policy is against the principle of equal competition, she does not think it's wrong. The objective of this policy is to achieve a balanced development throughout the nation. People generally don't have much objection to this policy.

The examination method is the worst aspect of the whole matter. It is an ordeal for all the candidates. The most unnecessary test is the politics test. It is simply nonsense and everybody hates it. Students just write what they were told to write to avoid political problems.

Bai thinks that the purpose of secondary education should be to give young people an all-around basic

education. Now everything centers around admission to college. The normal curriculum exists only in name and teaching is focused entirely on the preparation of students for the final examination.

Students are miserable and pitiful, but they don't have any other choice. The ratio of success to failure in a class directly or indirectly affects the well-being of the teacher. Students shouldn't be divided into two categories of classes. The purpose of this division is to increase the admission rate. If the examination could be offered several times a year, the pressure would be tremendously reduced. This is possible only when standardized tests are used. The politics test should not be included or it should be substantially modified so that its content covers social sciences rather than teaching political propaganda and ideological indoctrination. Another merit of a machine-scored standardized test is that it could reduce cost and bias.

Generally, Bai believes that the current admission policy can be judged as fair and rational from the point of view of the whole nation, though from the point of view of certain individuals it is not. On principle, everybody is equal in front of the test and has an equal opportunity for competition. The negative impact is that its pressure is too heavy and too devastating.

Finally, Bai concludes that it is difficult to compare

the United States with China as the two systems are so different, though she admits that the former's is much more preferable than the latter's. Though the government is unwilling to make social and political changes, there are lots of concrete and technical components of the policy that can be improved.

Summary

The first section of this chapter has provided the reflections of ten Chinese educators on the Chinese university admissions policies followed by the researcher's summary of their main views. The next section will do an across-subjects analysis to find their similar and different views on particular issues under investigation. The cross-subjects analysis will begin with a demographic summary of the participants' background. Then the Content Analysis method will be used for data analysis.

Cross-Subjects Analysis

This section will provide a cross-subjects analysis. The cross-subjects analysis begins with a presentation of demographic information on the ten participants which includes such variables as sex, age, present status, rank in their Chinese universities, the respective status and location of their Chinese universities, teaching experience, and length of their residence in the United States. The

content analysis that follows focuses on four main topics:
a) the current admission policy; b) the impact on secondary education; c) suggestions for change; and d) a comparison between the U.S. and the Chinese university enrollment systems.

Demographic Information

A demographic profile is offered to provide an overview of the backgrounds of all the ten participants. The eight variables regarding the participants demographic information are summarized as follows:

- 1) Sex: 3 females; 7 males
- 2) Age: 3 over 40; 6 between 30 and 40;
1 under 30
- 3) Present Academic Status: 3 visiting scholars;
7 degree-seeking students
- 4) Rank at university: 3 associate professors;
7 instructors
- 5) University status: 2 national; 3 regional;
3 provincial; 2 local
- 6) Location of their Chinese universities: 2
northeast; 2 east; 2 southeast; 2 northwest;
2 southwest
- 7) Teaching experience: 2 over 30 years; 4
between 5 and 10 years; 4 less than 5 years
- 8) Live in U.S.: 2 five years and over; 4 between
three and four years; 4 less than two years

Conclusions drawn based on the analysis of demographic data are provided in Chapter V.

Content Analysis

An informal content analysis method is used for analyzing data. Instead of using frequency tables, the analysis is presented in descriptive summaries. The analysis is focused on the significant questions that are listed in the "Guidelines for Interview," and the analysis of participants' reflections is also presented in that order. The analysis is approached under three headings, beginning with the reflections on the various issues of the current Chinese university admission policies, and then its impact on secondary education, and finally their suggestions for change and reform.

I. On the current admission policy

Qualification requirements

For the political qualifications, seven participants express strong opposition, using words such as absurd, disgusting, nonsense, political control, ideological indoctrination; three think it is necessary to replace the political component with ethical and disciplinary behavior.

For the age restriction, seven consider it unnecessary (unreasonable, unfair, deprives people of their rights, shuts people out, etc.); two consider it necessary but think it needs to be flexible and extended; one thinks it is unfair but necessary.

For the health requirement, seven are strongly against

it, thinking it unfair, too rigid, arbitrary, too restrictive, ridiculous, and blocks people from college; three think some health requirements are necessary but need to be flexible.

For the unmarried status, nine think this requirement is unnecessary because it is meaningless; one thinks that it is necessary but should not be too rigid.

Selection criteria

All ten participants agree that using the test score as the only criterion for candidate selection is not ideal, and not absolutely fair, but all believe that at the present time this is the only fair selection criterion available. All ten think that other criteria should be used but cannot be used at the moment, believing that other criteria will increase events of backdoorism and cheating. Nine of them think that the test score can objectively and effectively measure the candidate's knowledge and ability, though exceptions do occur. One participant thinks that "it cannot give an accurate and objective measurement of the candidates' ability and potentiality." All agree that recommendations, GPAs and school grades are unreliable if they are to be used as criteria for selection, though one participant thinks that experiment should be carried out to incorporate GPA and school grades into selection criterion.

