

Regional Education Inequality in China under Marx's View of Justice

Yingqin Zhang
*International Business School
 Shaanxi Normal University
 Xi'an, China
 1603507412@qq.com*

Meng Wang*
*International Business School
 Shaanxi Normal University
 Xi'an, China
 1603507412@qq.com*

Abstract—Fairness and justice is the core of Marx's view of justice. Although Marx's view of justice is based on his analysis of the failure of market economy in Western capitalist countries during the earlier stage, yet it is still of extremely important theoretical value and guiding significance to solve the issue of social injustice in today's Chinese society. Starting from the current situation of regional education inequality in China, the paper explores and contrasts the phenomena showing the gap between urban and rural education as well as between education in the central and western regions. Besides, guided by Marx's view of justice, corresponding countermeasures and suggestions are put forward.

Keywords—Marx's view of justice; unfair education

I. BASIC CONNOTATION, THEORETICAL VALUE AND GUIDING SIGNIFICANCE OF MARX'S VIEW OF JUSTICE

Fairness and justice is the core content of Marx's view of justice.[1] The basic concept of his view of economic justice is fair allocation; the basic idea of his view of development justice is freedom, equality and people orientation; the basic concept of his view of ecological justice is coordinated and sustainable development; the basic concept of his view of political justice is equality, justice and democracy.[2] The core values and concepts of the Chinese social justice theory are consistent with that of Marx's view of justice and China's socialism, namely freedom, equality, democracy, fairness, justice etc.[3]

Although Marx's view of justice is based on his analysis of the failure of the market economy in Western capitalist countries during the earlier stage, yet since the social injustices in contemporary China are mostly caused by the rapidly developing socialist market economy, Marx's view of justice is still of extremely important theoretical value to solving the problems of social injustice in China. In other words, on the basis of comprehensively systematizing Marx's theory of justice, we should base ourselves on Marx's view of justice and use it as a guiding theory to face the problem of regional education inequality in contemporary China, construct a theory of social justice with Chinese characteristics and thereby promote the overall development level of socialism construction with Chinese characteristics.

II. CURRENT SITUATION ABOUT REGIONAL EDUCATION INEQUALITY IN CHINA

A. Rural Education Lags behind Urban Education

The urban-rural gap in education is reflected in the gap between urban and rural education expenditure. According to Monitoring Report of China's Rural Poverty in 2016, the investment in education for key counties of the national poverty alleviation plan is relatively small. As shown in Table I, the average proportion of administrative villages with kindergartens or preschools in key counties of the national poverty alleviation plan was 57.9%, and the average proportion of administrative villages with primary schools and educational convenience was 65.6%. That is to say, among key counties of the national poverty alleviation plan, as of the end of 2015, 42.1% of the administrative villages still had no kindergartens or preschools, and 34.5% of the administrative villages had not yet established primary schools and it was not convenient enough for children there to attend school. The backward development of rural education is more prominent in Western China. As shown in Table II, most of the key counties of the national poverty alleviation plan are distributed in Western China, and 59.1% of rural poor population in China is also concentrated in Western China. Monitoring Report of China's Rural Poverty in 2016 released the situation about construction of kindergartens or preschools in key counties of the national poverty alleviation plan distributed in 21 provinces and cities, including all provinces in Western China. Among the 21 provinces and cities, those with a relatively low proportion of administrative villages with kindergartens or preschools include Hainan (28.6%), Heilongjiang (30.1%), Jilin (32.9%), Inner Mongolia (40.3%), Shaanxi (40.5%) and Qinghai (41.2%). In Hainan and Heilongjiang, about 70% of administrative villages had not yet established kindergartens. Provinces with comparatively a low proportion of administrative villages with primary schools and educational convenience include Inner Mongolia (27.8%), Jilin (32.6%), Heilongjiang (34.6%), Shanxi (40.7%), Shaanxi (40.8%) and Sichuan (41.3%). About 70% administrative villages in Hainan and Jilin had not yet established primary schools and it was not convenient enough for children there to attend school. As a fundamental task crucial for generations to come, education is limited by local natural conditions, economic development and fiscal revenue, thus education investment should be nationally coordinated. According to the statistics on rural kindergartens and primary schools, there is a big gap between rural and urban regions in terms of investment in education. Therefore, the

state should continue increasing investment in preschool education and primary education in rural areas, especially when it comes to investment in education for key counties of the national poverty alleviation plan. Investment should be increased not only in education fund and teaching facilities, but also in human resources. We must actively encourage more human resources to be transmitted to poor rural areas.

