

Higher Education in China

political economy premise

urban bias:

media focus

culture

but in China, political salience

empirically

larger cities \Rightarrow shorter lifespan of non-democratic regimes

hukou \rightarrow mechanism of urban bias but not robust to migration

Great Recession \Rightarrow example of pro-rural policies to keep peasants from flooding back to cities

Great Recession \Rightarrow infrastructure projects accelerate \Rightarrow lessen pressures on urban job creation

why who what where when how

question, question, question everything!

why

access to education is a way to give urban residents a vested interest in your staying in power, because it provides access to elite careers.

oh, and that it helps China's economy grow is useful

basic education is for example universal

but that doesn't explain the structure of higher education.

who

urban bias

part is natural: higher urban incomes mean (comparatively) fewer kids whereas college are urban in location.

of course higher urban incomes are

an intentional product of *hukou* and

an unintentional product of the Soviet-derived capital-intensive development strategy.

college entrance exams have to be taken where you have your *hukou*, even if you've never visited your home province.

differential youth-population-to-college ratios mean urban residents need lower scores to get into university than do rural *hukou* holders.

what

engineering, of course.

then the sciences and law

then administration and economics

in 30 years, if you want to do engineering, you may have to do it in China and India. Ford Motor Company is in fact setting up R&D facilities overseas so as to be better able to tap talent in engineering and the sciences

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where

home bias in education: your *hukou* has a huge influence on where you go to school.

the best universities are in urban areas, and the big coastal cities have more top-ranked schools than the provinces, which may have only one "top" school.

it's really helpful to go to Beijing National University *Beida*. a disproportionate number of the elite are graduates.

now to get into a top university it's helpful to both go to an elite high school and to have the resources for after-school prep schools (some of which expect their students to attend their classes 7 nights a week, plus weekends – forget extracurricular activities!!)

you can't readily do that without an urban *hukou*, plus it helps to start early because as urbanites your parents are "in the know"

when

primary school now almost universal. biggest challenge is remote minority populations where there is no local use of Chinese as a language, even by local business people

college can be delayed by one year so as to retake the kaogao.

[高考 is an abbreviation for 普通高等学校招生全国统一考试]

how learn

rote learning model. that's how you got into college, more to the point, that's the only way you get into college.

great for sciences and engineering and medicine. and accounting. less so for other fields.

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dilemma:

the more urban the population, the more difficult it is to use policies of cooptation

how evolve

when cities were small, you could favor them and thus see that the elite were above average in everything.

so as cities expand, and as successful business people become quasi-elite

you need to expand the size of higher education. *and rapidly and a lot!*

when everyone is cities, well, it's impossible for everyone to be above average.

shudder every time you hear "he gave it 110%"

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Caution:

political economy is not everything

but it does help understand the nature of higher education in China.

*sources: Ma & Adams Chapter 5
China Statistical Yearbook 2014*

*I've not looked at – but as a followup did order from smile.amazon.com – Jeremy Wallace (2014), **Cities and Stability: Urbanization, Redistribution, and Regime Survival in China**. Oxford University Press.*