

Comparison of the Admission Policy of Chinese and American High School Athletes

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Abstract: Athletics admission is one of the admissions considered special in the United States. High school athletes in China have also been enjoying special admissions policies. The author would like to compare the admission policies for high school athletes in China and the United States. The research methods used in this paper mainly include literature review and comparative analysis. This article compares the management and admissions departments, admission standards (academic and sports), and sports programs of Chinese and American athletes, and makes a discussion and summary. The article showed that the department responsible for admissions in China is a national institution, while in the United States is NCAA. In terms of admission standards, China's academic standard for athletes is relatively simple, and only one test result is considered. In the United States, students' high school courses, high school grades, and SAT or ACT scores are comprehensively considered.

Keywords: Comparison between China and the United States, Athlete Admissions, NCAA, High Level Sports Team Enrollment, Admission Policy.

1. Introduction

Athlete enrollment has always been an important educational equity topic. James.L. Shulroan and William.G. Bowen analyze and evaluate the student-athlete enrollment system and the value of sports in the United States. The sixth chapter, Recruitment of College Athletes, discusses the evolution of recruiting student-athletes in American universities, as well as the development process of recruiting and selecting student athletes[1]. Scholar Yang Hua systematically introduces American college sports. In his book, he systematically and detailedly introduced the development of the National Collegiate Athletic Association(NCAA) and its close relationship with the admissions of American college athletes[2]. Zou Yuehui et al. used the method of literature research and field investigation to sort out the development process of American college student-athlete recruitment and selection, and further analyze the experience of recruiting students has been analyzed and summarized. They believe that the qualification certification system and the admission system should be further improved, a complete "one-stop" competition plan and training system should be built, and the advantages of school education and resource facilities should be fully utilized. It is of great significance to further improve the incentive mechanism and guarantee mechanism[3]. At present, there are few related studies in this field comparing the specific policies for the admission of Chinese and American athletes. By arranging the documents issued by the

Chinese Ministry of Education and the admission requirements on the NCAA website, this article adopts the method of comparative research to compare the management and admissions departments, admission standards(academic and sports), and sports programs of Chinese and American athletes, and makes a discussion and conclusion at the end. The purpose of this article is to clarify the specific requirements of Chinese and American universities for the admission of athletes and to contribute to the research on special admissions for the college entrance examination and the comparison of Chinese and American education systems.

2. Introduction to the Theories Related to Educational Equity

John Rawls's definition of equity in his book "The Theory of Justice" has been recognized by many scholars. Rawls mentioned that the first principle of justice is the "principle of equal liberty" "everyone shall enjoy the broadest, comprehensive, equal rights to equal fundamental liberties"[4]. The second principle of justice is the "principle of fairness of opportunity", which means that "everyone has equal opportunities to obtain political and economic status, but because there are huge differences between people, whether it is inborn heredity, acquired ability or social background, etc." [4]. Given the first and second principles of justice, people can use the third principle of justice—the "principle of differential treatment"(also known as the principle of compensation for interests). This is also often regarded as the most operational principle in achieving educational equity. Compensate disadvantaged groups in society by readjusting the distribution of resources and rights. This is also known as "diverse treatment," and it allows the most vulnerable groups to receive as much compensation as possible in the face of unfair social conditions. It is worth noting that although the "principle of differential treatment" is not a compensation principle in the full sense, it achieves the essence of "compensation". After sorting out, it is found that the above principles proposed by Rawls are most appropriate to the admission policy of athletes in China. We can try to learn from Rawls's theory by comparing the differential treatment of athletes' admissions policies in China and the United States.

3. How Chinese and American High School Athletes Enter University

In China, there are three main methods for athletes to enter universities: college admissions for High-Level Enrollment Sports Teams(here referred to as "high-level"), college admissions for sports training, martial arts, and traditional national sports(here referred to as "Individual Enrollment"), and general admissions for sports. Among them, High-Level Enrollment and Individual Enrollment require students to meet the standards of national second-level athletes. Students who participate in the general admissions of sports only need to take the sports test before the college entrance examination. The purpose of participating in the sports test is that the candidates can study sports-related majors, like Sports Human Science, Sports Economics and Management. Therefore, this article takes High-Level Enrollment and Individual Enrollment as the ways for high school athletes to enter universities in China.

