



# Study on the Effect of Poverty Alleviation Through Education in China

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**Abstract.** Poverty undoubtedly is a global problem, and the fight against poverty and poverty runs through human life. Poverty alleviation through education can be understood as education developed in economically underdeveloped areas. It can improve the overall quality of the individual population in underdeveloped areas, increase their cultural capital and social capital, and thus gain the ability to eliminate poverty for a long time, blocking intergenerational poverty. It enables all citizens, whether farmers or business people, to receive an education and aims to develop the economy and rationally use nature by strengthening the construction of spiritual civilization and learning modern science and technology. Therefore, education undeniably is the foundation for China to achieve comprehensive poverty alleviation and prosperity. Since the reform and opening up, China has paid unprecedented attention to education and poverty alleviation and has introduced a series of related policies. In the context of the new era, more demanding requirements have been placed on the goals, subjects, objects, content, methods, and management of education poverty alleviation policies.

Compared with economically developed areas, underdeveloped areas in China are often located on the outskirts of political and economic centers. The transportation system is imperfect, the economic foundation is relatively weak, and the social development capacity is insufficient. In addition, the natural and geographical conditions are harsh, the ethnic composition is complex, and religious influences are profound. Cultural diversity is outstanding and has long been constrained by multiple obstacles such as location conditions, cultural factors, historical accumulation, governance system, and governance capabilities. The development speed is slow, and the coverage of poverty is comprehensive. As far as the current social development situation in backward areas is concerned, poverty is a fundamental cause of many problems. Therefore, education for poverty alleviation is a practical need for urgent poverty alleviation in poverty-stricken areas and a practical issue that the academic circle should pay attention to. It is a need for humanistic care. This study mainly explores the value pursuit of education policy and poverty alleviation policy in China based on literature research, further analyzes the value pursuit of education poverty alleviation, and finally puts forward suggestions for the design of education poverty alleviation policy in the new stage of alleviating relative poverty.

**Keywords:** Poverty Alleviation · Education · Education Policy

## 1 Introduction

Poverty alleviation through education is an essential task of poverty alleviation and development. The poorer the place, the more difficult it is to provide education. However, the more underdeveloped the place, the more necessary it is to provide education and the less education is provided, the poorer it will be. This Matthew effect is a vicious circle in which “poor” and “stupid” are mutually causal [1]. However, if we want to completely solve the poverty problem and let the poor get out of poverty for a long time, the only way is through education. Education can enable the poor to make changes in vision, willingness, methods, and abilities. Only by enabling the poor to understand the demand in labor and improve the equipped transferable skills can the employability of the poor, that is, their subjective initiative to enter the market, be improved. Poverty alleviation through education guarantees the right of the poor to receive education and enables them to acquire sustainable development capabilities to lay a solid foundation for regional economical development.

Implementing poverty alleviation through education is the key to eliminating poverty in poverty-stricken areas. It is also the most potent weapon on the road to anti-poverty. After decades of development, China’s educational poverty alleviation policy has gradually been improved, and the policy system has initially formed, demonstrating a series of significant achievements in strengthening regional education and reducing economic disparity between different provinces in China. The implementation is receiving increasing attention, highlighting its growing importance in promoting social and economical development. Educational poverty alleviation is a systematic activity that includes essential links and steps such as policy formulation, policy implementation, evaluation, consolidation, and continuation. The current outcome is satisfying. From 2011 to 2018, the incidence of poverty in China continued to decrease, and the number of poor people continued to decline. The scale of rural poor dropped from 122.38 million to 16.6 million, an average annual decrease of 155.1114 million; The number of poor people in key counties for poverty alleviation dropped from 61.12 million to 9.15 million. The gap in poverty incidence between key counties and rural areas for poverty alleviation has gradually narrowed, and the incidence of rural poverty has decreased from 12.7% to 1.7%; The incidence of poverty in key counties for poverty alleviation dropped from 29.2% to 4.3%, a decrease of 24.9%. According to the World Bank’s measurement of \$1.9 per day (purchasing power parity in 2011), the percentage of poor in China’s total population fell from 11.2% in 2011 to 0.7% in 2015, the same as that of high-income countries.

However, educational poverty alleviation still requires a sound and complete policy system to play its functions and fully realize its value pursuit and goals. In the new era, it is faced with more diverse needs and a more complex environment full of opportunities and challenges. How to start from the evaluation of education poverty alleviation policies to continuously improve the policy system and strengthen the performance of policies has become the focus of attention in the current academic circles and practice.

