



Early Childhood Education Policy Development in China Based on the Perspective of Equity and Quality

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Abstract. Pursuing of a high-quality early childhood education has become the consensus of all countries in the world. The international community has regarded high-quality preschool education as one of the important symbols of building national wealth. The Chinese government clearly stated that the development goal of popularizing high-quality early childhood education. In the process of China's early childhood education becoming scientific and standardized, early childhood education policy research has played a very important role. Looking back on the history of early childhood education policy research in China, it can be found that the research of early childhood education policy is always responding to major national policies, serve the needs of the social change, and focus on key issues in career development in terms of value orientation. The current Chinese early childhood education policy research has experienced a shift from structural functionalism to critical analysis paradigm and from theoretical functionalism speculation to empirical research, realizing the coexistence and complementarity of multiple research paradigms. The research horizon of this filed in China has gradually broadened. This paper reviewed the history of early childhood education policy research in China. It is found that the development of early childhood education policy based on the perspective of equity and quality has four stages: i.e., construction of early childhood education policy system, development and systematization of early childhood education policy, further development of early childhood education policy, and steady development of early childhood education policy. The relation between equity and quality is the basis of the development and evolution of Chinese early childhood education.

Keywords: Early childhood education · Policy Studies · Education Policy

1 Introduction

In 2019, two significant plans to drive continued advancement of China's education sector were published by the Chinese State Council. These plans, i.e., the Implementation Plan for Accelerating Education Modernization and China's Education Modernization 2035 Plan, are intended to significantly modernize China's educational system by 2035, the year the nation is determined to achieve socialist modernization and become a global

leader in education [1]. According to China's Education Modernization 2035, improving the quality of education is the core requirement of education modernization. The development goal of China's preschool education has been upgraded from the long-term reform and development of universalizing preschool education in 2020 to the modernization development of popularizing high-quality preschool education in 2035. In the future, the focus of China's preschool education has changed from extensive expansion has turned to connotative quality improvement [2]. High-quality preschool education can bring huge rewards for individual development, increased labor participation, social equity, and economic growth, and build wealth for the country. Therefore, policy formulation and reforms need to pay high attention to the quality of pre-primary education [3].

Preschool education determines the future development direction of talents, relates to the future of the country. It also relates to the competitiveness of China's human resources. Relevant research in economics can also prove that the investment in preschool education has the highest rate of return in all education stages [4]. Countries have reached a consensus on the importance of preschool education and are carrying out educational reform to promote the development of preschool education. For the prosperity and prosperity of the country, in order to improve China's international status and competitiveness, in order to improve the people's living standards and meet the growing needs of the people for pre-school education, we must vigorously develop pre-school education and do a good job of pre-school education that the people are satisfied with. Education policy is a guide to the development of a country's education. Education policy is directly related to the development of education. Because educational policy is an important means of regulating educational activities, and to a large extent, it regulates the development of educational activities. In the new century, education has developed into a cultural industry second only to the economic sector. Its role and status are important, and its scale and structure are huge and complex, which are unprecedented. In order to make such a system work flexibly, it is unimaginable to lack the guidance and coordination of reasonable education policies. Preschool education is also the foundation stage of the entire education. Chinese government have regarded preschool education as an one of the most important parts of basic education.

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. The main contradiction in Chinese society has been transformed into "between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life. It points out a new direction for the development of education in the new era, meanwhile revealing the key issues restricting the development of contemporary Chinese society. General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Xi Jinping summed up this direction as strive to enable every child to enjoy a fair and high-quality education. It indicates improving the quality of education has become an issue that is as important as educational equity in the new era. This statement has become an important judgment on the pursuit of educational equity and quality in the 21st century. Since then, better education and fairer education is also a higher quality education.

Fairness and quality are a pair of contradictions that must be faced and resolved in the process of human social development, and so is the formulation of educational policies. The fairness orientation in education policy can be understood as the rationality of the distribution of educational benefits, specifically including the equitable distribution of rights, positions and opportunities among stakeholders [5]. The quality orientation in the education policy mainly refers to the effectiveness of the educational policy formulated by the government in the allocation of resources. Therefore, the relationship between equity and quality in educational policies is essentially a priority issue between the rationality of educational interests and the quality of resource allocation. As the superstructure of society, education policy is often affected by economic, political and other aspects. In dealing with the priority of fairness and quality in preschool education policy formulation, we need to hold an open attitude and weigh the value orientation of policy formulation in many aspects. Therefore, it is of great value to study the changes of preschool education policy in China from the perspective of the relationship between equity and equality.

Even though there are a lot of research and discussion on the quality of preschool education, the contradiction between the quality of preschool education as a long-term controversial structure and the current core of the national policy agenda is still particularly prominent [6]. Therefore, reviewing the background of China's educational modernization and the social form of preschool education development and construct preschool education national quality framework is still a major topic that urgently need to be explored. This paper reviewed the history of early childhood education policy research in China. In addition, four stages of the early childhood education policy development based on the perspective of equity and quality has been discussed. Last but not the least, this paper also emphasized the equity and quality are the basis of the development and evolution of Chinese early childhood education.