In the United States, there are two ways for sports students to apply to American colleges and universities. Students need to be certified by the NCAA. The second is to follow the regular application process. Students with a background of sports expertise can apply through this process and study sports-related majors. The former requires certification by the NCAA Eligibility Center, while the second one only requires students to have a better performance in a certain sporting event. Therefore, when discussing athletes in the United States entering colleges and universities, the author only discusses high school athletes who enter colleges through the NCAA system.

4. Comparative Analysis

4.1. Comparison of Administrative Enrollment Departments

Athlete enrollment in China is under the unified management of the Ministry of Education and the State Sports General Administration. They issue documents in which they provide the criteria for admissions in High-Level Enrollment and Individual Enrollment. During the admission process, universities have a degree of autonomy and can decide the time, item, and location of the sports tests. However, the requirements of the admissions brochure issued by the Ministry of Education must be followed. It can be said that the recruitment of athletes in China is the admission of unified national calibration.

The recruitment of American student-athletes relies on NCAA. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is a non-profit organization that manages student sports in approximately 1,100 schools in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. It also organizes athletic programs at universities in the United States and Canada. NCAA has independent rule-making power, interpretation power, and adjudication power for its member schools. American universities with NCAA membership must abide by the rules of the NCAA and obey the decisions of the NCAA[2].

4.2. Comparison of Academic Admission Standards for Athletes

4.2.1. Academic Standards for Admission of Chinese Athletes

Athletes who participate in Individual Enrollment have to take College Entrance Exam designed for Athletes. The test subjects are Chinese, mathematics, politics, and English. For candidates who hold a first-level athlete certificate, universities can reduce 30 points for the student. Candidates who hold a national-level elite athlete grade certificate can be admitted with 50 points less[5].

High-Level Enrollment need to take the college entrance examination. College entrance examination in most areas implements a 3+3 policy, that is, three compulsory subjects, Chinese, mathematics, and English. Students can choose the other 3 subjects from history, politics, geography, biology, physics, and chemistry. Universities shall reasonably determine the minimum requirements for academic scores of the students admitted to the school's sports teams, generally not lower than the second batch of undergraduate admission control scores in the province where the students originated[6].

4.2.2. Academic Standards for Admission of American Athletes

The NCAA divides its member schools into three divisions: Division I, Division II, and Division III. To be eligible to compete in NCAA sports during your first year at a Division I school, students must graduate high school and meet all of the following requirements:

- Complete 16 core courses, including 4 years of English, 3 years of math (Algebra 1 or higher), 2 years of natural/physical science, 1 additional year of English, math or natural/physical science, 2 years of social science, and 4 additional years of English, math, natural/physical science, social science, foreign language, comparative religion or philosophy.
- Complete 10 core courses, including seven in English, math, or natural/physical science, before your seventh semester. Once you begin your seventh semester, students may not repeat or replace any of those 10 courses to improve your core-course GPA.
- Earn at least a 2.3 GPA in the core courses;

Students will have to earn an SAT or ACT score matching their core-course GPA on the Division I sliding scale, which balances the test score and core-course GPA. If students have a low test score, they need a higher core-course GPA to be eligible [7].

NCAA Division I Full Qualifier Sliding Scale		
Core GPA	SAT	ACT Sum
3.550	400	37
3.525	410	38
3.500	430	39
3.475	440	40
3.450	460	41
3.425	470	41
3.400	490	42
3.375	500	42
...
2.425	930	70
2.400	940	71
2.375	950	72
2.350	960	73
2.325	970	74
2.300	980	75

Figure 1: Sliding scale for NCAA division I[7].

As shown in Figure 1, students with higher Core GPA are required with lower test scores.

4.3. Sports Criteria for Admission of Athletes

Students who meet the criteria may enroll in the current year's Individual Enrollment:

The students have to obtain the national second-level athlete (or higher) certificate in the sports program admitted by Individual Enrollment. Students who meet the conditions can apply for admission to High-Level Enrollment. Students have to obtain the national second-level athlete and above certificates and be the main team members in high school, and have won the top six in the group project or the top three in the individual project in the provincial and municipal competitions.

