

# Roles of Non-governmental Organizations in Education Development of Low-income Families in Rural Area of China

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## ABSTRACT

Education is the top issue of a country. The Chinese government has been focusing on developing education of low-income families in rural area recent year and has been achieved achievement. Non-governmental Organization (NGO) is active in areas like education, medical, public policy, environment, etc. Due to its own nature, NGOs have played a great complementary role in the government's education poverty alleviation. However, NGO still need to be optimize. This paper is discussing the roles of NGO in education in rural area of China and meanwhile, the obstacles that NGO is facing, and the solutions will be demonstrated. The paper also provides some advice on NGOs which devote themselves in education and the systems to help build a more healthy environment.

**Keywords:** NGO, Education, Rural, Low-income Families

## 1. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, education has been playing important roles in the development of society. Its feature of mobility helps tons of people get rid of the low or lower class to upper class. However, as the equalizer of this society, in low-income family in rural area of China, education seems that it does not play its role well. The lack of resources and teaching staff have become the top issues. Monthly dispensable income of a low-income family ranges from CNY 500 to CNY 1000 [1] which means the resources that they could get are limited. In this way, non-governmental organizations (NGO) can play its role to filling the gap. Nowadays, in many area, NGO has been founded due to a growing sense of responsibility. Most of them are established in developed area and their goals are to help less-developed area on education, economy, etc. This paper will demonstrate the roles of NGO in education development of low-income families in rural area in China, which includes realizing the value of NGO what the obstacles are and the solutions by using data analyzing and interviewing to related paper. It is hoped that the value of NGO could be valued. This paper offers some solutions on the obstacles that NGOs are facing and helps to build a healthier environment.

## 2. ROLES OF NGO IN EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES IN RURAL AREA

### 2.1. Materials Support

In China, there are almost 50% children whose age are from 3 to 6 living in rural areas [2]. The resources of preschool education is limited and what is more, the education during 0-3 years old is blank in some area. When talking about the quality of education, most schools has less support on teaching materials. In some rural areas of China, low-income families can hardly live due to the lack of living materials so as education materials. As a result, it should be the top issue to solve. NGO, in this way, could use its influence to raise books, desks or notebooks.

Due to the development of internet, many NGOs now are bringing forward a new way of education which is online class. This also means that every school's requirements for basic configurations, such as networks and computers, are mandatory. In this process, NGOs do their best to help rural schools raise funds and provide technical support. For example, a Shanghai NGO has enabled more than 40,000 rural students to receive a good education through the online teaching model.

## 2.2. Spirit Support

According to the State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, there are only 52.5% children who could be taken care by both parents. These children are not only lack of companion but also lack of the education from parents. When those children grow up, due to the lack of necessary education, they would choose to leave their hometown and work somewhere else, like their parents without much choice, which, eventually forms a vicious cycle.

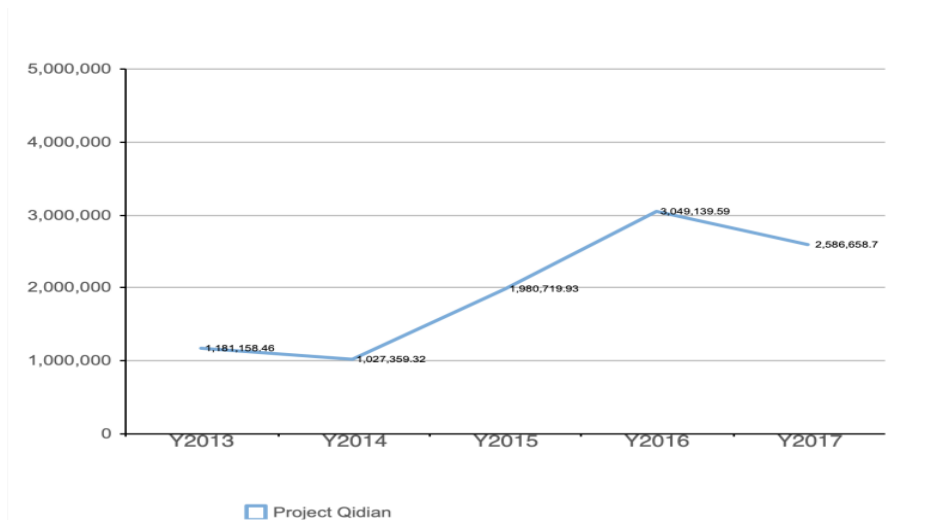
NGOs play a certain role in the development of rural education activities in addition to giving material support. NGOs improve children's enthusiasm for education, and also improve parents' educational awareness.

