

# Research on China's Higher Education Policy

Jing Guo

Ulaanbaatar Erdem University, Ulaanbaatar, 11000, Mongolia

---

**Abstract:** Taking China's higher education policy as the research object, this paper conducts a comprehensive and in-depth research on the historical evolution of China's higher education policy, current policy analysis, policy effect evaluation and challenges and countermeasures by using the historical analysis method, policy analysis method and effect evaluation method. The study found that China's higher education policy has experienced three stages of historical evolution before the reform and opening up, since the reform and opening up to the end of the 20th century, and from the beginning of the 21st century to the present, and the policies at each stage have had an important impact on the development of higher education. Currently, China's higher education policy has achieved remarkable results in terms of macro management, micro operation and characteristic development, but it still faces problems such as uneven distribution of educational resources and equity and opportunity in higher education. In response to these problems, this paper puts forward a series of countermeasure suggestions to optimise the higher education policy system and strengthen policy implementation and evaluation. In the future, China's higher education policy should focus on innovation and reform to promote the sustainable and healthy development of higher education.

**Keywords:** Higher Education Policy, Historical Evolution, Policy Analysis, Effect Evaluation, Challenges and Countermeasures.

---

## 1. Introduction

With the rapid development of economy and society, higher education has gradually become an important reflection of national competitiveness. As the world's largest developing country, the scale of China's higher education has ranked first in the world. However, how to ensure the quality of education, promote educational equity, as well as realise the rational allocation of educational resources in the huge education system has become an important issue facing the development of higher education in China at present. Against this background, this paper aims to explore how to formulate and implement more targeted and effective higher education policies by examining the historical evolution of China's higher education policies, analysing the current situation, and evaluating their effects, with a view to providing useful references for the sustainable development of China's higher education sector.

This paper first reviews the historical evolution of China's higher education policies, analyses the characteristics of the policies at different stages and their impact on the development of higher education. Secondly, it composes and analyses the current Chinese higher education policies in detail, including all aspects of macro-management policies and micro-operation policies. On this basis, the paper further evaluates the effects of higher education policies and reveals the problems and challenges that exist in the process of policy implementation. Finally, corresponding countermeasures and suggestions are put forward in response to these problems and challenges.

The research significance of this paper is mainly reflected in the following aspects: firstly, it helps to deeply understand the historical evolution of China's higher education policy and its internal logic, and provides historical experience for future policy formulation; secondly, it helps to systematically analyse the effects of current higher education policies, and provides a basis for policy adjustment and optimisation; thirdly, it helps to identify problems and challenges in the development of higher education, and provides a reference for

the formulation of more targeted policies; fourthly, it helps to promote the equity and quality of higher education. Fourthly, it helps to promote the fairness and quality of higher education and contribute to the sustainable development of higher education in China.

## 2. Historical Evolution of China's Higher Education Policies

### 2.1. Higher Education Policies before Reform and Opening Up

#### 2.1.1. Establishment and Development of Higher Education System

The establishment and development of the higher education system is an indispensable part of any country's education system. In China, the establishment and development of the higher education system has gone through a number of stages, one of the most important of which is the higher education policy before reform and opening up.

Before the reform and opening up, China's higher education system had a weak foundation, a small scale and limited educational resources. Higher education was mainly monopolised by a handful of universities, with limited enrolment and mainly for the elite. The content and methods of education were also relatively homogeneous, emphasising political and theoretical education, which was out of touch with the needs of actual economic and social development [1].

However, with the deepening of reform and opening up, China's higher education system has undergone tremendous changes. Firstly, the scale of higher education has expanded rapidly and the number of enrolments has increased dramatically, making it possible for more young people to have access to higher education. Second, the system and structure of higher education have also undergone significant changes. The highly centralised higher education system of the past has gradually evolved towards localisation and diversification, with the emergence of a large number of local and private colleges and universities and a more complete higher education system. At the same time, higher education

curricula and teaching methods have also been reformed, with more emphasis on the cultivation of practical and innovative abilities, and more closely linked to the needs of society.

In general, the higher education policy before reform and opening up has cultivated a batch of talents for China's modernisation, but at the same time there are some problems and limitations. With the deepening of reform and opening up, China's higher education policy has been continuously adjusted and improved, gradually establishing a more perfect and diversified higher education system, which has made important contributions to China's economic and social development [2].

### **2.1.2. Characteristics and Impact of Educational Policies**

Taking the Ming and Qing dynasties as an example, the policies of those times had distinctive features and had far-reaching influence on education management.

First of all, the cultural and educational policy of the Ming and Qing Dynasties centred on respecting Confucius and promoting Confucianism, stressing the status and role of Confucianism in feudal society. This policy prompted intellectuals to attach importance to Confucian education and take Confucianism as the main source of knowledge, thus making Confucianism occupy an important position in education.

Secondly, the cultural and educational policies of the Ming and Qing dynasties were characterised by the netting of scholars and the confinement of ideas. The rulers of the Ming and Qing dynasties consolidated their dominance by recruiting scholars through the promotion of Confucianism and the implementation of the imperial examination system. At the same time, the rulers took a series of authoritarian measures and implemented high-pressure policies to tightly control and restrict the intellectuals, confine their thoughts and make them submissive under the feudal rule.

