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The Structure and Admission Mechanism of Chinese Higher Education: Institutional Differentiation and the Gaokao System

Yunning Yang

Sungkyunkwan University, Multimedia Television and Film, Arts, Seoul, 03382, Tianjin China

Abstract: ***University education in China has a long history dating back to imperial China. However, the modern university system was established in the early 20th century and has since undergone numerous reforms and transformations. Today, China has one of the largest and fastest-growing higher education systems in the world, with over 2,000 universities and colleges. The system is divided into three main categories: research-oriented, comprehensive, and specialized universities. Research-oriented universities emphasize scientific research and are often designated as "key universities." Comprehensive universities offer a broad range of disciplines and degree programs, including arts, sciences, engineering, and humanities. Specialized universities concentrate on specific fields such as medicine, agriculture, and finance. Admission is highly competitive: students are required to take the National College Entrance Examination (Gaokao), a standardized test assessing academic proficiency in subjects including Chinese, mathematics, and English. Scores determine university eligibility and institution/program placement. This overview delineates the structural differentiation and admission mechanism that shape Chinese higher education.***

Keywords: Chinese higher education, University classification, National College Entrance Examination, Admission system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Once admitted to a university, Chinese students are typically required to complete a four-year undergraduate program before pursuing further studies. Some students may opt to pursue vocational programs, which are shorter and more focused on practical skills. Graduate programs in China typically last between two to three years, and students can earn a master's degree or a doctorate. The Chinese university system places a strong emphasis on research and innovation, and universities are expected to contribute to the country's economic and social development. To this end, the government has invested heavily in research and development in recent years, with a particular focus on emerging fields such as artificial intelligence and biotechnology. One of the unique features of the Chinese university system is the large number of international students who attend Chinese universities. China is one of the top destinations for international students, with over 492,000 international students enrolled in Chinese universities in 2019. The Chinese government has also launched several scholarship programs to attract more international students to the country.

Overall, the Chinese university system has undergone significant changes and improvements in recent years, with a focus on enhancing the quality of education, promoting innovation and research, and attracting more international students. As China continues to grow as a global economic and technological powerhouse, its universities will play an increasingly important role in shaping the country's future.

2. THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

China has a large and complex university system, which is overseen by the Ministry of Education. The system is divided into different types of institutions, including universities, colleges, and vocational schools. There are over 2,000 universities and colleges in China, both public and private, with a total student population of over 38 million. The top universities in China, known as the "C9 League," are a group of nine elite institutions that are considered the most prestigious and receive the most funding from the government. Admission to universities in China is highly competitive, with the national college entrance exam (known as the Gaokao) being the main factor in determining whether a student is accepted. The exam is taken by over 10 million students each year and covers a wide range of subjects, including Chinese, mathematics, and English.

The curriculum in Chinese universities typically focuses heavily on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects, although there is also a growing emphasis on social sciences and humanities.

Chinese universities are also known for their research output, with a number of institutions ranking highly in international rankings. The Chinese government has made a significant investment in higher education in recent years, with the aim of developing a world-class university system. This has included increased funding for research, the establishment of new universities, and efforts to attract international students and faculty.

Table 1: Use of fitness apps by college students (*n*=472)

Whether to use	*The number of*	*Percentage (%)*
There are	410	86.86
There is no	62	13.14

Table 2: Gender of respondents (*n*=410)

gender	*Number (person)*	*Percentage (%)*
male	263	64.15
female	147	35.85

Table 3: Use of fitness apps by college students of different grades (*n*=410)

grade	*Number (person)*	*Percentage (%)*
A freshman	154	37.56
A sophomore	165	40.24
Junior year	48	11.71
Senior year	43	10.49

3. FEATURES OF THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The Chinese university system has several unique features, some of which are: National Entrance Exam: The National Higher Education Entrance Examination (Gaokao) is a rigorous standardized test that is mandatory for all students seeking admission to universities in China. This exam is taken by millions of students each year and is considered one of the toughest exams in the world. Large Enrollment: China has the largest higher education system in the world, with more than 3,000 universities and colleges, and over 36 million students enrolled in higher education programs. Emphasis on STEM: The Chinese university system places a strong emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. This is reflected in the curriculum and the research focus of universities. Strong Government Control: The Chinese government exercises a high degree of control over the university system, including funding, admissions, and curriculum. This ensures that universities align with the country's development goals and priorities.

