

# On the Path Choice of Fair Opportunity for Higher Education Enrollment from the Perspective of Good Governance

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## **Abstract**

*The issue on the enrollment fairness of higher education has always been a hot topic of social concern. Equal enrollment of higher education is one of the basic demands of modern society. Enrollment system is the fundamental cause of the problem of unfair enrollment. Legality, transparency, democracy, service, responsibility and efficiency under good governance can best achieve fair higher education entrance opportunity by providing a suitable environment to ensure the effectiveness of governance. It is of practical significance for education fairness to improve the college enrollment system under multi-governance, optimize the allocation of resources, promote the sunshine project and strengthen education legislation.*

**Key words:** good governance; higher education; enrollment opportunity; fairness

Since the popularization of higher education, the number of young people of the right age to receive higher education in China has increased. By 2013, the number of college students has reached 6998330 people and the number of students in the school is 24680726. [1] The scale of higher education in China has been developing rapidly, but the rise in the number of people receiving higher education does not mean that the higher education enrollment opportunity for the individuals is equal and fair. The college entrance examination is an important medium for the social reproduction of the culture capital and the re division of social stratification and status. The belief that "knowledge changes destiny" concerns every family, every youth's most vital interests, and the stability and development of the whole society.

At present, the current enrollment and recruiting system is the main reason leading to the unfairness of higher education enrollment, the policy that "all men are equal in front of the test scores" just seems fair in form. In fact, college enrollment is mainly based on the "provincial quota", which means enrollment

indicators are set according to the number of candidates in different regions and provinces. The practice of this policy, to a certain extent, promoted the equalization development of higher education admission in different regions. However, with the continuous development of higher education reform, it is more and more obvious that provincial quota policy negatively influences the individual to enjoy the fair opportunity of admission to the high quality of the higher education resources. Some scholars believe that "the college entrance examination system is the most social concern, thus the problem of the college entrance examination system itself has been questioned and even referred to as 'China's largest education injustice', 'the most dazzling injustice'." [2] The national medium and long-term education reform and development plan (2020 - 2010) clearly regulates fairness promotion as a national basic education policy, which is the basis of social justice. The key to achieving education fairness is to achieve the fairness of admission opportunity. Equal admission to higher education is a fundamental part of good governance and social fairness and justice. Higher education being a quasi public product, the government has the responsibility to protect the fairness of higher education enrollment and ensure that the individuals enjoy the quality of higher education resources. Good governance is a new mode of administrative management in China, and it is also the inevitable trend of the university management in the future. The fundamental characteristic of good governance is the joint governance of multiple subjects. To focus on the development of higher education in the perspective of good governance will undoubtedly provide a new research perspective and feasible path to solve the problem of higher education admission opportunity.

## **1. Theoretical interpretation of good governance**

### **1.1 Concept transformation from governance to good governance**

Since 1990s, the word "governance" has been widely used in the fields of economics, politics and management in the West. It has become a "buzz word" that can refer to anything otherwise nothing". [3] In 1989, the World Bank first use "governance crisis" to describe the political development of Africa. Due to the failure of the national government and markets, governance mechanism is applied to remedy some aspects of this failure. In 1995, the Global Governance Commission defined governance as "the sum of the many ways in which a variety of public or private individuals and organizations manage their common affairs; continuous process of joint action to reconcile the conflicting or different interests. Governance has four characteristics: governance is a process, neither a set of rules nor an activity; the basis of governance is coordinate rather than control; governance is not only involved in the public sector but also private sectors; governance is not a formal system but a continuous interaction." [4] This definition is currently the most recognized and authoritative interpretation by a number of scholars.

First, governance emphasizes the diversification of subjects which includes not only the government, enterprises and institutions but also the private sector, the non - profit organizations. Its power orientation is also diverse and interrelated, instead of single, top-down and government dominated; second, governance manages to maximize the maintenance and promotion of public interest. In addition, the essence of governance is voluntary cooperation, and the different subjects of governance carry on the continuous and interactive management of public affairs through cooperation, consultation, partnership, etc.. Therefore, "as a system to promote participation, transparency and accountability, governance, is applied in all levels of business, government and society which are committed to seeking to improve the quality of governance to

achieve better efficiency and better adaptation to the rapid changes in the era of information.”[5] Governance, however, is not a master key, there being the risk of failure. In order to solve the failure of governance, the concept of "good governance" emerges as the times require.