Examination method, questions, grading

All ten agree that the examination time is at the worst

time of the year, though five acknowledge the reasons for that timing. For the method of examination, they all think it is effective but seven think it is harmful to students (suffering, ordeal, destructive, devastating, terrible). For the examination subjects, nine regard the politics examination as unnecessary and call for its complete abolishment while one suggests the change of the content. While eight think that to test on six subjects is better than on three subjects, two think that to test on three subjects is better. For the grading method, all agree that the grading involves a "human factor," and subjectivity and costs too much money and man power.

Mandatory enrollment plan

Eight participants think that the quota allocation policy is unfair but necessary at the present time for the purpose of balancing the national education standard. They agree that this policy looks unfair from the individual's point of view but there is still fair competition within the region. Two regard it as unfair and unnecessary because the policy will fall short of its purpose. Four point out that candidates from remote areas are not inferior in intelligence and ability when compared to candidates from advanced areas. The discrepancy in their total test score results from inferior secondary education.

Enrollment process

All ten participants agree that a more desirable

process for enrollment should be for the candidates to take the examinations before filing applications rather than filing applications before taking examinations. The reasons are that latter involves a greater degree of blindness and risk on the part of the candidates, putting them in a disadvantageous position.

II. On its impact on secondary education

Purpose of secondary education

All ten participants believe that the purpose of secondary education should be to "foster a holistic development in every student," or to "popularize intermediate level of education," or to "help students develop their thinking and practical skills," or to "study the basic knowledge." No one thinks that the purpose of the secondary education should be to prepare students for college. All of them point out that in reality the purpose of teaching in secondary schools today is teaching for the test and to the test.

Method of teaching

Unanimously, all ten participants feel strongly about the teaching method in the secondary schools, stating that it involves "spoon-feeding," "duck-feeding," giving "endless homework and exercises," giving "frequent mock tests," "using previous years' examination papers," "teaching what to think instead of how to think," "teaching what to learn

instead of how to learn." All of them think that these methods of teaching are effective for preparing students for the examination but not good for training students in thinking and creative skills.

Curriculum

All ten participants point out that the normal curriculum and teaching syllabus has been "ignored," "interrupted," or "neglected."

For the division of classes into two categories, seven are strongly against it, thinking it "not correct," "not a good practice," "not beneficial in a long run," "serious drawbacks," and "shouldn't be divided." Two think it shouldn't occur too early, and 1 thinks it necessary.

Pressure on students, teachers, and parents

All the participants have unanimous opinions on this aspect of the issue. They all describe the pressure on students with strong words and expressions such as "tremendous," "enormous," "fierce," "extremely heavy," "miserable," "suffer terribly," "overwork and over exhaustion," "victims," "pitiful and sympathetic," "physical and mental test," "no weekends, no holidays," "going through an ordeal," and "three days determines the entire future." All of the participants also point out the tragic events that occur every year after the examination such as mental and physical collapse and suicidal attempts.

They all agree that the pressure on the teacher is also

heavy and that teachers use similar methods of teaching to boost the enrollment rate. They all believe that it is wrong to judge the quality of teaching by the enrollment rate.

However, the participants seem to differ slightly on the pressure placed on parents. Some think that intellectual parents feel more pressure while others think that farmer parents feel more pressure. Some respondents also think that the pressure on parents parallels the expectations parents place on their child.

As to the pressure parents put on their child, some think that intellectual parents are more anxious for their child to succeed and therefore put more pressure on them, while others think that farmer parents put more pressure on their child because their child's future is dependent on the outcome of the examination.

Its impact on society

All ten participants believe that the impact of the current university admission policy has more positive impact than negative impact. The positive impact is that it "stimulates education and learning," "encourages fair competition," "give everybody an equal chance despite their family background," "poses a challenge to all students and forces them to study hard," and "reduces malpractice." The negative impact is, unanimously, that the pressure is too heavy and too devastating. It seriously affects the normal

curriculum in secondary education; and it has a tremendous psychological impact on those who fail.

III. Suggestions for change

For the applicant qualifications, all the participants suggest that requirements such as age restrictions, health standards, and unmarried status, should be highly flexible, though seven of them think that these requirements are unfair and unnecessary. They unanimously suggest that the political qualification should be entirely abolished, and 3 suggest that, if it cannot be entirely abolished, it should be substantially modified to include ethical and disciplinary behavior and exclude political propaganda.

For the examination method, all of them prefer standardized tests. All prefer the tests to be offered several times a year, though some of them suggest that there should be an extra test on candidates' writing and creative skills.

For the enrollment procedure, all prefer "examination, application and selection" to the present "application, examination and selection."

For the selection criteria, seven think the test score should continue to be used as the sole selection criterion while three suggest carrying out experiments in restricted regions using multiple standards for selection. Three suggest that the top 5 percentile should be recommended to

college without taking the test. Two suggest adding bonus points to honor students. Two suggest using corrective factors to remedy test score discrepancy resulting from local education inferiorities.

