

# Educational Change Case Study: from the Educational Leadership Perspective to Solve the Problem of Shandong Province's College Entrance Examination Policy

**Nuo Han**

*Faculty of Education, Monash University, Beijing, China  
754365608@qq.com*

**Abstract:** *The college entrance examination is one of the important selection methods for students to enter higher education institutions in China. Some provinces have the power to independently decide the provincial college entrance examination policy. Shandong Province implements the policy of independently formulating provincial college entrance examination questions. In the process of implementing the distributed college entrance examination policy, educational freedom in different regions has been achieved, but there are also some problems in terms of educational leadership. Based on the experience of a high school in Shandong Province, this article evaluates the college entrance examination policy from the perspective of education administrators, mainly from the aspects of distributed leadership, the transition from government to governance, and global panopticism with leadership discourse. While giving some feasible suggestions from teachers and exam subjects, it also found that there are corresponding specific challenges. Through the active cooperation of the government, schools and individuals, realize the vision that the college entrance examination policy can promote the all-round development of students.*

**Keywords:** *Educational reform, College entrance examination policy, Educational leadership, Distributed leadership*

## 1. Introduction

Provincial college entrance examination question policy widely adopted in high schools all over China. Local education departments themselves can edit national college entrance examination(NCEE) papers in different regions. However, there are some problems to be solved in the implementation of NCEE policy. First, there is a widespread problem of neglecting the comprehensive development of students in senior high schools in our country. Although the Ministry of Education has delegated ability to local education departments and given them the power to make independent propositions, it still has to abide by the syllabus designated by the Ministry of Education in general. The syllabus does not include music, art, and other aesthetic education subjects, but only English, mathematics and other science and technology and humanities subjects as examination subjects. In this case, the general quality of students can hardly be reflected in the limited examination subjects. Also, examinations cannot adequately reflect students' learning effectiveness, especially students' ability, which may lead to unsatisfactory results of truly excellent students. Knowledge reserve is not the only test standard. For a prospective college student, it should also have other abilities, such as professional thinking, experimental experience, practical ability and so on. Finally, NCEE test questions designed by different regions are regular and can followed. The types of NCEE test questions remain the same, and the examiners are more inclined to find inspiration in the question bank of each province. NCEE is the only way for most students to enter higher education institutions in China. The difference in test results is likely to determine students' future job choices and social status.<sup>[1]</sup> Hence, the enforcement of NCEE policy and the allowance of the autonomous proposition in different regions have an essential impact on the future training of talents in China.

The purpose of this issue is to solve the problems related to NCEE policy from the perspective of leadership and to analyze the impact of leadership on NCEE policy, including the issue of provincial autonomy.

## **2. Explanation of relevant concepts**

For the sake of rigour, this article deals with two main concepts: firstly, the Higher Education Entrance Examination and secondly, the meaning of reform.

### **2.1 *The national college entrance examination***

The national college entrance examination(NCEE) refers to the higher education entrance examination in China. It is one of the most important national examinations in China, and is the qualification test for candidates to enter and choose universities. It is organized by the state, with questions set by a special body, and the exams are held at a uniform time. The college entrance examination is also interpreted as a test and admissions activity used by the government or general higher education institutions to examine the character, knowledge, abilities and skills of new students for admission to higher education. There are three existing forms of college entrance examinations in China: the General College Entrance Examination, the Self-Study Examination and the Adult College Entrance Examination. The college entrance examination in this paper refers to the full-time general higher education system in China, and does not include adult or amateur universities.

### **2.2 *Reform***

The concept of "reform" can be understood in three ways: firstly, the logical premise of reform is that it exists in response to a problem, and the implicit premise of reform is that it is currently bad or defective, and it is hoped that through reform it will develop in a good direction; secondly, the intrinsic requirement of reform, in essence, reflects a change in concept and thinking, that is, a change in value orientation. Secondly, the intrinsic demand for reform reflects a change in perception and thinking, that is, a change in value orientation. Thirdly, the external manifestation of reform must be reflected in a more obvious change before and after the development of things, and there should be a "qualitative" difference between before and after, and the reform should be global and qualitative. The reform should be global and qualitative in nature. Slow changes of an incremental nature and "tinkering" changes should not be regarded as "reform".

