

Education and Precision Poverty Alleviation: Education "Poverty" Issue in Left-behind Children in Rural Villages and Exploration on Solution Pathways

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Abstract. Education precision poverty alleviation mainly refers to the government's use of education assistance as a precision poverty alleviation method for poverty-stricken regions, entailing the availability and provision of suitable education resources for different population groups. To a certain degree, addressing education problems among left-behind children is a manifestation of the value of education precision poverty alleviation and avoids blind poverty alleviation. At present, left-behind children education is primarily undertaken during the course of upbringing by grandparents, and plagued by issues such as lack of family education, polarized learning conditions, insufficient emotional guidance, relatively poor moral ethics, deficiency of psychological support, complicated social environment, influenced cognitive development and other problems. The education precision poverty alleviation strategy chiefly explores pathways from aspects such as the government, schools and the society to ensure effectiveness in education precision poverty alleviation for left-behind children and to promote the protection of the rights and the healthy upbringing of left-behind children in rural villages.

1. Problem Proposal

Education precision poverty alleviation mainly refers to the government's use of education assistance as a precision poverty alleviation method for poverty-stricken regions, entailing the availability and provision of suitable education resources for different population groups. It is an important component in the overall strategy in the development of poverty alleviation efforts in China, and a crucial measure for stopping poverty from being passed down from generation to generation.

The course of urbanization generated a substantial number of left-behind children, and in turn the issues of left-behind children captured the attention of the public. The *National Mid- and Long-term Education Reform and Development Planning Outline (2010-2020)* explicitly stipulated the implementation of a sustained care and support mechanism for left-behind children in rural villages. In 2013, the concept of precision poverty alleviation was put forth, marking a momentous step forward for Chinese efforts in alleviating poverty, and engendered a new opportunity and mentality for addressing the problem of left-behind children.

According to a research report published by the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) in 2013, there were a total of 61.03 million left-behind children (children less than the age of 18 years-old who remain while one or both of their parents leave to work elsewhere). Looking at rural village left-behind children survey released by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 2016, there was still 9.02 million rural village left-behind children (children less than the age of 16 years-old who remain while both their parents leave to work elsewhere or the one remaining parent has inadequate competence to function as guardian). Poverty is a denial of a person's choices and opportunities, the deficiency of the basic ability to effectively participate in society, the lack of entitlement to basic education and medical care services, the exclusion from community life, and the deprivation of

benefits. Ever since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the Communist Party Central Committee led by General Secretary of the CPC comrade Xi Jinping adopted a strategic viewpoint founded upon the full realization of a xiaokang "moderately prosperous" society and the actualization of the Chinese dream of the revival of the Chinese people, took innovative measures in poverty alleviation and committed full efforts into developing poverty alleviation. Since the proposal of the concept of precision poverty alleviation in 2013, poverty reduction has already achieved progress at the current phase, offering a new opportunity for education assistance and caring efforts for left-behind children in rural villages. Precision poverty alleviation mandates the provision of aids for left-behind children to shift from a "blanketing irrigation" to "precision-based dripping irrigation," avoid the fuzzy and fragmented early-phase alleviation, usher in a normalized, long-term and targeted education precision poverty alleviation stage, [1] and realize a full-fledged precision poverty alleviation that targets the psychological health and education of left-behind children in rural villages. Counting from the onset of the *Temporary Measures for the Schooling of Migrant Children* in 1998, it has been more than two decades since the CPC and state government began to roll out various policies aimed at resolving the problems of left-behind children in rural villages. Yet, under the constant attention and relentless efforts of both academia and government, the education of left-behind children is still hampered by poverty, and there are widespread disputes within academic circles on how to deal with and resolve such issues.

2. Manifestations of "Poverty" in Education of Left-behind Children in Rural Villages

"Poverty" in education of left-behind children in rural villages mostly arises from poverty in knowledge, poverty in information and poverty in culture. [2] The value and pursuit of education poverty alleviation are the valued beliefs and valued objectives pursued by education poverty alleviation, as in to answer the questions of why should education poverty alleviation be carried out and what is the ultimate goals of education poverty alleviation. [3] The problem of "poverty" in education of left-behind children in rural villages is an outcome jointly instigated by the inadequacy of various main education entities, resulting in the personality disorders and deviation behaviors. At present, the "poverty" in education of left-behind children is chiefly manifested in the following aspects:

2.1 Primary reliance on upbringing by grandparents and lack of family education

The guardians of left-behind children themselves generally have relatively poor personal qualities, and compounded with issues such as high degree of migrant movement, the result is a severe lack of family education. The first part of the problem is education problem arising from upbringing by grandparents. At present, the majority of rural village left-behind children already enrolled in schools are the single child in their families born prior to the easing of the "single-child policy". Most of the time, these kids are spoiled by grandparents, and therefore, such spoiling would generate a series of problems such as dislike for schooling, cutting class and reluctance in study. The second issue is the lack of family education. The lack of family education refers to situations in which parents should take care of their own children to avoid the series of issues arising from upbringing by grandparents, but poor economic circumstances prevent a family from entirely relocating, resulting in children left behind in rural villages and thus the general deficiency in family education. Due to the loss of young and capable labor, the lion's share of left-behind children must take responsibility for a portion of household labor such as agricultural works and other production tasks, animal husbandry and other mundane daily affairs, which distract them from learning. At the same time, "education from grandparents" is conducted rural village seniors that are themselves relatively lacking in personal qualities and busy with farming duties, thus they cannot provide the needed extracurricular support conducive to the education of left-behind children. Thirdly, schools and families cannot form complementary education. There is a general gap of effective communication between most rural village schools and the left-behind children guardians, leading to incongruence in education goals and integrity, and thus any chance of complementarity.

2.2 Polarized learning conditions, insufficient emotional guidance

Generally speaking, another problem hindering left-behind children is: A polarized trend in academic performance, but relative to urban children of the same age, left-behind children perform sub-par; at the same time, left-behind children generally do not receive enough emotional guidance. The first problem is polarized academic performance. This issue is mainly manifested in a comparatively small proportion of academically gifted left-behind children, who perform well in school since young and can matriculate all the way to higher education, but usually this type of children have to bear tremendous stress in both life and study, and mature too early; on the other hand, the majority of left-behind children in rural villages lack both family education and parental care because parents are away from home most of the time, while their guardians, usually seniors, generally spoil them. The issue is compounded by busy farming activities, and thus most children are unenthusiastic about academics since young and do not perform well in school. In addition, the shortage of suitable guidance from guardians or approval from people in the surrounding society accelerate a vicious cycle, leading to increasingly poor academic performance, absence of willingness to study and a high rate of drop-out. Overall, academic performance is quite polarized among these children. The second issue is prominent emotional problem. This is mainly seen in the loneliness and anxiety in left-behind children, as well as them falling in love at an early age, and a lack of basic communication with parents.

2.3 Relatively poor moral ethics, deficiency of psychological support

First of all, left-behind children usually have relatively poor moral ethics. Survey data shows that 56.5% left-behind children show relatively lowly conducts, much worse than non-left-behind children in the same area, and far from comparable with the overall personal qualities and moral ethics than city-dwelling children of the same age. One possible culprit is the combination of inadequate family education and surrounding growth environment. Research indicates that the moral ethics of left-behind children in rural villages are directly affected by niche environment of the community where they live, and the moral ethics of guardians and children of similar age, in addition to "bandwagon effect" and "imitation effect". Second of all, left-behind children are generally more introverted; they lack emotional support and are lonely. This issue is primarily seen in the severe shortage of normal communication about life and emotions between left-behind children and senior guardians, parents, relatives, friends and others of similar age. Furthermore, when psychological issues begin to emerge in left-behind children, the problem continues to exasperate with time because the issue is not discovered in time and not appropriately allayed. Third of all, psychological problem leads to psychological bias. Research data shows that roughly 70% left-behind children have some sort of psychological problem, and approximately 10% left-behind children are haunted by severe psychological disorder. [4]

2.4 Complicated social environment, influenced cognitive development

Since most rural villages are located in isolated mountain regions where entertainment options are scarce, left-behind children are left with extremely few choices in leisure activities outside of school. Families that are relatively well-off will purchase television, thus watching TV becomes the primary mode of entertainment for this type of children. However, when senior guardians do not adequately monitor, left-behind children could watch TV all day long and are easily misguided by unhealthy information. Incorrect notions like "money can solve all problems" or "money can make anyone do anything" are prevalent in rural village areas, and to a certain extent such mentality has led left-behind children off-course and driven them to drop out of school. Parents hope that their kids could focus on studying, but many also believe that leaving school to work is also an acceptable choice. Village CPC committee, as the self-governing body of the public at the grass-root level, have not given enough attention to the education issues of left-behind children. In reality, left-behind children are quite commonly seen, but their education problems are relatively inconspicuous and the severity of these problems will not rear their ugly heads within short duration, thus less attention and efforts are dedicated to these issues, making it even more difficult to find a

solution.