For the enrollment planning, four feel strongly that all colleges and universities should be open to the whole nation instead of having mandatory location restrictions. Two suggest experiments on self-financed enrollment, whereas others think that entire self-financed enrollment is impossible, even for the years to come.

When evaluating the current admission policies as a whole, all the participants point out that the admission policies are closely related to, and the product of, the political, economic, social, cultural, and educational systems of China. Substantial reform on the former is unlikely if the latter remains intact.

IV. Comparison between U.S. and Chinese university enrollment systems

When comparing Chinese university admission policies with American university admission policies, all ten participants point out that it is difficult to compare the two because their educational and social systems are entirely different. But all do agree that the American university admission policies are more desirable than the Chinese university admission policies in many respects. The

most outstanding features of the U.S. university admission procedures are that the applicants enjoy complete freedom of choosing where and when to go to college and the universities exercise complete authority in decision making. There is a variety of criteria used for selection and the applicants do not suffer from the tremendous psychological and physical pressure throughout their high school years.

Summary

Chapter IV provided a report on the reflections of the ten participants on various issues of the Chinese university admissions policies followed by a demographic and content analysis of data. Chapter V will attend to an overall summary of the study as well as conclusions and implications.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study has focused on the reflections of ten Chinese educators on the current Chinese university admission policy. Four areas of concern have been investigated, namely, various issues of the policy, its impact on secondary education, the participants' suggestions for change, and their comparison between the American and the Chinese university enrollment systems. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the results of the data analysis and to make recommendations for use of the study's conclusions and suggestions for further study.

Conclusions

The analysis of data has attained several major findings. Conclusions drawn based on the findings are organized according to a) participants' personal factors and b) the four major areas studied.

a) Participants personal factors

Great efforts have been taken by the researcher in selecting participants for this study so that they would represent the typical composition of the population of the Chinese educators who are studying in American universities.

A variety of variables were observed which included age, sex, professional rank, size and location and status of their original Chinese universities, length of teaching experience, length of stay in the U.S., and the U.S. universities at which they were studying. The demographic analysis of the ten participants showed that this objective has been satisfactorily achieved: there were male and female participants; visiting scholars and degree seeking students; professors and instructors; national, regional and local universities; mid-aged and young; longer and shorter teaching experiences; and different periods of residence in the United States. This sample was therefore considered to be a multifaceted profile of the Chinese educators in the United States. At the same time, there is no claim for representativeness of Chinese scholars or a specific segment of Chinese students studying in the United States.

The analysis of reflections of all ten participants revealed that their demographic differences did not seem to have any apparent effect and influence on their reflections and perceptions on the questions under investigation. There were issues on which all shared unanimous opinion. There were also issues on which the majority showed identical views while others differed to various degrees. And those who expressed different views possessed different personal factors too. The result of the analysis did not indicate any apparent pattern regarding personal factors. No

particular factor was found to be decisive in shaping or affecting the reflections of all the participants. For example, though some of the participants who came from provincial universities think that the quota policy is helpful to improve educational conditions in the backward regions, one participant who came from a provincial university strongly disagree.

All participants shared their views willingly and honestly. They were surprisingly frank and out-spoken on many of the sensitive issues which they admitted they would not if this investigation had been conducted in China. Having been assured complete anonymity, not one of them ever expressed any concern over political apprehensions when their views were in direct opposition to the Chinese government's policy. The combination of willingness, honesty, frankness, openness on the part of the participants, and the think description, meticulous analysis and thoroughness of procedure on the part of the researcher, has satisfactorily established the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings of this investigation.

It was also discovered that all participants were very realistic when making suggestions for change and reform. Living in the United States, studying in American universities, and comparing the two different systems, these factors have not made the participants forget the real situation in China. They did not make unrealistic

suggestions. Instead, their suggestions seemed to be so practical and applicable that many of them could be implemented immediately -- if the government were willing to comply. This fact further adds to the worthiness and importance of this study.

Issues under investigation

Through the analysis of data, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions to the four major questions of study.

Q1: The participants reflections on the current Chinese university admission policy in regard to a) applicants' qualification requirements; b) use of test scores as the single criterion; c) examination methods, questions and grading; d) state mandatory plan; e) the enrollment process; and e) the effectiveness and fairness in enrollment.

Unanimous agreement from all ten participants was expressed on several issues. The most outstanding area was the political qualification requirement for applicants. All participants showed strong disagreement regarding this qualification requirement, equating it with "political control" and "ideological indoctrination," calling for its complete abandonment. Closely related with the political qualification requirement were the politics class in schools and the politics examination, both of which consist of stereotyped propaganda and out-dated dogma. They need to be abolished from the school curricula and the university entrance examination.

Unanimous opinion was also obtained on the use of test scores as the sole criterion for candidate selection. All participants believe that at present this is the only criterion available that can objectively, effectively, and fairly select the best candidates regardless of family background and social status. One most important merit of this selection criterion is that it has provided an equal opportunity for all, and success is achieved through fair competition rather than backdoorism. However, they all admitted that this selection criterion is not ideal or absolutely fair. The total reliance on the test score can preclude some excellent students who fail to get a high score because of some unexpected reasons, and those who do not take the tests well are not necessarily poor achievers in schools. The discrepancies in educational opportunities also put many good candidates from rural areas in disadvantage when competing with city candidates. Considering the present situation in China, test scores of the entrance examination need to continue to be the sole criterion for candidates selection to eliminate illegal practices such as backdoorism and cheating.