The relationship between governance and good governance is very subtle. First, they are both the effective strategy for failure of the country and the market. Second, governance emphasizes the systematic and interactive feature while good governance emphasizes the effect and objectives of governance. Therefore, good governance means "effective and better governance, which is the ideal state of governance. Third, the core of governance is the multi interaction, coordination and cooperation based on rules to obtain the maximum public interest. Therefore, Good governance is the ultimate logic of governance, the essence of which is “the cooperative governance between the government and the citizen on the public life. It is a new relationship and optimal state between the political nations and the civil societies.” [6] The transformation from governance to good governance helped to build a new model of development of public utilities, highlighting the new normal role of the multi harmonious governance.

## 1.2 The connotation of good governance

Governance, as the name suggests, is a better and ideal state of governance. The theory of good governance is the result of the substantial development of the democratic politics in the civil society, the social idea of the "harmonious Trilogy", which is famous for its stability, cooperation and development. Since 1990's, the theory of good governance has paid attention to the effect and goal and further made up and improved the application of governance theory in public practice. Yu Keping, who has made profound research on the theory of good governance, said: "good governance is the social management process that maximizes the public interest. Its essence lies in that it is the cooperation between the government and the citizen on the public life. It is a new relationship and optimal state between the political and civil society." [7] On the one hand, good governance has broken the binary opposition between the manager and the managed as the government is no longer the only power center. The third non profit sector and private sector will become the government's partners, citizens and government being one of the main subjects of equality. “For public interest or public affairs that are common to concern, each parallel subject is participating into and managing public affairs engaged in the principle of openness, fairness, equality in order to achieve consensus." [8] In terms of public affairs, they talk and cooperate, share power and responsibility mainly through multi cooperation, consultation, partnership so that government power can truly return to civil society. On the other hand, good governance focuses on the realization of the best benefit from governing public affairs so as to reduce the probability of the treatment failure to a certain extent. As the highest level of public governance, good governance is a new public governance model of rationality, morality, legality and humanity.

In her paper *The correct use of the governance in international relations*, Mary Claudesmoz pointed out the four main elements of good governance. First, citizen safety is guaranteed, law respected, which are realized especially through the judicial independence, namely, the rule of law. Second, public institutions correctly and justly manage public expenditure, i.e. effective administration. Third, government leaders are responsible to the people for the behavior, i.e. the implementation of duties and liabilities. Four, all citizens are well-informed to understand the situation, i.e., the political transparency." [9] Professor Yu Keping

believes that the basic elements of good governance mainly include 10 aspects: legitimacy, the rule of law, transparency, accountability, response, effectiveness, participation, stability, integrity, justice. [10] As a new governance framework for public affairs, good governance involves the following basic demands:

First, nature of Rule of Law. In modern society, the rule of law is the primary guarantee to achieve good governance, which is concerned with governance effect and measurement standards. According to the truth that the bigger legitimacy, the higher degree of good governance, any concerned subjects of good governance (including government) are allowed to participate in public affairs governance on the premise that they not only have the consciousness of legality but also abide by the law and discipline and maintain the rule of law, fairness and rationality.

Second, transparency. Transparency is the basic requirement for the realization of good governance. The main subjects of good governance include not only the government, but also the citizens, the non profit organizations and other social organizations. The relationship among the main subjects is equal partnership. Each member of the cooperative subjects has the right to obtain the shared information. Throughout the public affairs of the good governance process, transparency enables the citizens and other organizations to be involved in scientific decision-making and effective supervision. The higher the transparency, the higher degree of good governance and public interest.

Third, democracy. Democracy mainly refers to the democratic participation of diversified subjects into the governance of social public affairs to ensure the transparency of governance process and the fairness of governance results. First of all, the democracy of good governance lies in the voluntary cooperation of multi subjects. The government is no longer absolute power domination as civil society and the third departments can also participate in governance. The common cooperation of the main subject is not only the essential characteristic of good governance, but also the important condition to realize the good governance. In addition, the transparency of governance information is also an important content reflected in the democratic nature of good governance. It not only strengthens the authority of the government, but also protects citizens' the rights of access to information, laying a foundation for better participation in social governance.

Fourth, service. The primary goal of good governance is that the governance subjects can well manage the public affairs and provide effective services for the public. The higher the quality of service, the greater the public benefit and the higher the level of good governance as well. In term of the function of the government, the service is the primary function of the government, and it is the duty of the government to provide quality and efficient public service to the public.

Fifth, accountability. Accountability is an important guarantee for the realization of good governance. In the past government led governance mode, the government organization, driven by its own interests, is only responsible for itself, neglecting the responsibility of safeguarding the interests of the citizens. In the modern society, with citizens' growing awareness of right, citizens have increasingly higher demand for the responsibility of the government. Each governance subject participating in social affairs should be responsible for themselves and the social public interest. Otherwise, the credibility of the government will be greatly weakened. Good governance emphasizes that the main subject should strengthen the responsibility consciousness and responsibility behavior and be responsible for the public interest.