In addition, the cultural and educational policies of the Ming and Qing dynasties had an important impact on education management. The Ming and Qing rulers attached importance to Confucian education, especially the education of Cheng and Zhu theories, and made Cheng and Zhu the main content of education. The establishment of the imperial examination system made education entirely aimed at the imperial examination, and the education system became subordinate to the imperial examination. In the state prisons and local government schools, the rulers formulated strict academic rules to strictly regulate the words and deeds of teachers and students. In addition, a series of literal prisons appeared during the Ming and Qing dynasties, brutally persecuting intellectuals and plunging the educational environment into a harsh and repressive state.

In general, the cultural and educational policies of the Ming and Qing dynasties were mainly characterised by the respect for Confucius and Confucianism, the promotion of Confucianism, the netting of scholars, and the confinement of ideas. This policy had a significant impact on the management of education, making education entirely geared to the imperial examinations, strengthening the feudal consciousness of intellectuals and restricting their freedom of thought. This policy upheld the feudal rule of the Ming and Qing dynasties to a certain extent, but it also led to inequality in education and suppression of intellectuals.

## **2.2. Higher Education Policies since the Reform and Opening up to the End of the 20th Century**

### **2.2.1. Expansion of the Scale of Higher Education and Policy Adjustment**

Since the reform and opening up, the scale of higher education in China has experienced unprecedented expansion. The expansion policy, which began in 1998, has led to a rapid increase in the number of people enrolled in higher education, with the gross enrolment rate in higher education growing from 9.8 per cent in 1998 to 54.4 per cent in 2020. This expansion process has not only raised the level of education of our people, but also provided a large number of talents to support economic development.

However, the expansion of higher education has also brought about a series of problems. Firstly, due to the rapid expansion, some colleges and universities are not adequately prepared in terms of faculty and facilities, resulting in the quality of education and teaching being affected. Secondly, the problem of uneven distribution of higher education resources is becoming more and more prominent, with some regions and colleges being relatively rich in education resources, while some are facing a serious shortage of resources. These problems have made the issue of equity and opportunity in higher education a focus of social concern.

In order to cope with these problems, our government has also made a series of adjustments in its higher education policies. On the one hand, the government has increased its investment in higher education, raised the level of financial allocations for higher education, and supported colleges and universities in improving their educational and teaching conditions. On the other hand, the government has also classified and managed higher education, promoted the development of the characteristics of colleges and universities, and improved the quality of education and teaching. At the same time, the government has also promoted the internationalisation of higher education, and improved the international competitiveness of China's higher education through the introduction of foreign high-quality educational resources.

Overall, the expansion of the scale of China's higher education is a complex process that brings both opportunities and challenges. In the future, China's higher education policy needs to continue to be adjusted and improved to meet the new development requirements [3].

### **2.2.2. Reform of Higher Education System and Structure**

Since the reform and opening up, the reform of China's higher education system and structure has achieved remarkable results. First of all, the management system of higher education has undergone significant changes, the relationship between the government and colleges and universities has been clarified, the government's macro-management function of colleges and universities has been strengthened, while the autonomy of colleges and universities has been expanded. This change is conducive to stimulating the vitality of colleges and universities and promoting the development of higher education.

Secondly, the structure of higher education in China has been optimised. By adjusting the structure of disciplines and specialities, the education of applied, technical and compound talents has been vigorously developed to meet the needs of social and economic development. At the same time, the hierarchical structure of higher education is also being

improved, and the three levels of postgraduate education, undergraduate education and specialised education are articulated with each other, forming a relatively perfect higher education system.

In addition, China's higher education system has also undergone reform. In the past, the higher education system was mainly led by the government, and there was a lack of competition among colleges and universities, making it difficult to guarantee the quality of teaching. Now, China encourages private capital to invest in the field of higher education, and has gradually formed a higher education system led by the government with the participation of a variety of school sponsors. This reform is conducive to improving the quality of education and promoting educational equity.

However, the reform of China's higher education system and structure still faces some challenges. Firstly, the problem of uneven distribution of educational resources is still relatively serious, with large gaps between some colleges and universities. Secondly, the problem of equity and opportunity in higher education needs to be solved urgently, especially the relatively low level of higher education development in rural and poor areas. Again, the connotation construction of colleges and universities is insufficient, and the quality of teaching still needs to be improved.

To address these problems, China should continue to promote the reform of higher education system and structure. On the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen the government's macro management of higher education, optimise the allocation of educational resources, and increase support for higher education in rural and poor areas. On the other hand, it is necessary to promote the internal construction of colleges and universities, improve the quality of teaching, and cultivate more high-level talents. At the same time, it is necessary to encourage competition among colleges and universities and promote the development of colleges and universities with special characteristics in order to adapt to the diversified needs of society and economy. In short, the reform of China's higher education system and structure is a long-term and complex process that requires the joint efforts of the government, colleges and universities and all sectors of society.

## **2.3. Higher Education Policies from the Beginning to the Present of the 21st Century**

### **2.3.1. Innovations and Challenges in Higher Education Policies**

China's higher education policy has faced unprecedented innovations and challenges in the period from the beginning of the 21st century to the present. With the country's rapid economic development and scientific and technological progress, higher education policies have been constantly adjusted and reformed to meet the requirements of the new era.