Another common view-point concerns the method of examination. Machine-scored standardized test is more desirable than the present traditional methods because the latter involves heavy subjectivity and put tremendous pressure on students. In the meantime, however, there

should be supplementary components that test students' writing ability and creativity. The tests are held on three consecutive days which generally happen to be hottest days of the year. Though this schedule is beneficial to the test administration, it is disastrous for students who take the test. It needs to be rescheduled to a better date such as in April or May rather than in July.

Most candidates believe that it is unfair to include age and health in the qualification requirements to shut some people out of competition. A few participants voiced different views. Analyses of these participants' reflections in context revealed that their opinions differed with others' not in the essence of meaning but rather in the angles of perspective. For instance, when one participant said that it is necessary to set age and health requirements, she was keeping in mind the highly competitive but unproportionally small enrollment ratio. Obviously, she was not advocating that the applicants older in age or with health problems be completely blocked from the opportunity to pursue a higher education. From the context of her reflections, it is easy to conclude that, had the educational opportunities in China been as ample as they are in the United States, she would have expressed her view from a different angle. Similarly, when other participants said that the age restriction and health requirements are necessary but should be flexible, they were expressing their

views from the angle of the national enrollment reality rather than from their own personal beliefs.

Most participants agreed that the state mandatory enrollment plan aims to balance the national education and to help backward regions to develop. Despite its unfair nature to individual candidates, the state mandatory enrollment plan produced more positive than negative effects. However, the state enrollment plan should be reformed so that the candidates can have more freedom of choice.

The present enrollment procedure of "application before the examination" forced the candidates to make judgements on themselves before they take the examination. It involves a great degree of self-confidence and blind guessing. It puts students to great risk. In contrast, the enrollment procedure which will benefit candidates tremendously should be "application after the examination." With this procedure, students can choose appropriate universities according to their test scores, thus eliminating unnecessary risk and anxiety.

In summary, the present enrollment system can be described as an effective and fair means to select the best candidates to higher education. Nonetheless, this system embodies many components that are unfair and unnecessary. The removal or reform of these components will substantially improve the existing enrollment system.

Q2: The participants' reflections on the impact of the enrollment system on secondary education in regard to a) purpose of secondary education; b) method of teaching; c) curriculum planning; d) pressure on students, teachers and parents; and e) impact on general public.

The impact on secondary education is another issue that gets unanimous agreement. All participants argued against the prevailing idea that the purpose of secondary education is to prepare qualified graduates for college. This idea has led to practices in secondary education that have seriously and negatively affected normal curriculum and methods of teaching. The normal curriculum has been modified to suit the preparation of the examination. The method of teaching is universally "duckfeeding" and teaching to the test. Because the result of the examination virtually determines a person's entire future, its significance is nothing less than a life and death struggle to the candidates. The pressure put on students is so tremendous that it results in short-term as well as long term negative impact on individuals and on society as a whole. The teachers are heavily pressured to increase the enrollment rate to save their reputation or to get salary increase. It is wrong to evaluate the quality of instruction by looking at the enrollment rate of the school. Parents feel the same pressure because for the family, success means honor and glory and failure means unemployment and a burden to the family.

However, different views were found regarding the

feasibility of dividing students into liberal arts and physics-engineering classes. The majority gave negative remarks to this practice, charging that it has seriously hindered the overall growth of the students. Two participants gave a different opinion, thinking that it is a waste of time to study something one is not going to use in future. A related argument was focused on how many subjects should be tested. While two preferred three subjects, others preferred the present six. These two arguments were based on the assumption that the present examination method continues to be used. Assumably, if standardized tests were to be used, their differences would be further narrowed.

Q3: The participants' suggestions for change in regard to a) applicants' qualification requirements; b) examination questions and methods of testing; c) enrollment planning; d) selection criteria; and e) enrollment process.

Despite the necessity that all participants felt for change and reform, they were quick to admit that under the present situation when the political atmosphere is so tense and economic reform is at a standstill, fundamental changes are unlikely. An attempt to abolish the political qualification requirement and the politics class from the curriculum is risky at this time. Because China is practically governed not by Law but by Authority, backdoorism will run rampant if high school grades, GPAs and recommendations are used for candidates selection because every school and every teacher will try to increase the

enrollment ratio by providing false records. They will have to wait a long time before they can be incorporated into the selection criteria. Unless the enrollment rate is substantially increased, the pressure on students will remain heavy and tense, but the national economy seems to be prohibiting any enrollment increase in the years ahead.

However, some reforms can be accomplished regarding the technical components of the enrollment system--the specific issues that do not directly conflict with the Party's and the Government's political and ideological principles. These reforms would benefit the candidates as well as secondary education. The technical components include, for example, using machine-scored standardized tests, offering two or three tests a year, giving applicants more freedom to choose the date of the test and choosing the universities they want to attend, rearranging the enrollment process, and reconsidering the age and health requirements or making them more flexible.