2 Changes in China's Preschool Education Policy

2.1 Construction of Early Childhood Education Policy System in the Mid-80s

In 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China established the emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts [7]. It makes clear that the focus of the work of the party and the country should be shifted to the socialist modernization drive and made a great decision on reform and opening up. In the wave of reform and opening-up, early childhood education has ushered in the spring of development. From the beginning of the reform and opening-up to the mid-1980s, the main feature of the development of early childhood education policy is to focus on restoring the cause of preschool education and initially constructing the preschool education policy system. First, the status of early childhood education is needed to be clarified. Early childhood education is one of the most important part of socialist education, Childhood is the foundational period for a person's healthy growth. Early education for infants and young children is a work that lays the foundation for cultivating talents. Second, build a leadership and management system for early childhood education. Last but not the least, it should pay attention to the development of rural preschool education.

2.2 The Mid-1980s to the Mid-1990s: The Development and Systematization of Early Childhood Education Policy

From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the scope of early childhood education policy was further expanded, the content was more systematic and scientific. The early childhood education policies in the mid-1990s covered almost all aspects of preschool education. The relevant provisions and standards were also proposed. They can provide systematic policy support for regulating and leading the development of preschool education, but also provide a basis for scientific management of early childhood education. In addition, human-centered design is also applied to early childhood education policies development.

In 1991, the Chinese government signed two international conventions, World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s to protect children's rights [8]. In China, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Minors was formulated in 1991. After that, the Plan for the development of China's children's development in 90s was promulgated, which made provisions on the protection of minors' families, schools, society, and judicial aspects. In addition, the Chinese government formulated the Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China (1993), which not only clarified the rights, treatment and rewards of teachers to guarantee the legitimate rights and interests of teachers, but also stipulated the responsibilities, obligations, working principles of teachers.

2.3 Mid-1990s to Early 2000s: Further Development of Early Childhood Education Policy

During the ninth five-year plan period from 1996 to 2000, early childhood education policies were adjusted in terms of school-running channels and funding to adapt to the transformation of economic development and social system reform [9]. In 1995, several opinions of the State Education Commission, the State Planning Commission, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs including deepening the early childhood education system reform were proposed. In 1997, State Education Commission issued the "Implementation Opinions on the "Ninth Five-Year Plan" Development Goals of National Early Childhood Education [10]. It pointed out: "With the deepening of the economic system reform, we should actively and steadily carry out the reform of the kindergarten-running system, and further clarify that all levels of It is the responsibility of the government to explore the mode of running a kindergarten and internal management mechanism suitable for the socialist market economy, and gradually promote the socialization of early childhood education."

Due to the absence of specific supporting policies, there is a lack of normal management of promoting the socialization of kindergarten education. In addition, some areas shirk the government's responsibility to develop preschool education, and blindly push preschool education to the market, resulting in the closure and resale of many kindergartens. As a result, a substantial number of early childhood education and elementary education programs was reduced. Moreover, the quality of elementary education programs was also reduced causing by meeting the needs of the market.

2.4 21st Century: Steady Development of Early Childhood Education Policy

Since the 21st century, the Chinese government has put the development of preschool education in an important position [11]. Early childhood education is an important part of basic education and the foundation stage of school education and lifelong education. The development of early childhood education is of great significance to promoting the overall and healthy development of children's body and mind, popularizing compulsory education, improving the overall quality of the people, and realizing the goal of building a well-off society in an all-round way. The Chinese government confirmed their responsibility to develop preschool education, adhered to the public welfare and inclusiveness of preschool education, advocated "child-centered" education, and paid attention to educational equity. Regulate private education, vigorously develop rural preschool education, and promote the process of preschool education ruled by law.

3 Conclusion

Chinese early childhood education has achieved leapfrog development. The Chinese government has promulgated a series of policies and regulations to ensure that early childhood education develops in a scientific and standardized direction. In this process, more and more researchers began to participate in the process of policy formulation and implementation, providing intellectual support for the realization of scientific and democratic early childhood education policies. The current early childhood education policy is increasingly focusing on multiple stakeholders, emphasizing the advocacy of fair, providing high-quality preschool education public services on the basis of the current review of early childhood education policy research. Although the policy research has gradually attracted people's attention in recent years, the Chinese early childhood education policy research is still in an initial stage and most of the research more focus on theoretical speculation and current policy hotspots. In order to better solve the fundamental and fundamental policy problems of preschool education, future early childhood education policy research should more focus on practical research to provide a basis for formulation of preschool education policies that promote social reform and development. In the future, empirical research with international vision and Chinese characteristics should be gradually established and push it to a broader international stage.

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