Sports standards are getting higher for student-athletes in China. From 2024 onwards, only those who meet the national college entrance examination registration requirements of the province where the students originated, and who have obtained the title of national first-level athlete(inclusive) or above, can apply for High-Level Enrollment [8].

The NCAA requires students to provide information about athletic performance on their accounts on the website. Information on athletic performance is not mandatory, but if you want to get the attention of college coaches, you need to prepare rankings(whether it is world rankings,

domestic rankings, or various ranking systems that prove students are first-class talents; whether you are swimming expertise, basketball expertise, or tennis expertise, citing your individual or team rankings is often the fastest way to make a coach's eyes shine), professional competition results, and sports videos, coaches' popularity, professional physical test results.

5. Discussion

The admission policies for athletes in Chinese and American universities have continued the characteristics of their regular admissions. Due to various factors such as economic development, historical precipitation, cultural environment, social system, etc., the enrollment systems of Chinese and American universities are different. Zhang Yajun classified and analyzed the characteristics of the college entrance examination and enrollment system in developed countries. It is mainly divided into three modes: the comprehensive system, the certificate system, and the college entrance examination system[9]. China adopts the college entrance examination system, that is, a certain examination institution is responsible for the unified examination, uses a unified standard to measure students, and provides selective information for universities. The same goes for the admission of athletes. Chinese universities mainly use a student's test score to determine whether a student is eligible for admission.

In the development of China's education equity system, China places too much emphasis on the economic function of education, making education equity an accessory to economic development and socialist modernization [10]. According to a report in 2021, there are 92 institutions of higher learning in Beijing, more than the combined total of Tibet, Qinghai, and Ningxia Province[11]. The admission standard in China seems to be a single-dimension standard, but it is actually a promotion of equity. If students' abilities are evaluated across multiple dimensions during the admissions process, students who live in large cities should have an advantage. Some students were born in areas with underdeveloped educational resources, which makes them unable to meet some of the admission standards. Therefore, this seemingly single-dimension admission standard can also be understood as making the admission policies of universities more fair. It only inspects the basic education content that everyone can accept, so that more students can provide an opportunity for fair competition.

Whether it is regular admission or athlete admission, US universities have a more sophisticated system for evaluating students for admission. It combines students' test scores with their high school performance. Both academic and athletic performance are considered with a greater emphasis on sustainability and integration. The admission policy of the United States is very worthy of our study. For example, we can make requirements for athletes' high school grades. In this way, student athletes who want to enter a well-known university must give consideration to both sports performance and academic performance in high school. It also lays a solid foundation for student-athletes to adapt to university learning. Another point is that the admission policies can reflect the different understandings of the identity of student-athletes. Chinese universities are placing more emphasis on students' athletic advancement in their admissions process. American universities(NCAA) place more emphasis on amateurism. Students first, athletes second.

6. Conclusion

This article compares the management and enrollment departments, admission standards(academic and sports), and sports programs of Chinese and American athletes. The article shows that the department responsible for admissions in China is the national institution—the Ministry of Education, while in the United States is NCAA. The academic standards are also different. The admission policy of Chinese universities adopts the college entrance examination system. The

admissions policy adopted in the United States is a comprehensive system, which requires a comprehensive consideration of students' high school courses, high school grades, and test scores. For the athletic standards: the standards of the sport in China are more explicit, requiring students to obtain nationally recognized athlete certificates. This standard is improving year by year. In the United States, students can obtain certification from the NCAA Eligibility Center. Through the comparison of admission policies, the author believes that Chinese universities pay more attention to the achievements of students in their sports fields in the admission of athletes. If the achievement in sports is big enough, students can even skip the national college entrance exam. The United States pays more attention to the student attributes of athletes, emphasizes amateurism, and puts forward more comprehensive and stricter standards for students' studies. This article also has some flaws. In the analysis, there is no detailed analysis of the admissions of students from specific universities, specific years, specific regions, and specific majors. In future research, the author will conduct a more detailed study based on the admissions of athletes to a specific university in China.

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