Q4: Their comparison between the Chinese and the U.S. university admission policies.

When comparing the Chinese university admission policies with the American counterparts, all the participants point to the sharp contrast between the two: while the American universities follow the policies of flexibility, freedom of choice, and multiple selection criteria, the Chinese university admission policies are characterized by rigidity, restriction, and single selection

criterion. The contrasts are most striking in the following four issues that received shared perceptions of all the participants.

a) Candidates qualifications: American universities generally have one specific qualification requirement which is the candidate's graduation from secondary school with 16 units completed. GED is also accepted and graduates of nonaccredited secondary schools may be given special consideration. In contrast, candidate qualification requirements for Chinese universities include political attitudes, ethical conducts, age, marriage, and health in addition to high school graduation.

b) Admission procedure: In the U.S., each university follows its own admission procedure and exercises complete authority in decision-making. High school graduating seniors can choose to take the SAT test any time before or by the beginning of the last semester in high school. They also enjoy the freedom to choose when and where to attend a university. In China, there is only one entrance examination offered once a year. Candidates' choices are limited to the number of universities that are assigned to them by the State. Key universities select their candidates first. Nonkey universities select candidates from among what is left. University authorities have limited power in decision-making regarding major issues.

c) Basis for candidates selection: American

universities use a variety of criteria for candidate selection. Academic criteria generally include grade point average, SAT or ACT or ACH scores, rank in class, recommendations, performance and course selection in school. Other criteria that are given consideration include character and personality, extracurricular participation, and to a lesser degree, alumni relationship. The Chinese universities only use the entrance examination score as the sole basis for candidates selection.

d) Enrollment quota: The American universities generally try to enroll as many students as possible without sacrificing their selection standards. In contrast, the mandatory enrollment plan of the Chinese government forces the Chinese universities to abide by the enrollment quota, thus rejecting a high percentage of highly qualified candidates.

Sharp contrast is also found in some related issues that are beyond the scope of this study. For instance, in the U.S. college students pay for their expenses and can transfer to another major or another institution. In China, the expenses for higher education are covered by the State and transfers are not permitted. American college graduates have to look for employment after graduation but to Chinese college graduates, jobs are assigned by the State. These related issues directly or indirectly affect the university admission policies and need to be further studied.

After comparing these different policies and practices, all ten participants came to the conclusion that the flexibility, freedom of choice, and multiple selection criteria practiced by the American universities are more desirable than the rigidity, restriction, and single selection criterion practiced by the Chinese universities. The former benefits both the students and the university. However, considering the current political, social, economic situations in China, participants agreed that it may be impossible for the Chinese universities to do likewise now or even in the near future because this admission issue is only the product and the reflection of the whole system. Many expressed some hope that China needs to learn, to experiment, to adapt and to incorporate into the Chinese educational system what is feasible, suitable and practicable without confronting the present sociopolitical structure.

Implications

Commenting on the Chinese educational system, Hayhoe (1989) noted:

Central to China's traditional culture was a clear conception of the structure and organization of knowledge expressed in educational institutions that contributed to the remarkable continuity of the Chinese imperial system over many centuries. I would suggest that this aspect of Chinese scholarly culture persisted even after the imperial examination system was abolished in 1905 and the empire itself was overthrown in the Revolution of 1911. Its persistence created a contradiction within the Chinese modernization process

that was to intensify in each subsequent period." (p. 9)

The present Chinese educational system is essentially the result and the product of the old Confucian tradition mingled with the adoption of Western practices. In the early days of the Republic, European patterns were emulated. With the establishment of the Communist Government in 1949, China began to adopt and implement Soviet patterns for the structure and organization of the higher education curriculum. The following decades witnessed frequent twists and turns, which, instead of weakening, have reinforced features of both the European and Confucian tradition, supporting a hierarchical and authoritarian sociopolitical order. Simply stated, Chinese political leaders wished to transform knowledge patterns within the higher education curriculum to serve explicit goals of economic modernization, but at the same time they were reluctant to abandon a Confucian knowledge structure that was seen as essential to the political order. That is why the guiding principle of education during all the past forty years in China was, and still is, "to train ideologically qualified and vocationally proficient successors to carry on the cause of Communism."

All the participants, as well as the researcher himself, were brought up and educated under this system. The combination of tradition and education inevitably fostered or influenced their perception and reflection.

They are culturally bound. The striking similarity of opinion on so many issues may well be a reflection of this outstanding characteristic. Other people who do not share this characteristic may have looked at the same issue from an entirely different perspective. Similarly, a researcher who is accustomed to a different value system may have reached different conclusions from the same data.

Traditionally, the Chinese people classified themselves either as mental workers (similar to white-collar workers) or as physical workers (similar to blue-collar workers). The former is generally associated with superiority and nobleness while the latter with inferiority and humbleness. The two groups share different values of judgement and look at issues from different perspectives. University graduates naturally belong to the former. In contrast, those who fail to get a higher education would most probably join the latter group. All the participants in this study graduated from a university and had been successful in their careers. Perhaps their reflections represented people who share the same judgement value with them. It is questionable that applicants who failed the examination would offer similar reflections on the same issue, though they may share the same culture and tradition.