## **3. Argued views**

The implementation of NCEE policy involves not only the policies of different provinces mentioned earlier, but also some central concepts of leadership: distributed leadership, the transition from government to governance, and global panopticism with leadership discourse.

### **3.1 *Distributed leadership***

Distributed leadership as a leadership practice theory between leaders and employees in school systems.<sup>[3]</sup>It emphasizes that the realization of leadership is the result of a mutual reflection between leaders and other employees. Giving teachers more free discussion power in a team can increase their confidence and enthusiasm in their work. For example, in the weekly lecture meeting, we will encourage teachers to speak actively and analyze the different changes in students. Through the regular meeting, we not only learned from the teacher's speech about the students' real-time development (such as students' own views on NCEE) but also promoted the exchange of work experience between teachers. As some educators mentioned, the quality of students' performance will be influenced by teacher leadership.<sup>[4]</sup>

In addition, distributed leadership enables teachers to fully feel their own value in their work. However, in Shandong Province, the people who participate in NCEE questions are not the teachers who enter the classroom every day. On the contrary, these teachers confined to the schools where they teach and rarely have the opportunity to participate directly in the leadership team of the local education system. This leads to the fact that the teachers who design the examination questions cannot always understand the actual situation of teaching. It is worth reflecting on a phenomenon that in recent years, Shandong Province's Education Department has designed a comprehensive text test (history, geography, and politics), because the number of questions is too large, most students can not complete the exam in a limited time, which cannot actual the true level of students, there are certain unfair phenomena. In addition, although our leadership team spent much energy discussing how to improve the test design and put forward suggestions to the education department, it did not receive substantive

feedback, so the number of NCEE test questions did not change.

### ***3.2 The transition from government to governance***

Under the background of education, a typical example of the gradual shift of government functions to government governance is to allow provinces to make their own proposition NCEE. It can further understand that the responsibilities of the education sector show more democratic elements, and the form of supervision has gradually replaced the former unified, vertical and hierarchical forms from the decentralisation and networking.<sup>[5]</sup> On the one hand, the Ministry of Education gives the provinces the power to make their own propositions. On the other hand, it can make the difficulty level of the examination papers conform to the local teaching level to the greatest extent. On the other hand, it can also promote the local education departments to improve the teaching quality.

Although branches have some power, they are generally controlled by government policies, such as syllabuses. Taking Shandong as an example, the main subjects (mathematics, English, and Chinese) have been the main subjects of the examination syllabus in the past ten years while some humanities and aesthetic education subjects (music and art) have not been paid attention.<sup>[6]</sup> Although teachers in Shandong realize that these artistic education disciplines can help students improve their literacy and better overall development, due to the rigid requirements of the examination syllabus, teachers are more willing to spend time on the required examination subjects to help students complete their studies and achieve excellent results. From the perspective of school leadership, while abiding by national policies, we should also pay attention to students' all-round development. Our team has formulated similar policies to ensure that students can get an adequate education in aesthetic education. For example, to ensure the weekly class hours of aesthetic education subject and stipulate that the main teachers cannot occupy these times, hold periodic literary and artistic competitions and sports meetings and a series of extracurricular activities to promote students' all-round development.

### ***3.3 Global panopticism & leadership discourses***

The different forms of NCEE questions in different provinces determine the leadership style of teachers in the classroom. For example, in Shandong NCEE test questions tend to test students' recitation and memory of knowledge points. To help students, adapt to the test, our high school teachers choose to play the role of "controller" in the classroom. The phenomenon can explain by the theory of global panopticism. Teachers' classroom behavior is influenced by this theory, as well as by national and global education policies. This leads teachers to focus more on improving students' test scores, using in-class tests and dictation to check students' memory of knowledge points required by the syllabus. Students becoming gears in instruments, focusing only on productivity and efficiency.<sup>[8]</sup> Under this leadership model, students' creativity and independent thinking ability are limited, and there is a sense of distance between teachers and students. However, education departments in Beijing, Tianjin, and Shenzhen pay more attention to students' divergent thinking. NCEE questions involve the expression of personal views. Therefore, if students in these areas want to achieve good results in NCEE, they should not only have good hard power (memory ability) but also consider their soft power (critical thinking, etc.) development. This form of test design, so that the role of teachers from the classroom "controller" to the "therapist" of students, from the emotional awareness of students to care about students, create a relaxed learning atmosphere, thus further reducing the distance between teachers and students. It is evident that the NCEE test design in Shandong Province is not very reasonable, and it is difficult to promote the all-round development of students. As a leading member of a high school in Shandong Province, to change the current situation, we have formulated a series of policies, such as weekly curriculum training, through watching videos and lectures to encourage teachers to pay more attention to students' comprehensive quality and mental health.