Sixth, effectiveness. Effectiveness is the fundamental point where the superiority of good governance over governance lies. Governance of social and public affairs will inevitably encounter "invalidity" or

"failure". Good governance just turns the effect of governance to a good trend. Effective governance can make the social and public affairs management more orderly, more efficient and more scientific. It can also reduce management cost to a maximum extent so as to obtain greater public interest.

As a new governance model of public management, good governance is the goal pursued by all countries in the world. Yu Keping believes that good governance shows the good cooperation between the state and society or the government and citizens. From the perspective of the whole society, good governance can not be separated from the government and the citizens in particular. Without active participation and cooperation of citizens, good governance rather than good governance will be achieved." [11] Under the background of good governance, it is a partnership and relationship of equality between government and citizen. They work together to participate in social governance. Good governance is also the touchstone to evaluate the effect.

## **2. The theory of good governance to protect the value implications of the fairness of higher education enrollment**

"Fairness of enrollment opportunity is the core element of education fairness". [12] In the era of knowledge economy, higher education, as one of the main tools of social stratification, plays an important role in ensuring enrollment opportunity fairness, building a harmonious society and realizing social new normal development. The fairness of higher education enrollment means individuals enjoy the right to receive higher education on the basis of their academic ability and willingness instead of birth background. [13]It is the government's functional responsibility to protect such fairness. Good governance favors the win-win cooperation between the government and citizens, seeking common development and maximizing the public interest. It is not only an important way to achieve modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity, but also value implication for public education welfare and higher education enrollment opportunity fairness in particular.

### **2.1 Good governance to provide a favorable governance environment for the realization of fair higher education enrollment opportunity**

It is an important goal of the current deepening reform of higher education and the practice of the new college entrance examination admission program to achieve the fairness of provincial higher education enrollment opportunities. Differences in geographical positions, economic development level, culture and education facilities and household registration contradiction led to the tilt enrollment scores distributed to the developed and eastern coastal areas. Although China has laid down some compensatory policies and measures directed to the central and western regions, ethnic minority areas and backward mountainous areas, they still can not fundamentally eliminate unfair regional problem of enrollment opportunity. Migration for the college entrance examination is not uncommon. Some officials' children snatch quota allocation distributed to poor areas. This shows government policies alone can not ensure fairness, and the government's own limitations like corruption, to a certain extent, further exacerbate disparity of the province's higher education enrollment opportunities. The biggest characteristic of Good governance is the diversification of management subjects, which fully arouses the enthusiasm of government, citizens, non profitable social institutions and third-party departments and breaks the situation of government domination.

The multi-subjects' voluntary cooperation and equal partnership provide a democratic and harmonious environment and development platform to guarantee the equality of higher education enrollment opportunity.

## **2.2 Good governance to maximize the protection of citizens equal admission opportunities to higher education**

Equal opportunities of admission to higher education are the primary task of achieving fairness of higher education. As important social resources, opportunities of admission to higher education are allocated in "efficiency priority" by the market, which increases the inequality of higher education resources. Although the government has made some policies to support the local adjustment, it can not fundamentally solve the problem of equal admission to higher education. The biggest characteristic of good governance is the participation of civil society. Through the cooperation between citizens and the government, reasonable enrollment plan research is carried out. In addition, the rule of law, transparency, and democracy can, to a certain extent, regulate, adjust and supervise the enrollment and promote the coordination of the interests of all parties.

## **2.3 Good governance to effectively feed back the effect of enrollment fair opportunities of higher education**

A feedback process is needed to decide whether the higher education enrollment opportunity is fair. Good governance, the ideal state of governance, needs to ensure the effect of governance. Integrated factors such as the level of economic development, enrollment plan, college resources, students scale, the level of basic education make it a complex task to realize fair opportunity of higher education enrollment. The service, responsibility and effectiveness of good governance can not only guarantee the level of education fairness, but also further test and feedback its effect. To ensure of fair effect is an important part of good governance in education fairness. On the one hand, good governance can coordinate the interests of all parties, seeking to maximize the interests of the public where citizens enjoy equal rights to higher education enrollment. On the other hand, the degree of citizens' concern and participation in education can precisely illustrate the important practical significance of good governance to the problem of education fairness.