## 2.3. Financial Support

There are two aspects on educational investment for a family. One is the most basic education expenditure, including book fees, stationery fees, food costs, education fees, etc.; another is about extracurricular book fees, extracurricular tutoring fees, etc. At present, the proportion of tutoring fees and extracurricular book fees has gradually increased, and the proportion of basic education expenditure of low-income families in

preschool education is the highest, which is gradually increasing. From the perspective of education investment, the per capita investment in education of low-income families is about 600 yuan [3]. According to the kindergarten enrollment fee of 3500 yuan per year in medium-sized cities, there are more than half funding shortage. It shows that it has become a big burden for low-income family on education.

As a social welfare organization, NGOs can better send education funds to those in need by integrating resources, thereby reducing the burden on families for low-income groups. In the case of limited financial investment in rural education at the county level, NGOs can actively mobilize all aspects of society to raise social resources through various channels such as public welfare funds, enterprise funding, personal resources and government support, so as to alleviate the financial pressure of county-level governments in rural education to a certain extent and support the development of rural preschool education. For example, the "Qidian Program" implemented by the *China Charity Aid Foundation for Children* focuses on preschool education in poor rural areas, and the amount of money and materials directly or entrusted to other organizations to fund beneficiaries reaches more than one million every year, and the support has increased significantly in the past two years [4].



Feature1. The Increasing beneficiary from 2013 to 2017

## 3. THE FACING CHALLENGES

### 3.1. The Challenges of Funding

“Funding issue is the most priority issue needed to be solve”. one of the interviewer said [5]. At present, Chinese NGOs have been facing the challenges of support system, which is the timeliness and stability of NGO capital supply. Ideally, Chinese companies, the Chinese government, and the public could all become supporters of Chinese NGOs. The sources of funding for NGOs can be divided into the following categories: social

donations, services fee, state subsidy funds, and membership funds given by members of the organization. Among the sources of funds, the government provides about 55% of the financial appropriations, 21% of the income from membership fees, 6% of the operating income of the organization, 10% of the sponsorship provided by the enterprise, 5% of the other income, and only 3% of the personal donations [6]. Although NGOs have many sources of funding, their expenses are too large to meet their needs for social activities. The instability and lack of funds also seriously affect the daily recruitment work of NGOs. It is difficult to attract

professionals without sufficient financial support, who are crucial to the healthy development of future NGOs.

### **3.2. The Lack of Law**

The rapid development of NGOs is one of the remarkable changes in Chinese society since the reforming and opening up. By the end of 2006, the total number of various non-governmental organizations in the country had reached 354,000, including 192,000 social organizations, 161,000 private non-enterprise units, and more than 1,000 foundations [7]. However, there are many opinions on the definition of non-governmental organizations in China. At present there are no laws and regulations that only target non-governmental organizations, and the current laws and regulations are only the Regulations on the Registration and Administration of Social Groups, the Interim Regulations on the Registration and Management of Private Non-enterprise Units, and the Regulations on the Administration of Foundations, among which the normative content is not perfect. A sound legal system is an important guarantee for a healthy development of NGOs. The construction of laws and systems can provide a legal and reasonable basis for NGOs participating in the governance of rural preschool education in China, so that they can actively mobilize the support of all aspects of society and regulate their own behavior in accordance with the law in activities. Now China's NGOs are still in the initial stage of development, and the corresponding legal support system is not perfect. The imperfect laws and regulations and supervision system make the NGO less efficient, and also make the criminals use the NGOs for benefits, which seriously affects the credibility of the NGOs.