Firstly, the innovation of higher education policy is reflected in several aspects. On the one hand, the state has increased its investment in higher education, promoting the expansion of the scale and quality of higher education. On the other hand, higher education policies have begun to focus on discipline construction and optimisation of professional settings to meet the needs of social and economic development. In addition, the policy also encourages the internationalisation of higher education, strengthens

international exchanges and cooperation, and enhances the international influence of Chinese higher education [4].

However, higher education policies also face a series of challenges. First, the uneven distribution of higher education resources is a long-standing problem. High-quality educational resources are mainly concentrated in higher education institutions in first-tier cities and some developed regions, while the development of higher education in central and western regions and underdeveloped regions is relatively lagging behind. This has led to inequitable opportunities in higher education and affected the mobility of social classes [5].

Secondly, the issue of higher education equity and opportunity is also a major challenge for policy. Although the state has taken a series of measures, such as expanding enrolment quotas for students from rural and poor areas and providing scholarships and bursaries, there is still a certain degree of educational inequity. In addition, there are certain problems with the selection and evaluation system of higher education, which needs to be further reformed and improved.

In response to the above challenges, future higher education policies need to continue to be innovative and reformed. On the one hand, the policy should pay more attention to the balanced distribution of educational resources, increase support for higher education in central and western regions and less developed regions, and improve the fairness of educational opportunities. On the other hand, the policy should strengthen the research and solution to the problem of equity and opportunity in higher education, reform and improve the selection and evaluation system of higher education, and ensure that every student has a fair chance to receive education. At the same time, policies should also encourage the internationalisation of higher education and enhance the international competitiveness of Chinese higher education.

Overall, China's higher education policies from the beginning of the 21st century to the present have been developing and adjusting in the midst of innovations and challenges. Policies need to be constantly innovated to meet the requirements of the new era, and at the same time, a series of challenges have to be faced and solved in order to realise the fair and sustainable development of higher education [6].

### **2.3.2. The Role of Policies in Promoting the Development of Higher Education**

China's higher education policies have played an important role in promoting the development of higher education in the past decades. Since the reform and opening up, the Chinese government has adopted a series of policy measures, such as expanding the scale of higher education, improving the quality of higher education, and promoting the reform of the higher education system, etc., and these policies have greatly promoted the development of higher education.

First of all, the Chinese government has promoted the construction of high-level universities and improved the overall level of higher education through the implementation of a series of higher education development programmes, such as the '211 Project' and the '985 Project'. These programmes are of great significance in enhancing the international competitiveness of Chinese higher education and cultivating high-quality talents [7].

Secondly, the Chinese government actively promotes the reform of the higher education system, separates the administration from the university, gives more autonomy to universities, and encourages universities to conduct academic

research and scientific and technological innovation. This reform model enables colleges and universities to adjust their professional settings more flexibly, improve teaching quality, and promote the development of higher education.

In addition, the Chinese government has regulated the development of higher education and safeguarded its quality by formulating a series of higher education policies, such as the Law on Higher Education and the Regulations on Academic Degrees. At the same time, the government also strengthens the supervision of higher education and establishes a series of evaluation systems to assess the teaching quality of colleges and universities, which ensures the quality of higher education [8].

Overall, China's higher education policies have played an important role in promoting the development of higher education. In the future, the Chinese government will continue to increase the investment in higher education, promote the development of higher education, and make greater contributions to the economic and social development of the country [9].

### **3. Analysis of Current Higher Education Policies in China**

#### **3.1. Macro-management Policies for Higher Education**

##### **3.1.1. Higher Education Development Planning and Strategy**

Higher education development planning and strategy is an important guide for the development of national education. In China, higher education development planning and strategy mainly involves the following aspects.

Firstly, China's higher education development planning and strategy focuses on improving the quality of education. In the context of the new era, the development of China's higher education should not only pursue the expansion of scale, but also strengthen the construction of quality. To this end, the government has taken a series of measures, such as the implementation of the 'double first-class' construction and the promotion of the connotative development of higher education, etc., in order to improve the quality of education and the academic level of colleges and universities.

Secondly, higher education development plans and strategies emphasise the adjustment of disciplinary layouts. In order to meet the needs of national economic and social development, China's higher education development plans and strategies emphasise the optimisation of disciplinary structure, the strengthening of strategic, cutting-edge and cross-cutting disciplines, and the cultivation of high-quality talents in line with national needs.

Again, the development planning and strategy of higher education attaches importance to the equity of higher education. In order to ensure that every student has a fair chance to receive higher education, the government has implemented a series of policy measures, such as increasing support for the central and western regions and high-level talents, promoting a balanced distribution of higher education resources, and pushing forward the reform of the university admission system.

In addition, the higher education development plan and strategy also focuses on promoting the internationalisation of higher education. In the context of globalisation, the development of higher education in China should be in line with international standards, strengthen international

exchanges and cooperation, and improve international competitiveness. To this end, the government supports colleges and universities to carry out international cooperation projects, encourages students to study abroad, and introduces foreign high-quality educational resources.