Many issues investigated in this study yielded unanimous agreement from all the participants. However, the unanimous agreement on a particular issue does not

necessarily imply that a solid conclusion can thus be drawn. Further studies may be needed to investigate the issue in a deeper and broader perspective. For example, all the participants believed that if high school grades, GPAs and recommendation letters are used for selection, backdoorism will run rampant, thus losing their credibility and reliability. However, the following questions may be raised regarding this issue. Since backdoorism already exists under the present selection criterion, what will be the margin of increase if these criteria are used? What are the causes of backdoorism? Are there ways to check, to reduce, and gradually eliminate backdoorism? What will be the ratio between enrollment through backdoorism and enrollment through normal process? And how seriously will it affect or improve the enrollment system? Only when these questions are answered can a solid conclusion be reached.

Recommendations

As a result of the study, the researcher offers two recommendations. The first recommendation concerns the use of the findings of this study. This study was conducted on foreign soil and in an anonymous manner. The researcher believes that the combination of the detailed presentation and careful analysis sufficiently established the trustworthiness of this qualitative study. However, the researcher wishes to remind the reader of limitations of

this study. The sample population was a convenience sample with only ten participants. A larger, randomly selected sample population would be desirable to determine the extent to which reflections about education are representative. The second recommendation concerns the need for further research on other related issues. This study has focused on the current Chinese university admission policy and its impact on secondary education. Not included in this study were other issues that may have direct or indirect impact on the admission policy. Issues such as university administrative policies, national budget allocation policies, and minority applicants policies, certainly have significant influence on the enrollment system. For example, if freshmen or sophomores were permitted to change majors or to transfer to another university, the application procedure would have been different. Further study is needed to investigate these issues so that more comprehensive conclusions can be reached.

Concluding Statement

Throughout the process of interviews and data analysis, I, the researcher of this study, became frequently impressed by the fact that participants offered so many common responses on so many important issues so honestly and so frankly. This phenomenon and the findings of this study have provoked some deep thoughts in me the researcher.

The most striking common reaction of the participants towards the current Chinese university admission policies is directed at the political qualification requirement and the politics examination. This is a most sensitive topic and their reaction has explicitly and courageously challenged a most revered tenet in today's China.

Ever since the Communist Government came to power in 1949, it set the principle of education as "training qualified successors to carry on the cause of Communism." Throughout the past forty years, general education has been performing a variety of tasks, involving both ideopolitical and academic functions. Political education has always been one of the focuses of the curriculum from elementary school through graduate studies. Since education follows the political line, priority has been given at different times to one set of values over the other and numerous policies have been associated with ideopolitical values. Though actual practice in the past forty years has revealed the difficulties of incorporating the ideopolitical values and the academic values within the same educational structure, the policies persisted.

All the participants of this study were educated under this system. From their childhood they were taught and expected to follow the Party's directions and to believe in the Party's doctrines. It is highly unlikely that they would have expressed the same views with the same

explicitness were they still in China where political persecution has always been a threat. Perhaps nobody can doubt the sincerity of the participants when they expressed their views in a free land. Their reflections revealed that the Chinese Government has failed its long-advocated purpose of the political education. Though people inside China still submit themselves to political indoctrination, the government should realize that this submission is not out of their willingness but because of their helplessness. It is time to reconsider the purpose of education in general and the political education in particular. Or at least, the candidates qualification requirements and the politics courses should be abolished or substantially redesigned.

I share many of the views the participants offered in this study. The present candidate qualification requirements are too restrictive and too rigid. I agree with the participants' opinion that the qualification requirements should put emphasis on candidates' academic performance rather than on political standing, age and health. The national unified college entrance examination has been an effective and fair means to select the best candidates to college, considering the present situation in China. However, the pressure and the negative effects it produces often cast doubts on the results and tend to offset its effectiveness. China has been a closed society for centuries. The current examination method was directly

inherited from our ancestors with little outside influence. Now that exchanges with the outside world and the development of modern technology have opened the minds of the Chinese educators, it is possible to try out new methods of examination. One practical method may be to combine the machine-scored standardized test method popular in the West with the long-standing hand-graded tests to produce a new type of examination which could absorb the strengths of both methods while reducing their shortcomings. However, a substantial reduction of the pressure on candidates has to await the change of the present restrictive enrollment policy.

Backdoorism has been the concern of every participant of this study regarding the multiple-standard selection criteria. This concern really reflects that of a much larger population in China today when backdoorism has been an effective means to accomplish one's ends. The reason for its popularity is partly due to tradition and partly due to corruption. I believe that some day when the Chinese society becomes governed by Law instead of by Power, this issue of backdoorism will be substantially eliminated, because backdoorism is generally associated with individuals in power or in charge. When everyone respects the Law and when an equal opportunity is provided for all, backdoorism will no longer be an obstacle to the implementation of multiple-standards selection criteria.