### **3.3. Government Overmanagement**

The government's excessive management has affected the mobilization of NGO social resources. At present, most of China's foundations are self-fund-raising and self-doing institutions. They are not providers of public welfare resources, but "gold absorbers" for public welfare. In particular, a number of public foundations with government backgrounds have formed an "iron triangle" of interests in public welfare resources [8]. That is, enterprises are willing to donate funds to the Red Cross, Charity Federation and public foundations with government backgrounds, and foundations with government backgrounds do government projects, and the government and enterprises have a relationship between government and business, thus forming an iron triangle of interests that is difficult to break through. At present, the lack of resources of NGOs participating in the governance of preschool education in poor areas of China is the most prominent and important problem, and there is a huge gap between the expenditure required for organizational operation and the funds that can be raised.

The "iron triangle of interests" formed between the government, enterprises and foundations makes it often that non-governmental organizations do not have sufficient resources (funds, personnel, etc.), and most NGOs participating in rural preschool services have neither government backgrounds, nor public fundraising qualifications, or even grassroots organizations without legal status.

## **4. SOLUTIONS TO EXISTING PROBLEMS**

### **4.1. Improve the Legal and Regulatory System**

School education is a public welfare undertaking, especially the development of preschool education in rural areas is more compensatory and fair, and the construction of a sound rural preschool education service system must strengthen the "first" of governments at all levels [9]. The development of NGOs depends on the maturity of relevant legal systems and norms. Freedom of association is a fundamental right of citizens. Besides, effective protection of freedom of association is an important symbol of a democratic society. NGOs are a powerful complementary means for the government, but they also require reasonable supervision by relevant laws. In the face of the trend of social pluralism, China must formulate and form a supporting and different levels of laws and regulations as soon as possible, clarifying the nature, function, status, funding sources, codes of conduct, scope of activities, rights, obligations, etc. of different types of NGOs, and clarifying the functions and goals of different types of NGOs through a complete legal framework, so as to legalize and standardize NGOs and their operations. The top priority is to form a system and supporting relevant legal system of NGOs, reduce the threshold for the legalization of NGOs, simplify the NGO registration procedures, bring a large number of NGOs that are outside the legal system into the management system, change the situation of emphasizing supervision over cultivation, and ensure the legal system and tax system to promote the development of NGOs.

### **4.2. Strengthen Publicity**

While NGOs have made great achievements, we must also see the shortcomings. The NGO propaganda is not in place, and the public knows less. China is one of the largest luxury consumer markets in the world. However, according to the statistics, more than 70% of families in the United States have donated, and the average annual donation of citizens is about 522 US dollars, while the average charitable donation of Chinese is 1.7 yuan [10]. Compared with the huge poor population, there is still a big gap in the number of NGO professionals. Through a variety of media publicity forms, the role of NGOs in social welfare is highlighted, so that the public can see the value of NGOs and increase the credibility of NGOs. Credibility is a kind of social system trust, which helps

NGOs to operate normally, enhance the credibility of NGOs, strengthen internal management, strengthen external image construction, and provide a strong support network and open up resource circulation channels for NGOs. Therefore, China's NGO organizations can strengthen their own website construction, clarify the mission, concept and organizational vision of the organization; disclose the organization's donation income, donation expenditure, donation channels, and supervision methods, so as to achieve financial transparency; introduce the organization's project development, so that the organization's activities are in an open state and more transparent in the performance of social services. In this way, the proportion of individual donations can be increased, so that the public can really participate.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As an example of social and regional co-governance, NGOs actively participate in rural education and broaden the path of rural education in China. In the context of the country's vigorous development of preschool education, especially rural preschool education, while emphasizing the responsibility of the government and enterprises, it is necessary to pay attention to the role of society, because many problems can be solved through the public governance of the region and society. In recent years, China's NGOs have shown certain advantages in participating in the governance of rural preschool education, but due to the problems of China's non-governmental organizations themselves and the limitations of the national system, their role in social development has been weakened to a certain extent. In view of the characteristics of China's social governance and the dependent development relationship between the government and non-governmental organizations, when non-governmental organizations participate in rural education, they should establish a cooperative relationship with the government to promote mutual symbiosis, use government authority to create a good external environment, and strengthen their own internal management to provide support for rural children to enjoy a fair and quality education.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Shiqi Sun.

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