

# Reflections on the Fairness of Education in the New Era

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## ABSTRACT

Educational equity is the main goal of China's educational development and reform. At present, China's educational equity as a whole is beginning to take shape, but there are still obvious regional differences, urban-rural differences and class differences, which are embodied in the relative lack of educational resources for children of western regions, rural areas and migrant workers, at the same time, the connotation of educational fairness has changed, and the public's pursuit of educational fairness has changed from "opportunity fairness" to "quality fairness". In view of this, this paper discusses the relationship between educational resources and educational equity, and believes that the relative lack of educational resources and the unreasonable distribution of resources are the main reasons for the current educational inequality in China. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the social productive forces, realize the rational distribution of educational resources through education legislation, establish a scientific educational quality evaluation system, rationally pursue educational quality, establish a new educational fairness view of education serving individual personality development, and realize the essential fairness of education.

**Keywords:** educational resources, equity in education, advice

## I. INTRODUCTION

Fairness, also known as justice, is to judge the rationality of an event based on certain standards through the subjective feelings of individuals. It focuses on the "rationality" issue, which has an obvious "personal value orientation".[1] In essence, fairness is about how social resources are allocated.[2] It arises from the tension between the scarcity of resources and the subject's self-interest.[3] From the perspective of historical development, the pursuit of equal treatment is the goal of universal value pursued by public policies including educational policies in modern democratic society.[4] As an important part of social organism, education fairness is the measure and catalyst of social justice and civilization.[5] Therefore, educational fairness is not only the symbol of social civilization and progress, but also the source of individual subjective happiness.

The 13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education clearly regards the promotion of educational equity as the main goal of China's educational development and reform, and puts forward a series of strategic tasks. The principal contradiction facing Chinese society in the new era is that between unbalanced and inadequate development and the

people's ever-growing needs for a better life. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China made it clear that efforts should be made to ensure that every child has access to a fair and quality education. Thus it can be seen that eliminating the imbalance in the development of education and further promoting educational equity is an important issue for China's educational reform and social development.

## II. THE CURRENT SITUATION AND TREND OF EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

### A. *The overall development of education across the country is relatively equitable*

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core has attached great importance to education equity, and proposed to "make every child have the opportunity to receive education, and strive to make the 1.3 billion people enjoy better and more equitable education.[6] China's education equity has been promoted from "giving priority to development and fair development" in 2014, to "promoting fair development and quality improvement in education" in 2015, and then to "developing higher quality and fairer education" in 2016. Education equity has realized a new direction from equal educational opportunities to improving education quality. Government through the

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implementation of "two free a complement, the plan, improve managerial condition of rural middle and primary school, a long distance for the college entrance examination policy, provided the entrance relief for poor college students and student loans, the students in normal university directly under the Ministry of Education shall free education, secondary vocational education tuition-free policy will extend to all rural students and other favorable measures, effectively expanding the coverage of education, make education really benefit all classes and groups. In June 2016, education equity was written into the Education Law for the first time, marking that education equity transformed from a political requirement into a legal requirement, which means that education equity entered a new era.[7]

*B. The development of regional education is unbalanced, and the difference between urban and rural education is obvious*

The differences in social development and economic development between the eastern, central and western regions and between urban and rural, which led directly to the imbalance of education resources, embodied the education resources are relatively scarce in western regions, rural, and migrant children, the education resource imbalance include the differences in education hardware facilities, the number and structure of teachers, educational opportunities for further education and training, educational ideas and methods, educational activities and contents, etc., this a series of unequal education resources determines the unbalanced development of regions and between urban and rural education. Studies have shown that, taking the university level as the classification criterion,[8] urban students get 3.1 times, 1.4 times and 0.67 times more admission opportunities than rural students in key universities, general undergraduate universities and junior colleges, in terms of enrollment method, the admission opportunity of urban students in the college entrance examination and enrollment system is 1.1 times that of rural students, 3.3 times that of art colleges and 3.4 times that of independent colleges, 7.3 times that of additional score system and 8.2 times that of independent enrollment system, and 17.2 times that of recommended enrollment. In addition, children from disadvantaged groups represented by migrant workers have almost no rights and opportunities to choose schools compared with children with urban household registration and good family economic status, which means that children from disadvantaged groups cannot enjoy better educational resources. Studies have shown that children of different classes (cadres, soldiers, staff, workers and peasants) are in an unfair position in terms of educational outcomes.[9] Thus, it can be seen that, on the whole, China's education coverage has been basically achieved, and the benefits of the education

equity policy have been more and more extensive and more people have benefited from it, but the differences between social classes, regions and urban and rural areas left over from social history still exist in education. Therefore, on the basis of the overall promotion of educational fairness in China, it is necessary to take "creating a free and well-rounded person" as the value goal [5], and explore effective ways to narrow the differences in various types of educational development by means of "difference compensation" and "distribution according to needs".

*C. Educational equity is facing a deep transformation from "opportunity equity" to "quality equity"*

The "Overview of China's Education" released by the Ministry of Education shows that in 2019, [10] there were 2.53 million schools of all levels and types in China, an increase of 11,000 over the previous year. There were 282 million students receiving education for academic qualifications at all levels nationwide, an increase of 6.606 million or 2.4 percent over the previous year. There were 173.20 million full-time teachers in schools of all types and at all levels nationwide, an increase of 592,000 or 3.5 percent over the previous year. Schools at all levels and of all types have 33.74 billion square meters of floor space, an increase of 160 million square meters or 4.6 percent over the previous year. The total assets of teaching and research equipment and equipment in schools at all levels and of all types nationwide totaled 11.1211 trillion yuan, an increase of 99.29 billion yuan or 9.7 percent over the previous year.