3. Exploration for Pathways to Solutions of "Poverty" in Education of Left-behind Children in Rural Villages

At present, precision poverty alleviation has been elevated in status as one of the great strategic policies of China. The various forms of "poverty" faced by left-behind children in rural villages all originate from actual causes. Fundamentally speaking, there is a cause-and-effect relationship between poverty and the economic differences apparent in the binary urban-rural structure. Thus, it is necessary to take a look at the fundamentals when conducting education precision poverty alleviation for left-behind children in rural villages so as to truly realize the healthy growth and development of these stricken children. The fundamental solution is to mobilize a diverse range of main entities to provide them with psychological care and support, foster sound growth environment for these left-behind children in rural villages and ensure their healthy growth and development.

3.1 For the government, it is necessary to maximize the function and responsibility of the municipal government and local government. In terms of the municipal government, steps ought to be taken to break through any bottlenecks in mobility between urban and rural areas, implement the residence permit system as soon as possible, promote progress in programs such as urban-rural public service equality, and facilitate rural village children with suitable conditions to migrate and "assimilate" into the city. At the same time, more work skills training should be provided to the parents of children who have moved into the cities, including the provision of training for difficult and highly technical production skills to city migrant farmers who possess relatively high degree of academic background. In terms of the local government, steps ought to be taken to conduct comprehensive survey, information registration and daily monitoring of left-behind children in the territory of jurisdiction, and at the same time pay attention to the psychological needs and world view development of these children. Actions should also be taken to the delegation of tasks related to left-behind children information collection, registration and supervision, speed up the formation of a "superior level empowers subordinate level, superior level takes responsibility for subordinate level" responsibility mechanism, strengthen construction of local infrastructure facilities to not only provide information monitoring terminals for the daily supervision of left-behind children but also to overhaul the transportation facilities of these faraway mountain regions so as to bolster their access to the outside world. At the same time, active measures should be employed to learn from and introduce the valuable experience and cutting-edge methods from all other areas across the nation with regard to the administration of left-behind children, so as to earnestly elevate the scientific basis in the administration of left-behind children.

3.2 For schools, it is necessary for both urban schools and rural village local schools to strengthen the intensity of education from multiple angles. In terms of urban schools, student recruitment should be more fair and more opened to rural village children that move into the city, provide these kids with more and fairer opportunities for education, allay discrimination and conflict between children, pay more attention to their psychological counseling, world view cultivation and guidance for assimilation into society, so that they feel the same warmth at school as they do at home. These children should be staffed with dedicated psychological counselors, while regular teachers should raise their ability to resolve children's psychological issues, and refrain from managing all children in one and the same way, so as to address the wide range of psychological problems that migrant children face as they move into the city. In terms of local schools in rural villages, education poverty alleviation tasks should be undertaken in earnest, and more attention should be paid to the healthy growth in both the mind and body of left-behind children: For instance, more emphasis should be placed on the learning quality of left-behind children in the classroom, actively provide them with homework guidance, and provide feedback to parents about academic performance in a timely manner. Augment the children's activity experience, and during activities instruct and encourage them to take an active stance on seeking knowledge and discovering problems. At the

same time, raise the remuneration of faculty, earnestly carry out tasks related to left-behind children drop-out prevention, regularly organize teachers to study and advance their knowledge elsewhere, improve the teaching ability of teachers, enhance faculty training on capacity to identify and manage the psychological problems of left-behind children, under the psychological dynamics of left-behind children in a timely manner, response quickly to any unhealthy psyche or behavior exhibited by left-behind children, carry out education on developing a proper world view, and guide left-behind children to form the correct mentality.

3.3 For communities, it is necessary to provide to left-behind children more care and support. In terms of urban communities, begin with collecting information about and registering migrant children that came into the city, and form a comprehensive migrant children monitoring and care network; urban communities should establish more family activity venues for migrant families, recruit volunteer teams engaged in relevant work, and enable them to participate in the daily life of these migrant children to better monitor them and aid with their studies; urban communities should dedicate emphatically to cultivate and foster community volunteer service teams, strive to form a coordinated work mechanism in which "social workers guide volunteers, volunteers assist social workers," so as to administer management on the daily life and learning of migrant children in an orderly and suitable fashion. Foster conditions to better enable migrant children to assimilate into the city, and enable these migrant children to feel the warmth and care from the community. Local village CPC committees should team up with various private organizations from communities to advocate activities to visit rural villages and other patriotic and nationalistic activities, so as to raise the legal consciousness, safety awareness and patriotism among left-behind children. Local village CPC committees should cooperate with the government in collecting info about, registering and organizing data on left-behind children, and at the same time shoulder a certain degree of responsibility as their guardian. Families of left-behind children with serious issues should be honestly reported, village CPC cadre should be arranged to visit these left-behind children families regularly to truly understand their actual needs, provide material and spiritual support, ensure the earnest implementation of the government's relevant poverty alleviation plan, and genuinely function as the intermediate platform between left-behind children families and the government. Personally visit left-behind children families, take an active stance on learning more about the life and studies of left-behind children, and maximally provide left-behind children with the necessary care and protection.