## **3. Good governance being the best way to guarantee fairness of higher education enrollment**

In *Development report 2006: fairness and efficiency*, the World Bank believes that fairness establishes on two basic principles: "one is a fair opportunity. That a person's achievements should result from his or her efforts and talent rather than the background. The other is to avoid the absolute deprivation, which means avoiding the absolute deprivation of the right to enjoy social welfare, especially the right to health, education and consumption." Problems in education fairness focus on the allocation enrollment. In terms of good governance, the best way to achieve higher education fairness is discussed in such aspects as government, citizens and the third party social assessment institution.

### **3.1 To reform the college entrance examination and enrollment system, break the local protection and narrow the regional gap in admission rate**

College entrance examination and enrollment system is the main factor affecting admission opportunity of higher education. The government should reform the college entrance examination and enrollment system and narrow the regional gap in admission rate. *The implementation opinions of the State Council on deepening the reform of examination and enrollment system* pointed out that the overall goal of the systems is: "by 2020, education examination and enrollment system with Chinese characteristics will have been established, forming a mode of examination classification, comprehensive evaluation and multiple admissions, perfect a mechanism of fairness promotion, scientific talent selection and effective and building lifelong learning' Overpass' of cohesive communication of education at all levels and recognition of various learning outcomes." [15] Provincial enrollment plan can be adjusted by improving the enrollment rate in the central and western regions and heavily populated provinces. Besides, examination content and form should be reformed with the academic level test as a basis for the entrance exam, strengthening the comprehensive quality evaluation. In addition, due to priority to the local students, quality higher education resources can not be reasonably distributed. Good governance is thus introduced to solve the problems.

### **3.2 To increase education investment, balance quality higher education resources and reasonably divert**

With advantages of comprehensive consideration, scientificity, practicality, coordination and variety, reasonable diversion of quality higher education resources is the main way to realize the equality of higher education admission opportunity. The government's macro regulation of higher education planning, cooperative education, information technology and expanding the quality of higher education resources can promote the balanced development of higher education at various levels. On the one hand, education investment should be increased, and social capital is raised in multi channels. Allocation of higher education resources should take into account social needs, personal development and college admissions policies. Reasonable diversion is beneficial to the development of social economy to a great extent. It can also benefit the healthy development of higher education and the promotion of social democracy and equal education opportunity, which will guarantee the equality of higher education admission opportunity and meet the needs of citizens. But the diversion is definitely not the pure government interventions. On the other hand, in order to achieve the final realization of the equalization of higher education, a variety of non government forces participate in the development of higher education, promoting optimal allocation of higher education resources, taking into account the differences between urban and rural areas, exerting the enthusiasm of civil society and balancing the interests of all parties.

### **3.3 To continue to promote the "Sunshine Project" system and formulate relevant laws to protect the education fairness**

The "Sunshine Project", to a certain extent, ensures the transparency of enrollment information and fairness. With Sunshine Project functioning in the whole process of enrollment, all local governments should earnestly strengthen the management and supervision of it. The transparency and democracy of good governance asks for establishment and perfection of the openness of enrollment information, strengthening

the interaction and communication among government. It is a powerful weapon for the equalization of admission opportunities for higher education to manage education and school in accordance with the law. The science of education legislation is the basis and the primary link to protect the development of education and the legitimate rights and interests of the legal subjects. The state should formulate relevant laws and regulations of education fairness to standardize enrollment by law. Rule of law under good governance just meets the legal requirements for education fairness. In such a concept, the interests of each subject related to admissions can be effectively regulated to a certain extent. We must see to it that there are laws to be observed and strictly enforced, and law-breakers are prosecuted. In the society, atmosphere of citizens enjoying equal opportunities for higher education must be created.

### **3.4 To establish partnerships among citizens, social organizations, universities and the government**

It is an important task for the development of higher education to ensure that every citizen has equal admission to higher education. Citizens are the direct beneficiaries of fair higher education enrollment opportunities. A national college entrance examination and enrollment supervision committee set up by the civil society directly participate in and monitor the enrollment process. Good governance is committed to all the relevant subjects' participation in governance and the establishment of partnerships to regulate the enrollment of the various subjects. The government has important decisions and options in the enrollment. Therefore, "meta governance" should be introduced to provide a suitable institutional environment for the diversified management of higher education enrollment opportunity. To coordinate the interests of all parties, colleges and universities should strictly regulate their own enrollment behavior, expand the autonomy of schools, take into account the interests of the citizens and accept the supervision of the third party organizations and civil society. The service, effectiveness and responsibility of the good governance are the guarantee for the fair effect of the higher education admission opportunity. Good governance can protect the equality of citizens in the greatest degree, which is a great progress in the cause of higher education and has positive practical significance.

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