## 2 Literature Review

The American scholar David Easton defines the concept of public policy as the authoritative decision output of the political system. Therefore, the policy is the most authoritative distribution of the value of the whole society [2]. Xie Junjun believes that educational poverty alleviation in our country is “a way to get rid of poverty. Its purpose is to transfer the material foundations, such as funds and funds required by economically depressed areas and people, and to enable people to achieve their goals on a fundamental basis. To get rid of poverty, by acquiring some methods and technologies, the local people can survive” [3]. Huan Pingqing and Wang Zheng believe that education alleviates poverty “by improving the quality of the poor and enhancing their self-development ability.” At the same time, these two scholars believe that education for poverty alleviation should use modern methods to speed up education in underdeveloped areas in China so that these educated people can provide more for their development [4]. Zhu Aiguo believes that poverty alleviation through vocational education, allowing poor rural students to receive vocational education and enhance their ability to get rid of poverty and become rich, is the most effective “blood-making” poverty alleviation [5]. At the same time, poverty alleviation aims not only to lift people out of poverty but also to improve their living standards and productivity gradually. The goal of poverty alleviation through education is to revitalize rural industries. The key to our people’s poverty eradication is to have a specific material foundation for developing all aspects of the natural rural industry.

Foreign countries also have rich research results on the policy issues of poverty alleviation through education. Research by Poste Comfort Olopade et al. confirmed the positive role of human capital in poverty reduction and believed that human capital is a decisive factor in improving the economy. It also advocated that OPEC members improve living standards and social welfare through education and health [6]. Phillip Brown explored the role of education in poverty reduction in the context of high-income inequality. The study pointed out that improving school performance and expanding access to higher education can be mitigated by increasing the social mobility of disadvantaged households. Studies have pointed out that education policy is at the heart of the pathway to poverty reduction [7]. Retrospective simulations by Marcelo Medeiros et al. show a vital limit to what education policy can do to reduce poverty: It will take decades to eradicate poverty and inequality. Substantial reductions in inequality and poverty levels can only be achieved through expanding higher education [8].

## 3 China’s Current Education Poverty Alleviation Policy

Before the founding of New China, China’s education system was imperfect, lacking adequate institutional guarantees and no unified policy requirements such as the number of years of schooling. In the early days of the founding of New China, the country’s political economy was unstable. The country set the unified teaching system and teaching order as essential in constructing the education system. The country began to attach importance to the establishment of education, and related education policies sprouted one after another.

### **3.1 Compulsory Education**

After 1995, the state deployed and implemented two phases of the “National Compulsory Education Project in Poor Areas” to vigorously support poverty-stricken counties in improving school conditions [9]. In May 2001, the state issued the “Decision on the Reform and Development of Basic Education,” pointing out that the rural compulsory education system should be further improved. With the continuous improvement of education popularization in our country, the nine-year compulsory education consolidation rate has increased from 91.5% in 2011 to 94.2% in 2018, an increase of 2.7 percentage points. The gross enrollment rate of primary school-age children, junior high school, and high school increased from 99.79%, 100.1%, and 84% in 2001 to 99.95%, 100.9%, and 88% in 2018, respectively. As of November 20, 2019, the number of students dropping out of compulsory education in 832 state-level poverty-stricken counties across the country has decreased from 290,000 at the beginning of the ledger to 23,000, and the number of poor students from registered families has decreased from 150,000 to 0.6 million [10]. The gradual withdrawal of impoverished counties marks the full realization of the poverty alleviation goal of “guaranteed compulsory education.”

### **3.2 Improve Infrastructure Hardware in Poverty-Stricken Areas**

From 2014 to 2018, the central government invested a total of 169.9 billion yuan in special subsidies, driving local investment of 37 billion yuan. By the end of 2018, 832 poverty-stricken counties had completed their construction tasks. The gradual improvement of the school’s hardware facilities is a change that teachers and students can see. The hardware investment of relevant departments in education is sufficient and meets the daily teaching needs. Nowadays, schools in many poverty-stricken areas have organized the construction of physics laboratories, chemistry laboratories, biology laboratories, music classrooms, reading rooms, and psychological counseling rooms. Every teacher in the office is equipped with a computer, which is convenient for making courseware and online learning. The classrooms are equipped with multimedia equipment, as giant computer screens are installed behind the movable blackboard.

### **3.3 Improve the Treatment of Teachers in Poverty-Stricken Areas**

The salaries of rural teachers have improved year by year. In addition to the increase in basic wages, the state has also set up special funds to subsidize rural teachers. In addition to living expenses, teachers’ salaries also have some wealth. Male teachers who live far from the school have their scooters. Some teachers also bought real estate in the county seat. The school also provides corresponding subsidies for teachers’ living in school, including “nutritious meals” for teachers. Teachers can eat complimentary breakfast in the school cafeteria, and the school also subsidizes lunch.

## **4 Inadequacies of Poverty Alleviation Policies**

From the perspective of the main body of education poverty alleviation policy, education has played an essential role in national poverty alleviation and development. It has played a vital role in improving the quality of the population in poverty-stricken

areas and improving the self-development ability of families in poverty-stricken areas. However, the current educational poverty alleviation development concept needs to be more comprehensiveness and systematization. There are still deficiencies in policy value positioning and development dimension design for the population in poverty-stricken areas to get rid of poverty and achieve “blood-making” sustainable development. Not only that, at present, the government vigorously implements targeted poverty alleviation work through education without participating in social poverty alleviation subjects. In some policies, educational poverty alleviation work only relies on the guidance of administrative organs to deal with specific tasks. However, it cannot fully and completely regulate and control various social forces. Hence, creating ideal primary conditions for social participation takes work.