Finally, higher education development planning and strategy focuses on the cultivation of innovative talents. In the new era, China's higher education should cultivate high-quality talents with innovative spirit and creativity to support the innovative development of the country. To this end, colleges and universities should strengthen the construction of innovative talent training system, optimise the curriculum, strengthen practical teaching, and improve students' innovation ability.

In short, China's higher education development plan and strategy closely focus on the overall situation of national development, improve the quality of education as the core, and is committed to cultivating high-quality talents, so as to provide strong support for the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist country and the realisation of the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

##### **3.1.2. Higher Education Allocation and Financial Management**

In China's higher education policy, higher education appropriation and financial management is an important link. The development of the quality and scale of higher education cannot be achieved without adequate financial support and management. Therefore, the government has formulated a series of higher education appropriation and financial management policies to ensure the sustainable development of higher education [10].

First, in terms of higher education funding, the government invests in higher education through the establishment of various funds and programmes. These investments mainly flow into teaching reform, scientific research, and social services to promote the internal development of higher education. At the same time, the government also encourages local governments and social forces to invest in higher education, forming a diversified investment system and reducing the pressure on the central government's finances.

Secondly, in terms of financial management, the government requires colleges and universities to establish a sound financial management system, improve financial transparency, and ensure the effective use of education funds. At the same time, the government also requires colleges and universities to carry out cost accounting and reasonably determine fees and charges to ensure students' right to education. In addition, the government also regulates the debt risk of colleges and universities to prevent them from falling into financial crises due to excessive borrowing.

All in all, the policy on higher education funding and financial management has played a key role in ensuring the development of the quality and scale of higher education. However, there are also some problems, such as uneven distribution of funds and irregular financial management, which need further improvement and perfection by the government.

#### **3.2. Micro-operation Policies of Higher Education**

##### **3.2.1. Enrolment and Employment Policies of Colleges and Universities**

College enrolment and employment policy is an important part of education policy, which is related to national talent

cultivation, social and economic development and social stability. In recent years, China's college enrollment and employment policy has been improved in the reform, providing more choices and opportunities for students and cultivating more excellent talents for the society.

In terms of university admissions policy, China has implemented the 'sunshine admissions' policy, which strengthens the transparency and fairness of admissions. The admission policy pays more attention to the comprehensive quality and innovation ability of students, and promotes the reform of the selection and admission methods of colleges and universities. At the same time, in order to promote fairness in education, China has also implemented a series of preferential enrolment policies and financial assistance policies for students in rural and impoverished areas to ensure their equal access to higher education.

In terms of university employment policies, China has actively promoted reform of the employment market for university graduates and strengthened the quality and efficiency of employment services. The policy encourages college graduates to seek employment at the grass-roots level, in the western region and in arduous industries, providing college graduates with more employment opportunities. At the same time, China has also increased entrepreneurial support for college graduates, providing them with entrepreneurial training, loans and tax incentives and other policies to stimulate the entrepreneurial enthusiasm of college graduates.

However, the current college enrollment and employment policy still faces some challenges. For example, the fairness problem in the enrollment policy and the structural contradiction in the employment policy. For this reason, China needs to further optimise the college enrolment and employment policy to make it more in line with the needs of national talent cultivation and social development. For example, the college entrance examination system can be further improved and diversified admission methods can be explored to make college admission more fair, scientific and efficient. At the same time, employment guidance and services for college graduates can be strengthened to enhance their employment competitiveness and adaptability. In addition, it is also necessary to increase the support for entrepreneurship of college graduates, create a good entrepreneurial environment and stimulate their entrepreneurial vigour.

In conclusion, college enrollment and employment policy is of great significance for national talent cultivation and social and economic development. In the context of the current education reform and social development, China should continue to promote the reform and improvement of college enrollment and employment policy to provide more development opportunities for students and cultivate more excellent talents for the society.

### **3.2.2. Higher Education Quality Assurance and Evaluation Policies**

China's higher education quality assurance and assessment policy is a topic that has attracted much attention in recent years. In the past decades, with the rapid development of higher education in China, the government has gradually recognised the importance of higher education quality and has taken a series of measures to strengthen the assurance and assessment of higher education quality.

Firstly, the government has established a higher education quality assurance system. This system includes a

comprehensive assessment of the quality of education and teaching, scientific research, faculty, facilities and equipment of colleges and universities. Through the categorisation and management of tertiary institutions, it promotes tertiary institutions to improve the quality of education and teaching in accordance with their own characteristics and positioning. In addition, the government encourages specialised agencies and social intermediaries to assess the level and quality of disciplines, majors and courses of higher education institutions, and explores cooperation with international high-level education evaluation agencies to form a school evaluation model with Chinese characteristics [11].

Secondly, the government has established a system for publishing annual reports on the quality of higher education. Through the monitoring and assessment of the teaching quality, research level, and graduate employment of universities, it regularly releases monitoring and assessment reports in order to improve the transparency of the quality of higher education.

Again, the government has clarified the responsibilities of all levels of government and regulated the behaviour of schools. The government conducts regular assessments of colleges and universities, strengthens the internal quality management of colleges and universities, promotes the separation of management, operation and assessment, and forms an education management system that separates government affairs, has clear powers and responsibilities, is co-ordinated, standardised and orderly.