The university enrollment issue, like every other major issue in China today, is not only an educational issue but also a social and ideopolitical issue. Problems with the enrollment system can not be solved independently. Fundamental educational reforms that are necessary to solve the many problems acknowledged in this study, such as in the university admission policies, the unified entrance examinations and secondary education, have to await the successful completion of an extensive political, social, economic, and educational restructuring. But in the meantime, it is imperative, and possible, to start with the reform of those issues that could be achieved within the present sociopolitical structure. As a Chinese proverb goes, "A thousand-mile long journey begins with the first step." And the first step towards an improved educational system might well be some of the findings in this study.

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APPENDIX A

Higher Institution Enrollment Ordinances
issued by
State Education Commission

(Excerpts)

Higher institutions enrollment must adhere to the principle of comprehensively examining applicants morally, intellectually, and physically so as to select the best. The enrollment must be executed such that it will be beneficial to secondary education as well as social stability. It must be administered in accord with the ratified enrollment plan, and achieved through the national unified entrance examination.

Chinese citizens who meet the following qualifications may apply:

1. uphold the four cardinal principles (Socialist Road; Proletarian Dictatorship; Leadership of the Communist Party; Marxism and Leninism);
2. love motherland; observe disciplines; abide by law;
3. determined to study hard for the socialist construction and modernization;
4. high school graduate or equivalent;
5. under 25 of age and unmarried;
6. meet health requirements.

Foreign citizens residing in China, who graduated from a high school or possess equivalent education, are physically fit and under 25 of age, may apply. Overseas Chinese, Hong Kong and Taiwan residents should see appropriate stipulations specified separately.

The National Unified University Entrance Examination include the following subjects:

-- Liberal Arts Applicants:

Politics, Chinese, Mathematics, Foreign Language (English, Russian, or Japanese), History, Geography, Biology

-- Physics-Engineering Applicants:

Politics, Chinese, Mathematics, Foreign Language (English, Russian, or Japanese), Chemistry, Physics, Biology

(Source: People's Daily, 04/27/90, 12/28/90)

APPENDIX B

Applicants Qualifications
for
Beijing Foreign Studies University
April 1, 1990

1. This University participates in the National Unified Enrollment. Candidates qualifications, examination subjects, and examination dates are in accord with the stipulations of the related documents issued by the State Council. Inquiries and questions should be directed to the office of the local Enrollment Committee.
2. As stipulated in the enrollment documentation of the State Council, applicants to this University must not exceed 23 of age (born after September 1, 1967).
3. Applicants who have studied English may apply to the English Specialty or any other specialty; applicants who have studied other foreign languages than English may only apply to any specialty but not English.
4. Health standards must be in accord with "Physical Checkup Standards and Regulations for Higher Institution Enrollment" issued by the State Education Commission and Ministry of Public Health. Applicants with the following problems may not apply to this University: stuttering; hoarse voice; defects with oral cavity, ear, nose, and throat that may affect one's pronunciation; facial abnormalities (including one-eye blindness, convergent squint, strabismus, harelip, forehead breach, tilted neck, etc.); facial scar, pocks, and limp.
5. Beginning 1989, general fees for the newly enrolled student is 200 Chinese Yuan.
6. Self-financed students are restricted to Beijing city only. The tuition and fees are 2500 Chinese Yuan for the academic year.

(Source: Enrollment Bulletin, 1990)

APPENDIX C

Health Requirements
for Admission to Higher Institution
issued by
State Education Commission
and
Ministry of Health

(Excerpts)

Students who have the following health problems may not apply for admission to higher institution:

1. Serious congenital hear disease;
2. Low blood pressure (90/60 or below) and high blood pressure (140/80 or above);
3. Active pulmonary tuberculosis;
4. Chronic hepatitis;
5. Diabetes;
6. Acute arthritis;
7. Serious kidney disease;
8. Any serious physical handicap or deformity, such as, for example, the muscular atrophy resulting from infantile paralysis or a difference of more than three centimeters in the length of the legs;
9. Severely defective hearing or eyesight, the later being defined as the corrected sight of both eyes measuring 0.4 or lower (normal eyesight on this scale ranges from 1.5 to 0.5);
10. Epilepsy.

(Source: China's Universities, p.55)

APPENDIX D

1990-1991 Mandatory Enrollment Source Plan

Beijing Foreign Studies University
Beijing, China

Designated Provinces	Specialties							TOTAL
	Eng	Rus	Spa	Fre	Ger	Ara	Mal	
Beijing	47	16	9	10	12	8	2	104
Tianjin	3		2	2	2	2		11
Hebei	4			2		3		9
Shanxi	3	1						4
Neimenggu	2	2						4
Liaoning	4	2			3	2		11
Jilin	5	2						7
Heilongjiang	4	2		2				8
Jiangsu	6			3	2			11
Zhejiang	4			3	3			10
Anhui	2			2				4
Fujian	2		2					4
Shandong	4			2	2			8
Henan	3							3
Hubei	5	2			2			9
Guangdong							2	2
Sichuan	5	2	2		2			11
Shaanxi	5			2		3		10
Gansu						4		4
Ningxia						4		4
TOTAL	108	29	15	28	28	26	4	238