Research Intensive: Chinese universities are increasingly focused on research and innovation, with the government investing heavily in scientific research and development. This has led to a significant increase in the number of research publications and patents filed by Chinese universities. Rapid Expansion: The Chinese university system has grown rapidly in the past few decades, with the number of universities and students increasing dramatically. This has created some challenges, such as overcrowding and competition for resources, but also opportunities for innovation and collaboration. Internationalization: Chinese universities are becoming more internationalized, with a growing number of international students and partnerships with universities around the world. This reflects China's increasing importance in the global economy and its desire to attract and retain talent from around the world.

4. THE ADMISSION PROCESS FOR CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

The admission process for Chinese universities can vary depending on the specific university and the program you are aplying for, but there are some general steps that most applicants must follow. Here is an overview of the admission process for Chinese universities: Choose a university and program: The first step is to research and choose the universities and programs that you are interested in applying to. You can find information about universities and programs on their websites, through online searches, or by consulting with education agents or advisors. Check admission requirements: Once you have chosen the universities and programs you want to apply to, you should check their admission requirements. These requirements can vary depending on the program, but they typically include academic transcripts, standardized test scores, language proficiency test scores, and recommendation letters. Submit your application: After checking the admission requirements, you can submit your application. Most Chinese universities have online application systems that you can use to submit your application and supporting documents. Pay application fee: You will need to pay an application fee when you submit your application. The fee can vary depending on the university and program, but it is typically around 800 RMB (about $120 USD).

Table 4: College students' access to fitness apps (*n*=410)

Access to	*Number (person)*	*Percentage (%)*	*The order*
A friend introduced	121	29.51	2
Weibo WeChat	168	40.98	1
Sports BBS	14	3.41	6
Mobile phones bring	53	12.93	3
advertising	32	7.8	4
other	22	5.37	5

Wait for admission decision: After submitting your application, you will need to wait for the university to make an admission decision. The length of time it takes for the university to make a decision can vary, but it is typically several weeks to a few months. Accept admission offer: If you are accepted into a program, you will need to accept the admission offer and pay a deposit to secure your place in the program. The deposit can vary depending on the university and program, but it is typically around 10% of the tuition fee. Apply for visa: After accepting the admission offer, you will need to apply for a student visa to enter China. You will need to provide your admission letter, visa application form, passport, and other supporting documents to the Chinese embassy or consulate in your country.

Overall, the admission process for Chinese universities can be competitive and complex, but with careful planning and preparation, you can increase your chances of success.

5. HOW DIFFICULT FOR A CHILD TO BE ADMITTED BY CHINESE UNIVERSITY

Admission to Chinese universities for international students can be competitive, but the level of difficulty depends on several factors, such as the age of the child, the program they are applying for, their academic performance, and the university's admission standards. If the child is applying for undergraduate programs, they will need to have completed high school education and have obtained a high school diploma. In addition, they may need to take language proficiency tests such as the HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) if they are not fluent in Mandarin Chinese. Graduate programs may have additional requirements, such as a bachelor's degree in a related field, and a high level of proficiency in Chinese or English depending on the language of instruction. Chinese universities also consider academic performance, extracurricular activities, and other factors when evaluating applications. The child's academic achievements, including grades and test scores, will be an important factor in the admissions process.

In summary, admission to Chinese universities for international students, including children, can be competitive and challenging. However, with proper preparation, academic excellence, and language proficiency, the child can increase their chances of being admitted to a Chinese university.

6. CONCLUSION

The Chinese university system is a complex and rapidly evolving system that has undergone significant changes in recent decades. Overall, it can be said that the system is highly centralized and closely linked to the government, with a strong focus on research and technological innovation. One of the key strengths of the Chinese university system is its emphasis on science and technology. This has led to the development of world-class research facilities and a highly educated workforce that is well-equipped to compete in the global economy. However, there are also concerns about the quality of education in some Chinese universities. Some universities have been criticized for a lack of academic freedom, political interference in research and teaching, and for relying too heavily on rote learning and standardized testing. Despite these concerns, the Chinese university system is likely to continue to play a major role in shaping the country's economic and social development. As China's economy continues to grow and become more competitive, the role of the university system in driving innovation and technological advancement will only become more important.

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