In general, China's higher education quality assurance and assessment policies have played a positive role in continuously improving the quality of higher education and promoting the internal development of colleges and universities. However, it still faces challenges on issues such as uneven distribution of educational resources and equity and opportunities in higher education. In the future, the government needs to further optimise the policy system and strengthen the supervision and evaluation of policy implementation in order to achieve the continuous improvement of higher education quality.

## **3.3. Special Higher Education Policies and Development**

### **3.3.1. Local Higher Education Policy and Regional Development**

The relationship between local higher education policy and regional development is increasingly visible in China's economic development. Local higher education policies refer to the educational regulations, measures and approaches, etc. formulated by local governments in accordance with the national education policies and in combination with the actual situation of the region. These policies are important for promoting the development of higher education in the region, promoting talent cultivation and scientific and technological innovation, and enhancing regional competitiveness [12].

The impact of local higher education policies on regional development is mainly reflected in the following aspects [13].

Firstly, local higher education policy can promote talent cultivation. By formulating policies conducive to the development of higher education, such as increasing educational investment, optimising the structure of disciplines and specialties, and promoting the combination of industry, academia and research, etc., local governments can effectively improve the quality of higher education, cultivate more high-quality talents, and meet the needs of regional

economic and social development.

Secondly, local higher education policies help scientific and technological innovation. Local governments can encourage colleges and universities to cooperate with enterprises, promote the transformation of scientific and technological achievements, and provide technical support for regional industrial development. At the same time, colleges and universities can also participate in local science and technology programmes and projects through cooperation with local governments to promote regional scientific and technological innovation [14].

Again, local higher education policies can enhance regional competitiveness. Higher education is an important part of the regional innovation system, and the optimisation of local higher education policies can improve regional innovation capacity and competitiveness, attract more investment and talents, and promote regional economic development.

Finally, local higher education policy can help promote regional coordinated development. Local governments can support the development of higher education in central and western regions by formulating differentiated education policies, narrowing the gap with the eastern region, and promoting regional coordinated development [15].

In conclusion, local higher education policies are closely related to regional development, and local governments should be fully aware of this, formulate and implement policies that are conducive to the development of higher education, and promote the economic and social development of the region. At the same time, local governments should also strengthen the articulation with national education policies to ensure the effectiveness and implementation of local higher education policies. In the process of China's higher education development, local higher education policies will play an increasingly important role and make greater contributions to the realisation of the comprehensive construction of a modern socialist country and the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

### **3.3.2. Higher Education Internationalisation Policy and Exchange and Cooperation**

China's higher education internationalisation policy and exchange and cooperation is an important direction for the development of Chinese higher education in recent years. With the in-depth development of globalisation, international academic exchanges and cooperation have become increasingly important. The Chinese government also recognises this and has emphasised the importance of internationalisation in its higher education policies [16].

On the one hand, China's higher education policy encourages universities to carry out international exchanges and co-operation, and promotes co-operation and exchanges between China and the world's top universities. The Chinese government also supports universities to introduce foreign high-quality educational resources to improve the quality of education. In addition, China actively promotes the participation of higher education institutions in international academic cooperation organisations and international scientific programmes to enhance the international influence of Chinese higher education [17].

On the other hand, China's higher education policy also encourages universities to go out and actively participate in international affairs and international competition. Chinese universities can carry out international collaborative research and enhance their scientific research by establishing joint R&D bases with high-level educational and scientific

research institutions outside China. At the same time, Chinese universities can also enhance the level of international academic exchanges by organising international academic conferences.

In addition, China's higher education policy encourages colleges and universities to carry out co-operative education to cultivate talents with an international outlook. Co-operation can be a cooperation between Chinese universities and foreign universities, or a Sino-foreign co-operation programme. These co-operations can promote the sharing of educational resources and improve the quality of education [18].

Overall, the goal of China's higher education internationalisation policy and exchange and cooperation is to enhance the international status and influence of Chinese higher education and to cultivate talents with an international outlook. The implementation of this policy will help promote the development of Chinese higher education and enhance the international competitiveness of Chinese higher education.

## **4. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of China's Higher Education Policies and Challenges**

### **4.1. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Higher Education Policies**

#### **4.1.1. Changes in the Scale and Structure of Higher Education**

Changes in the scale and structure of higher education are important adjustments made by countries around the world to meet the needs of economic, social and technological development in a specific period of time. Since the reform and opening up, the scale of higher education in China has been expanding, gradually shifting from the original elite education to mass education and then to the stage of universal education [19].

In terms of changes in scale, China's gross enrolment rate in higher education has grown from about 2% in 1978 to more than 59.6% in 2022, and the total scale of higher education enrolment has reached 46.55 million, making China one of the largest countries in the world in terms of the scale of higher education. This change not only reflects the country's increased demand for talent training, but also demonstrates the government's efforts to promote educational equity and improve national quality.

At the same time, the structure of higher education is being optimised. In the past, Chinese higher education was dominated by research universities, focusing on academic research and theoretical education. With the development of the economy and society, especially the increased demand for applied and technical-skilled talents, non-research undergraduate colleges and universities and higher vocational colleges and universities have seen rapid development. Nowadays, China's higher education structure has formed a parallel system of research universities, non-research undergraduate colleges and higher vocational colleges and universities, which better meets the needs of different levels and types of talent training [20].