3.4 For social organizations, they should leverage on their own organization advantages, and coordinate efforts with the government and other main social entities. The various social organizations ought to leverage on their own organization advantages, and coordinate efforts with the government and other main social entities to provide support to migrant families in the form of funding and benefits, and set up safety, health, legal, emotional and other assistance programs for these families; social organizations should carry out some public welfare campaigns for left-behind children; social organizations should carry out a series of targeted volunteer service, provide "one-to-one" care for migrant children that moved into the city, and call on the society to donate to left-behind children, solicit support funding for migrant children and families with difficulties, conduct a large quantity of "left-behind children enter city to visit parents" activities during summer break, provide more convenient channels conducive to maintaining and reinforcing contact between children and parents, and form a full-spectrum left-behind children care network; based on the unique needs of left-behind children, services should be undertaken correspondingly to spread positive energy and encourage left-behind children to develop the right kind of world view. Upon the basis of cooperation with village CPC committee, foster even more harmonious neighbor relationships, and consolidate resources of neighbors and relatives to create a better growth environment for left-behind children. At the same time, social organizations should fortify rapport with each other; carry out campaigns focusing on bolstering the psychological health development of left-behind children as core theme, and offer emotional care and world view guidance to left-behind children. Overall, it is necessary to create a "family + school + government + private

organization" local management model, and form a full-spectrum left-behind children monitoring network in order to enable left-behind children to grow up healthily under the concerted efforts of these main entities.

3.5 For social workers, they should maximize the respective advantages of their social work and profession, and provide psychological counseling to left-behind children. In terms of the psychological health and education issue in migrant children that moved into the city, adopt methods like counseling, encouragement and support to administer psychological treatment on migrant children. In addition, carry out a series of psychological counseling activities, educate migrant children on health knowledge, improve their self-test, self-control and self-adjustment competence, and help them form the correct world view, outlook on life and values; social workers should be trained and organized into caring groups, then cooperate with schools and set up "a date between hearts" with migrant children that moved into the city, as a way to increase attention dedicated to the psychology, emotion and world view of migrant children; the internet should be utilized to increase positive reports on the families of migrant children, mitigate bias that urban-dwellers might harbor against migrant farmers and children that moved into the city, provide a certain extent of social assistance and support to left-behind children families in difficult situations, and when necessary offer relevant supervision and protection; at the same time, social workers should actively liaise with communities and social organizations to keep all parties updated on info about migrant children, establish conduits to transmit love and care, provide professional knowledge and guidance to communities and social organizations that intend to perform caring activities aimed at migrant children, and help migrant children overcome psychological barriers for life in the city.

3.6 For enterprises and social institutions, it is necessary to leverage on one's economic strengths and positional advantages, and give play to societal functions. Enterprises and social institutions should actively shoulder a certain amount of social responsibilities, give play to societal functions, earnestly contribute, and light up the candle of hope of left-behind children and their families for life in the city. Enterprises and social institutions should actively provide a certain quantity of material and job position support to migrant families that moved into the city, reduce housing, employment and daily necessities expenditure pressures on these families, enhance their ability to live in the city, and provide to migrant children a certain degree of material basis; enterprises and social institutions should organize more outdoor family activities, create ideal conditions to facilitate interactions between left-behind children and their parents, offer convenient circumstances for the parents of migrant children and their kids to communicate, and satisfy children's psychological and emotional demands of their parents; at appropriate times, allow the parents of these left-behind children to take planned leave of absence, so that they may return home to take care of their children and enable left-behind children to relish more in love coming from their parents; at the same time, enterprises and social institutions should to maximally leverage on one's economic strengths, organize employees to visit left-behind children, provide a suitable amount of economic support to the families of left-behind children, so as to create better living conditions and material assurance for left-behind children.

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