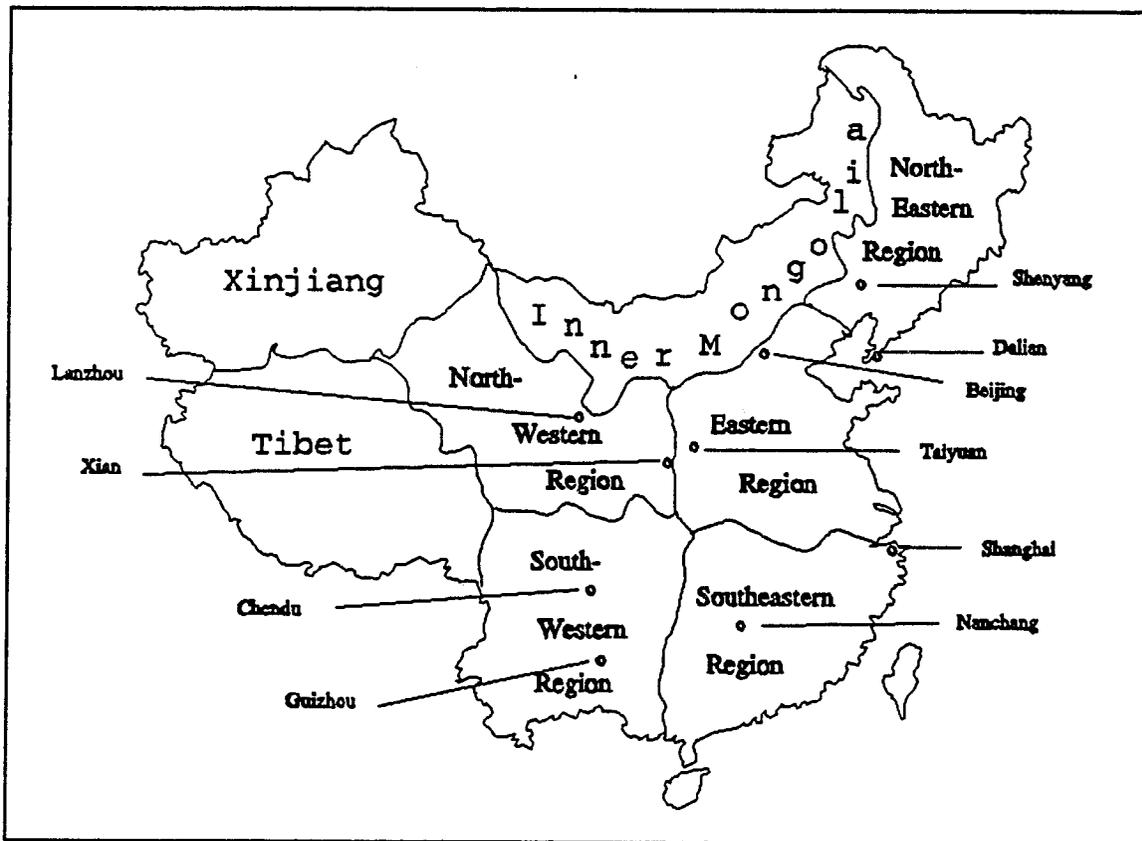
- Note: 1) Out of 28 specialties, only 7 enroll new students this year, namely, English, Russian, Spanish, French, German, Arabic, and Malay.
- 2) Out of 30 provinces, only 20 provinces have been designated.

(Source: Enrollment Bulletin, 1990)

APPENDIX E

MAP OF CHINA

(showing participants' original regions)



APPENDIX F

Letter to Participants

Dear _____ :

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Your participation will enable me to do an in-depth study of the reflections and perceptions of the Chinese educators who are now studying under a different educational system on the Chinese university admission policies between 1977 and 1988. As we have all grown up under this educational system and personally experienced the whole process, your reflections and perceptions, after you have studied for some time here in the United States, will be of special value, not only to my current research, but also to the future reform of the Chinese educational system. Your input and insight on the issue will be highly appreciated.

This study involves a series of interviews with Chinese educators. Each interview will last for approximately two hours. It would be conducted in a conversational manner, and you won't feel any uncomfortable pressure. As you have agreed, the interview will be taped, merely for the purpose of keeping an accurate record, and it will be erased once the study is completed. All the interviews will be entirely confidential and anonymous, and the data will only be used for this study alone. Therefore there is no need to worry about any unhappy consequences.

Please find attached a copy of the Guideline for our interview. It covers three main areas of concern, each of which has a few specific questions that would be the focus of the interview. Of course the interview needn't proceed in that order nor be confined to it. Any related questions or branching off are also welcome as long as they help shed light on the issue under discussion. It will help if you can do some preparation and research as it will make your points of view more convincing and persuasive. But I do think that it is necessary to review the undergraduate admissions requirements of your university you are attending here in the U.S. so you can make meaningful comparisons.

I will contact you again when I am ready for the interview. The specific time and place will be arranged to the convenience of both of us.

Thanks again for your cooperation and contribution.

Sincerely,

Baoshan Liu