However, changes in the scale and structure of higher education have also brought some challenges. For example, problems such as uneven distribution of educational resources, uneven quality of higher education, and difficulties in student employment have become increasingly prominent. Therefore,

in the future, China's higher education policy needs to pay more attention to connotative development, improve the quality of education, and promote educational equity in order to meet the new development needs of the country and society.

#### **4.1.2. Quality Improvement and Problems of Higher Education**

With the rapid development of economy and society and the increasing demand of the country for talent cultivation, the improvement of the quality of higher education has become the core issue of China's education reform and development. In recent years, China's higher education has gradually turned to the stage of quality improvement on the basis of scale expansion. The government and educational institutions have taken a series of measures to promote the overall improvement of higher education quality.

Firstly, at the policy level, China has formulated a series of policy documents on improving the quality of higher education. For example, *Several Opinions on Comprehensively Improving the Quality of Higher Education*, etc., which clearly define the objectives, tasks and initiatives for improving the quality of higher education. In terms of financial investment, the government has continuously increased its support for higher education, providing a strong guarantee for the improvement of higher education quality.

Secondly, in terms of the connotation construction of higher education, colleges and universities have strengthened their emphasis on the construction of disciplines and specialties, optimised the layout of disciplines, and strengthened the cross-fertilisation of disciplines. At the same time, colleges and universities have also strengthened the construction of the curriculum system, faculty, research capacity and other aspects to improve the quality of education and teaching.

In addition, China has actively promoted the internationalisation of higher education, strengthened cooperation and exchanges with international high-level universities, and enhanced the international influence of China's higher education. Through the introduction of foreign high-quality educational resources, the promotion of international exchange and cooperation of students, and the strengthening of international scientific research cooperation, the quality of China's higher education has been promoted.

However, in the process of improving the quality of higher education, there are still some problems. For example, the distribution of educational resources is uneven, and the development between regions and universities is unbalanced; the assessment system of higher education quality is not yet perfect, and the evaluation standards and methods need to be further improved; while pursuing the expansion of scale, some colleges and universities have neglected the construction of connotation, which has led to the low quality of education.

To address these problems, we need to further optimise the higher education policy system, strengthen policy implementation and evaluation, and promote the continuous improvement of higher education quality. At the same time, we need to strengthen the connotation construction of colleges and universities, improve the level of education and teaching, and ensure that the improvement of the quality of higher education is in line with the development needs of the country and society.

## **4.2. Challenges of Higher Education Policies**

### **4.2.1. Uneven Distribution of Educational Resources**

Unequal distribution of educational resources is a major challenge facing higher education in China. This inequality is reflected in the distribution of educational resources between urban and rural areas, between regions and between different schools. Firstly, there is a clear gap in the distribution of educational resources between urban and rural areas. Urban areas have more high-quality educational resources, including advanced teaching equipment, excellent teaching staff and abundant educational funds. On the contrary, rural and less-developed areas have a relative lack of educational resources, poor school facilities and inadequate teachers. This gap limits rural students' access to quality education and affects their future development.

Secondly, the uneven distribution of educational resources between regions is also an important issue. Uneven economic development has led to a far shortage of higher education resources in some regions, especially in western and remote areas. This imbalance not only affects the quality of higher education in these regions, but also restricts local economic and social development.

In addition, the distribution of educational resources among different schools is not reasonable. Key colleges and prestigious universities usually have more funds and resources, while general and private colleges and universities face a shortage of resources. This inequality not only affects the quality of education and research capacity of colleges and universities, but also exacerbates unfair competition among colleges and universities.

In order to solve the problem of unequal distribution of educational resources, the government needs to take a series of measures. Firstly, it should increase investment in education resources in rural and less developed areas, improve school facilities and upgrade teachers' strength. Secondly, it should promote the sharing of quality education resources, so that students in rural and remote areas can also enjoy quality education resources through such means as online education. In addition, education supervision should be strengthened to ensure the rational allocation and fair use of education resources. Only in this way can educational equity be realised, providing equal educational opportunities for every student and promoting the sustainable development of higher education in China.

### **4.2.2. Issues of Equity and Opportunity in Higher Education**

China's higher education has made remarkable achievements in the past decades, but the problem of higher education equity and opportunity still exists. First of all, the uneven distribution of educational resources is an important issue. In China, universities in urban and developed areas usually have better facilities and more resources, while universities in rural and less developed areas are relatively backward. This has resulted in students in some areas not being able to enjoy high-quality higher education.

Secondly, the college entrance examination system is also a factor contributing to unequal access to higher education. Although the college entrance examination is considered to be a fair selection mechanism, in practice, students in some regions face greater competitive pressure and have difficulty in gaining access to high-quality universities because of regional differences and the uneven distribution of educational resources. In addition, the results of the College

Entrance Examination do not fully reflect students' abilities and potentials, and as a result, some students with special talents may not be able to get the education opportunities they deserve because of their unsatisfactory results in the College Entrance Examination.

In addition, the financial situation of the family is also an important factor affecting access to higher education. In China, rising university tuition fees have put some students from economically disadvantaged families in the difficult position of not being able to continue their education. Although the government provides some scholarship and loan policies, these policies cannot fully solve the problems of students with financial difficulties.