## **4. Feasible changes and challenges**

Firstly, in distributed leadership, teachers' feedback should be the first level to be considered when the education department formulates the teaching policy. When teachers make meaningful suggestions to local education departments, they should give timely feedback and encourage teachers to participate actively in policy improvement. This not only improves the enthusiasm of teachers but also makes them feel the important value of their team. In particular, teachers involved in teaching are able to identify more intuitively the problems in teaching and learning and whether the teaching policy can contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and learning in practice. Thus, with the active participation

of teachers in general, the education department can obtain more direct first-hand information on students' learning progress and make timely adjustments to the GCE questions. Secondly, Shandong NCEE should strengthen the examination proportion of Humanities and aesthetic education, pay attention to the cultivation of students' soft power, and increase related examination subjects. The college entrance examination, as one of the representatives of examination-based education, is still the main way of training talents in China. With the reform of the national education policy, quality education has gradually become a widely promoted education policy, requiring the cultivation of students' all-round development in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and social aspects. The college entrance examinations that implement quality education must satisfy both the general examination of intellectual education and the comprehensive requirements for moral, physical, aesthetic and labour education. Therefore, the comprehensive development of students can be promoted by increasing the content of relevant examinations. Finally, to effectively eliminate the sense of distance between teachers and students, teachers should be encouraged to act as "therapists" of students, rather than as "controllers" who are high-ranking. Teachers play the role of "therapists" in the classroom, which can make students study more happily. A harmonious teacher-student relationship promotes mutual progress and is also conducive to the development of good psychological qualities in students. In a pleasant teaching environment, students can be more willing to think proactively and actively explore their intrinsic motivation to love learning.

Although there are similar solutions, there are also some challenges in the process of implementation. Firstly, there are a large number of teachers in Shandong Province. It is a vast project to listen to and give feedback to each teacher. Moreover, the situation of the teachers' school is different (teachers' level, students' source). Therefore, it is unlikely that the local education department will adopt every teacher's suggestion. Secondly, the change of NCEE test design depends not only on the efforts of the Education Department of Shandong Province but also on the request of the Ministry of Education. Although the power has delegated to the provinces, it is still inseparable from the supervision of the central authorities. Thirdly, teachers' choice of leadership was influenced by personal experience, parental guidance, and social background. It is not easy to change. For example, the role of "therapist" is more acceptable to those who have had painful experiences in childhood. Therefore, it is complicated to make uniform requirements for teachers and stipulate that the same teaching methods must be adopted. To sum up, although there are corresponding solutions, it takes a lot of time to achieve, so the irrational problems in NCEE can hardly be solved in a short time.

## 5. Conclusion

Therefore, the provincial NCEE policy can promote the implementation of China's NCEE policy. However, there are still some problems in NCEE in Shandong and other areas, such as decentralised leadership, question design, education teachers and so on. By adopting teachers' suggestions extensively, improving the type of questions actively and encouraging teachers to appear as "therapists" in the classroom, we can improve the existing problems of NCEE to a certain extent. However, as mentioned earlier in the article, there are also some difficulties in the implementation of these measures, such as different levels of teachers' opinions, difficulty in adjusting the design of questions in a short period, and personal perception of leadership inherent. To develop better in the future, the education departments of all regions should assist the central government in solving the NCEE problems in their respective areas and retain the advantages of NCEE policy. In this way, with the active cooperation of the government and individuals, NCEE policy will promote the all-round development of students.

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