Regarding poverty alleviation through education, the macro content of China’s current education poverty alleviation policy is relatively uneven. The current policy has a single standardized approach, lacking a diverse system of poverty alleviation approaches. Currently, in the specific working methods of poverty alleviation through education, we often pay more attention to giving financial and material help. However, the support for the ideas of poverty alleviation groups is often neglected. The main reason for ignoring this kind of ideological assistance is that implementing the government’s guidelines and instructions in poverty alleviation work still need to be implemented at this stage. At the same time, although the government has invested a lot of material, financial and human resources, the weak local finance can only provide little investment in education, leading to the overall lack of substantial financial support. The level of economic development has become the most critical factor restricting the development of local primary education.

Concerning the management policy of poverty alleviation through education, there are specific problems in training teachers in poverty-stricken areas in China, and there is a lack of relevant policy support. There are structural policy deficiencies in the teaching staff regarding age, education, professional titles, subjects, and knowledge. The lack of regulation and supervision in implementing education poverty alleviation policies has led to some gaps in the implementation process. On the one hand, in addition to teaching, teachers are also responsible for helping poor households. They need to help poor households in the village fill in the handbook and the information about the poverty alleviation system. Although these are simple tasks, they are piled up and complicated. This prevents teachers from entirely devoting themselves to teaching. Compared with the teacher-student ratio in urban primary and secondary schools, the teachers in poor areas are even weaker, so the quality of teaching is not high. On the other hand, many teachers did not major in teacher training during their schooling, and average graduates from provincial normal colleges are not willing to teach in mountain villages.

## **5 Suggestions on the Design of Educational Poverty Alleviation Policy**

### **5.1 Improving the Identification of the Main Objects of Poverty Alleviation Through Education**

The concept of poverty alleviation in China has shifted from the national to the regional end and should aim at critical breakthroughs in distinct regions. We should carry it forward in the structural adjustment of the supply-side reform and make education and poverty alleviation work more in line with the direction of deepening reform. By extending poverty alleviation policies to relatively poor groups, optimizing identification methods, and targeted poverty alleviation to enhance the endogenous motivation of the poor, the country needs to comprehensively use various education poverty alleviation measures to transform education into a track that improves the quality of the population and increases labor productivity. On the other hand, it is necessary to consolidate the foundation of poverty alleviation through education and take the development of primary education as the fundamental strategy to prevent returning to poverty.

### **5.2 Strengthen the Construction of Rural Teachers**

Improving the quality of teachers is the key to improving the quality of education. Only when the quality of education is genuinely improved can the foundation of fairness at the starting point of education be consolidated. First, the nation must pay attention to improving rural teachers' overall quality and morality. Carry out various forms of teacher ethics education, and integrate teachers' professional ideals, professional ethics, legal education, and mental health education into the whole process of training and management. Second, we must broaden the channels for supplementing rural teachers and expand the implementation scale of the particular post plan for rural teachers. Third, we must improve teachers' living conditions in rural areas so that teachers in poor areas can gain more sense of gain in a challenging environment. The fourth is to promote the flow of excellent urban teachers to rural schools and make reasonable job responsibilities for floating teachers.

### **5.3 Promote Family and Health Education**

The government and society should help parents in poverty-stricken areas understand their children's rights and their parents' obligations and create conditions for them to fulfill their family's parenting and educational functions. This is because long-term poverty will affect children's physical health, living environment, mental health, cognitive development, and family harmony. Therefore, the government should guide the parents of low-income families to care for their children and pay attention to their mental health.

At the same time, health and health education is also important aspect of poverty alleviation through health and education. It is not only related to the improvement of the education level in underdeveloped areas but also the improvement of the mental outlook of students, the improvement of national quality, and the progress of social

civilization. Over the years, the state has increased funding through various channels to promote the construction and renovation of school sanitation facilities in underdeveloped areas. School canteens, drinking water facilities, toilets, and other hardware have been significantly improved on the original basis, and students' physical and mental health in poor areas has improved.

## 6 Conclusion

The arduous task of poverty alleviation determines the long-term nature of poverty alleviation and development. Educational poverty alleviation, as a phased policy in the process of poverty alleviation and development, will become history after the country wins the battle against poverty. However, the educational equity pursued by the education poverty alleviation policy will continue in the national education policy. Realizing educational equity requires a long and arduous process, and education poverty alleviation policy is an essential link in pursuing educational equity. The problems in the implementation process also need to be explored slowly, requiring everyone to work together. Therefore, the research on the practical effect of policy value pursuit enriches the theoretical research on the subject and explores the solution to existing problems in educational poverty alleviation.

Through the research on relevant evaluation theories, this paper determines the ideas of the policy effect of education poverty alleviation, evaluates its implementation, and analyzes the policy effect and weak links. The education poverty alleviation experience and future policy prospects are summarized on this basis. Given the unbalanced and inadequate education development in China's poverty-stricken areas, the strategic upgrading concept of China's education poverty alleviation policy in the future is proposed, which makes up for the shortcomings of the current decision-making, behavior, evaluation, and other links. The paper's response to the urgent need for national strategic development demand has essential theoretical and practical value.

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