The Government has taken a number of measures to promote equity and opportunity in higher education. For example, it has implemented a policy of 'separate enrolment for rural students' to give rural students more enrolment quotas; it has launched the 'College Students Volunteer to Serve in the West' programme to encourage college students to serve in the western region, so as to improve the shortage of resources for higher education in the region; and it has provided more scholarships and loans to help students from families with financial difficulties to pursue higher education. The Government has also introduced the 'College Students Volunteer Service Programme in the West' to encourage college students to serve in the western region, so as to improve the shortage of local higher education resources; and provided more scholarships and loans to help students from economically disadvantaged families complete their studies.

Nonetheless, there is still a long way to go in terms of equity and access to higher education. In the future, the government needs to further increase its investment in education resources in rural and less developed areas, optimise the college entrance examination system, and comprehensively assess students' abilities, so as to ensure that every student has a fair opportunity for higher education. At the same time, society should also pay attention to and support those students with special talents but limited financial means, so as to provide them with more educational opportunities. Only in this way can true equity and opportunity in higher education be realised.

### **4.3. Countermeasures and Suggestions**

#### **4.3.1. Optimising the Higher Education Policy System**

Optimising the higher education policy system is the key to promoting the development of higher education in China. First of all, the policy system should reflect the national development strategy and coordinate with the country's scientific and technological, economic, social and cultural development. Policy makers need to study the development trend at home and abroad, accurately grasp the development needs of the country for higher education, and ensure that the policy is forward-looking and leading. Secondly, the policy system should pay attention to educational equity, endeavour to achieve a reasonable distribution of educational resources, and ensure that all types of colleges and universities and students have access to fair development opportunities. Policymakers should give full consideration to regional differences, increase support for central and western regions and disadvantaged groups, and promote the balanced regional development of education. Again, the policy system should emphasise quality orientation, establish a sound higher education quality assurance system, and strengthen the supervision and assessment of education and teaching quality.

Colleges and universities should optimise the structure of disciplines and majors according to their own characteristics and advantages, improve the level of education and teaching, enhance the ability of scientific research and innovation, and cultivate more high-quality talents. In addition, the policy system should focus on reform and innovation, actively promote the reform of higher education systems and mechanisms, and break the bottlenecks that constrain the development of education. Policymakers should fully mobilise social forces to participate in education reform, give full play to the role of the market in resource allocation, and promote the diversified development of higher education. At the same time, the policy system should strengthen international cooperation and exchanges, promote China's higher education to the world and enhance international influence. By optimising the higher education policy system, China's higher education will better serve the national development and make greater contributions to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

#### **4.3.2. Strengthening Policy Implementation and Evaluation**

Policy implementation and evaluation is a crucial part of the policy process, and the same applies to higher education policy. Firstly, strengthening policy implementation needs to be done at multiple levels. At the policy formulation stage, clarity and operability should be ensured to avoid ambiguity leading to biased understanding and implementation difficulties. At the policy communication and training stage, training and guidance should be strengthened for relevant stakeholders, such as educational administrative bodies, universities and teachers, to ensure that the policy intent is correctly understood and implemented. At the stage of policy implementation, a sound monitoring mechanism should be established to guarantee the fairness and efficiency of policy implementation. In addition, colleges and universities should be encouraged and guided to apply the policy flexibly according to their own characteristics and actual situation in order to maximise the policy objectives.

Secondly, policy evaluation is an effective means to test the effect of policies and to identify and solve problems in implementation. The assessment process should focus on science and objectivity, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively collect implementation data for analysis and evaluation. Through policy evaluation, problems and deficiencies in policy implementation can be identified in a timely manner, providing a basis for policy adjustment and optimisation. At the same time, the assessment results should also provide feedback to policymakers, implementers and stakeholders, and promote the continuous improvement and efficiency of policies.

In order to strengthen policy implementation and evaluation, it is also necessary to build a multi-party, transparent and open evaluation system. The government should actively introduce third-party assessment organisations to enhance the objectivity and credibility of assessment. At the same time, universities, scholars and all sectors of society should be encouraged to participate in policy assessment, giving full play to their professional strengths and supervisory roles. In addition, the assessment process and results should be disclosed to the society to enhance the transparency of the policy and accept public supervision.

To sum up, strengthening policy implementation and

evaluation is the key to improving the effectiveness of higher education policies and promoting education development. Through the above measures, it can ensure effective implementation of policies, timely adjustment and optimisation of policies, and ultimately achieve the improvement of the quality of higher education and the promotion of the overall interests of the society.

## 5. Conclusion

This study provides an in-depth discussion of China's higher education policies from the aspects of historical evolution, current policy analysis, policy effect evaluation and challenges. The study found that since the reform and opening up, China's higher education policy has achieved remarkable results. Firstly, the scale of higher education has been expanding, realising the transformation from elite education to mass education. Secondly, the structure of higher education has been gradually optimised, forming a multi-level and multi-type higher education system. Once again, the quality of higher education has been significantly improved, and a number of high-level universities and research institutions have stood out.