In 2019, the net enrollment rate of primary schools and the gross enrollment rate of junior middle schools were 99.94 percent and 102.6 percent, respectively, equivalent to the average level of high-income countries in the world, and the retention rate of nine-year compulsory education increased by 0.6 percentage points over the previous year to 94.8 percent. It can be seen that China's education funds, software and hardware ratio is more reasonable, school-age children enjoy equal educational opportunities has become a reality, the universal level of compulsory education continues to remain high, is moving towards the stage of quality and balance. At present, our country's education fair is more embodied in the "high quality" and "high level", the people's education demands from "being able to go to school" to "good quality schools", "school choice fever" and "tide of famous schools" in primary and secondary schools all over the country are the practical embodiment of this transformation, which means that educational fairness has shifted from "equal educational opportunity" to "equal educational quality".

### III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES TO EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

Educational resources, also known as "educational economic conditions", refer to the sum of educational human resources, material resources and financial resources. Along with educational practice, educational resources have been accumulating, expanding and enriching their own spiritual and material connotation, which have become the very important foundation and guarantee for educational cause.

Equity is about how social resources are allocated, [2] Educational equity is about how educational resources are allocated. It can be seen that the rationality and effectiveness of the allocation of educational resources are the key factors to determine the fairness of educational quality. Fairness is not equal to average, and the reasonable and effective allocation of educational resources is not an equal distribution of educational resources, but fully consider local differences in education in our country, urban and rural difference, the difference of school, class, group differences, to foster the comprehensive development of human ultimate value orientation of education and quality standards, through the differentiation on the education resources, maximum limit to reduce the differences in the quality of education in our country.

### IV. SUGGESTIONS ON OPTIMIZING EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

#### A. *Developing the productive forces and ensuring that educational resources are abundant*

The problem of social equity is caused by the lack of social resources. The phenomenon of "school choice fever" and "sky-high price school district housing" prevalent in primary and secondary schools are all caused by the lack of high-quality educational resources. Because of scarcity, there is competition and injustice, also only a few people benefit. In view of this, the unfair of education its root cause lies in the relative lack of education resources, in order to solve the problem of education equity, it is necessary to start from the social productive forces, improve the economic level, expand the educational resources, and further optimize the educational resources under the premise of relatively abundant educational resources, so as to realize the reasonable allocation of educational resources and solve various problems of educational development through differential allocation.

#### B. *Improving the legal system and ensuring the rational allocation of educational resources*

Law is a mighty agent of policy. Educational equity is an important goal of China's 13th Five-Year Plan,

and various measures to promote educational equity have been introduced one by one. However, without the mandatory constraint of law, some interest groups and lawless people in the society have an opportunity to earn their parents' hard-earned money under the banner of quality education, or seek their own interests through education reform, which making the road to educational equity long and long. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 in the United States and the Education Reform Act of 1998 in the United Kingdom are examples of efforts to improve and enact laws that promote equity in Education, up to now, there has been no separate legislation on educational equity in China. Only a series of education-related laws and regulations (such as The Education Law) restrict educational behaviors, which makes the pace of educational equity, especially the reduction of educational urban-rural and local differences, relatively slow. Therefore, referring to the successful cases of education equity legislation in the world, China should start from education legislation to provide strong protection for the effective promotion of education equity.

#### C. *Standardizing education evaluation system and rationally pursuing education quality*

What is a good education? To answer this question, we must know soberly what kind of people education should cultivate. Marx's view of educational equity believes that education should cultivate free and well-rounded people. Reviewing the current educational evaluation mechanism in China, it is not difficult to find that we regard students' achievement as the only standard to measure the quality of education. Education authorities use educational outcomes to position schools, the general public use enrollment rates to rank schools, parents use their children's grades to score schools. In this standard, there is only the desired educational result, and there is no need for students to be "human". We only blindly pursue the natural consequence of education — achievement, forgetting that the essence of education is to promote the development of human beings. Therefore, the malformed educational evaluation standards lead to many ugly aspects of educational development: preschool education tends to be primary; Micro high price school district housing; A huge sum of money entrusted to a good school; Teachers do not lecture in class, paid after-class tutoring. However, to return to the essence of education, "human beings" is the most core and critical element. Therefore, the evaluation of education should take the development of human beings as the starting point and end point, make clear the basic content and index of individual development, refer to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence, formulate an all-round educational evaluation system, and promote the normal development form of education with diversified educational quality view.

#### *D. Advocating new educational equity view that suits individual development*

Traditional education fair with the orientation of social standard and instrumentalism, pay more attention to the most basic education to all people, the new education fairness expands the connotation of education fairness, to make education toward the direction of high equilibrium, which emphasized the relationship between the individual and education, emphasizes the fairness of education should be education for each individual, also every individual can enjoy a quality education suitable for himself, which fundamentally makes it clear that an equitable education is not an average education, but an appropriate education that can promote the better development of individuals. Such educational equity allows the reasonable existence of educational differences and the diversified orientation of educational outcomes. Such education needs to truly see and recognize the multiple possibilities of individual development, and at the same time provide economic, material and human support for each individual's differentiated development. Only such educational fairness is the substantive educational fairness.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

Educational equity is the direction and goal of educational development. In the new era, educational equity pays more attention to educational quality equity on the basis of pursuing universal education, which requires more reasonable allocation of educational resources. The so-called rational allocation of resources is not an equal allocation of resources, but a distribution according to needs in combination with the current situation and characteristics of educational development in various regions. The fundamental premise is to ensure the free and all-round development of students with educational resources. Therefore, in order to promote educational fairness in the new era, it is necessary to take the development of social productive forces as the source, take the law as the guarantee, take the educational concept of promoting individual all-round development as the principle and standard, ensure the rational distribution of educational resources, and guide the fair and benign development of education.

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