However, while seeing the results, we also find that the current higher education policy faces many challenges. Firstly, the distribution of educational resources is uneven, and the development gap between regions and universities is large. Second, the problem of equity in higher education is prominent, and students in poor and rural areas have relatively fewer opportunities to receive high-quality higher education. Third, the quality assurance system of higher education is not yet perfect, and the quality of education and scientific research in some universities still needs to be improved.

In response to these challenges, this study proposes corresponding countermeasures. Firstly, the higher education policy system should be optimised to ensure the scientific, targeted and effective nature of the policies. Second, strengthen the implementation and evaluation of policies to improve their enforcement. Once again, promote the sharing of educational resources and synergistic development between regions and universities. In addition, it is also necessary to increase the support for higher education in poverty-stricken and rural areas to ensure educational equity.

Overall, China's higher education policy has achieved remarkable results in promoting the development of higher education, but there are still some problems and challenges. In the future, China should continue to deepen the reform and innovate the higher education policy system, with a view to better promoting the development of higher education.

## References

- [1] Garcia Manuel B.. School reopening concerns amid a pandemic among higher education students: a developing country perspective for policy development[J]. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*,2024,23(2).
- [2] Yichen Zhang. Examining Preferential Policies for Ethnic Higher Education in China's Multi-Ethnic Society: Impacts and Challenges in the Realm of Adult and Higher Education,2020 *Adult and Higher Education*,2024,6(2).
- [3] Fang Xiaotian. How China's Private Higher Education System Changes: An Analytical Framework of Multiple Dynamics[J]. *Higher Education Development and Evaluation*,2024,40(02): 41-54+121.
- [4] ZHOU Hongyu,YU Jiangtao. 2023 China's educational governance research hotspots and future prospects[J]. *Modern Education Technology*,2024,34(03):5-16.
- [5] Zhuoer Wang,Shisan Bao. The impact of social distancing measures (quarantine) policy on tertiary education and medical consultations in China The impact of social distancing measures (quarantine) policy on tertiary education and medical consultations in China during the COVID-19 pandemic[J]. *Frontiers in Public Health*,2024,12.
- [6] XU Wen. Learning to 'tell China's story well': higher education policy and public diplomacy in Chinese *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*[J]. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*,2024,46(2).
- [7] ZHAO Junfang,GANAL Mulzabek. Research on the change of education policy of studying abroad in China under the background of internationalisation[J]. *Social Science Front*, 2024,(03):237-246.
- [8] Ruan Hang. The Historical Evolution, Logical Rationale and Value Purpose of Modernisation of Chinese Higher Education[J]. *Journal of Hulunbeier College*,2024,32(01):42-49.
- [9] Zhuang Danli. Policy evolution, basic paradigm and optimisation of applied higher education development in China[J]. *Journal of Yangzhou University (Higher Education Research Edition)*,2024,28(01):33-42.
- [10] MA Hongping, SONG Wenhong. Logic of Policy Evolution and Policy Suggestions for International Students' Education since the "Belt and Road" Initiative--Analysis Based on the Texts of National Policies in the Past Ten Years[J]. *Journal of Heze College*,2024,46(01):72-79.
- [11] Dongsuk Kang,Min Jae Park. Performance management and policy evaluation of information and communication technology graduate programme for developing countries[J]. *Evaluation and Program Planning*,2024,103.
- [12] Zhang Xue-Wen. How science and education can help the country: policy agenda and practice in China in the midst of great changes[J]. *Educational Research*,2024,45(01):133-145.
- [13] YANG Xiaomin,HAN Qing. Funding for the Construction of a Strong Education Nation: An Overview of the Education Finance Sub-Forum of the China Education Reform and Development Forum (2023)[J]. *Education Economic Review*, 2024,9(01):122-128.
- [14] Li JJ, Su LF, Lv WJ. The impact of pro-poor policies on rural families' children's access to higher education-Evidence from Chinese household finance survey data[J]. *Educational Economics Review*,2024,9(01):86-103.
- [15] Xiang Zhengquan,Han Lijuan. Changes in China's Teacher Education Policies since Reform and Opening Up--Analysis Based on the Framework of Supporting Coalition[J]. *Journal of Hubei College of Arts and Sciences*,2024,45(01):73-78.
- [16] WANG Zhifeng,WANG Weiyi. The international evolution of higher education equity policies in the universalisation stage - a sustainable development perspective[J]. *University Education Science*,2024,(01):97-107.
- [17] Cobena Desy Yanty,Otu Ronisius. Higher education policy in developing and western nations: contemporary and emerging trends in local and global The role of education in the development of the world's education systems [J]. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*,2024,46(1).
- [18] Xu Shuqin. Groupwork and collaborative learning: Chinese university students' struggles and strategies[J]. *Higher Education Research & Development*,2024,43(1).
- [19] Zang Leizhen,Zhu Yifei,Wen Yuhan. Reconstructing public policy evaluation under the experimental method--Analyse the validation of its application in the evaluation of higher

education expansion policy[J]. Chinese Administration,2023, 39(11):148-156.

[20] ZHANG Chuansui,TANG Yaqin. The people's nature of new China's higher education policy and its specific embodiment and inevitable demand[J]. Journal of Hebei Normal University (Education Science Edition),2023,25(06):64-71.