TABLE I. STATISTICS ON CULTURAL EDUCATION IN KEY COUNTIES OF THE NATIONAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION PLAN UNIT: %

Region	Proportion of administrative villages with kindergartens or preschools	Proportion of administrative villages with primary schools and educational convenience
Total	57.9	65.5
Hebei	66.0	58.2
Shanxi	42.4	40.7
Inner Mongolia	40.3	27.8
Jilin	32.9	32.6
Heilongjiang	30.1	34.6
Anhui	66.2	80.2
Jiangxi	68.5	75.2
Henan	84.5	89.4
Hubei	47.9	48.1
Hunan	44.1	49.0
Guangxi	73.8	84.6
Hainan	28.6	44.0
Chongqing	43.7	47.5
Sichuan	42.6	41.3
Guizhou	58.5	74.6
Yunnan	65.7	87.0
Shaanxi	40.5	40.8
Gansu	50.1	73.0
Qinghai	41.2	47.2
Ningxi	45.6	78.0
Xingjiang	83.0	84.0

^a Data source: Monitoring Report of China's Rural Poverty in 2016 issued by National Bureau of Statistics

TABLE II. STATISTICS ON EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS IN RURAL AREAS IN DIFFERENT REGIONS OF CHINA IN 2015 UNIT: %

Index	Eastern China	Central China	Western China
Proportion of households with convenience to send their children to kindergartens or preschools in the natural villages they live	84.0	82.3	71.9
Proportion of households with convenience to send their children to primary schools in the natural villages they live	86.4	84.8	78.4

^b Data source: Monitoring Report of China's Rural Poverty in 2016 issued by National Bureau of Statistics

The backward development of rural education is also reflected in the high dropout rate among rural children. According to China Statistical Yearbook-2015, in Table III, the number of students in regular primary schools attended by left-behind children in rural areas of China in 2014 was 14,095,310, the number of graduates was 1,546,447 and the number of students enrolled was 2,369,596. The number of graduates only accounted for 65% of the number of students enrolled. That is to say, 35% of left-behind children in rural areas dropped out of school before graduating from regular primary school. The

number of students in junior high schools attended by left-behind children in rural areas of China in 2014 was 6,658,856, the number of graduates was 1,649,294 and the number of students enrolled was 2,245,206. The number of graduates only took up 73% of the number of students enrolled, which means 27% of left-behind children in rural areas dropped out of school before graduating from junior high school. Based on the data presented in China Statistical Yearbook-2015, the number of students in regular primary schools attended by children of migrant rural laborers in China in 2014 was 9,555,861, the number of graduates was 1,080,772 and the number of students enrolled was 1,755,669. The number of graduates only accounted for 62% of the number of students enrolled. In other words, 38% of children of migrant rural laborers dropped out of school before graduating from regular primary school. The number of students in junior high schools attended by children of migrant rural laborers in China in 2014 was 3,391,446, the number of graduates was 750,392 and the number of students enrolled was 1,180,922. The number of graduates only took up 64% of the number of students enrolled, indicating that 36% of children of migrant rural laborers dropped out of school before graduating from junior high school. It can thus be seen that the development of children's education in rural areas of China is universally backward, and the government should increase financial support in this regard.[4]

TABLE III. EDUCATION RECEIVED BY LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS AND CHILDREN OF MIGRANT RURAL LABORERS UNIT: PERSON

Item	Left-behind children in rural areas	children of migrant rural laborers
Regular primary school		
Number of graduates	1546447	1080772
Number of students enrolled	2369596	1755669
*Number of those who have received preschool education	2305330	1739497
Number of students in school	14095310	9555861
*Female	6347265	4042598
Junior high school		
Number of graduates	1649294	750392
Number of students enrolled	2245206	1180922
Number of students in school	6658856	3391446
*Female	3026043	1403723

^c Data source: China Statistical Yearbook-2015

B. Western China behind Eastern China in Education Index

Regional education inequality in China is also reflected in another aspect, that is, education development in Western China lags behind that in Eastern China.[5] Educational development can be measured by education indexes such as the enrollment rate and adult literacy rate. According to the statistical data in Table IV, there are differences between Western China and Eastern China when it comes to the education index. From 2004 to 2013, the average education index in Western China is 0.745 and that in Eastern China was 0.887. The former is 0.142 lower than the latter. According to

the data stated in China National Human Development Report 2016 (Table V), the average education index of the 12 provinces in Western China was 0.6413 in 2014. The average education index of the 10 provinces and cities in Eastern China was 0.7315. The former is 0.0902 lower than the latter. Statistics show that the level of education development in Western China lags behind that in Eastern China.[6]

TABLE IV. EDUCATION INDEXES OF WESTERN, CENTRAL AND EASTERN CHINA FROM 2004 TO 2013

Year	Eastern	Central	Western
2004	0.84	0.83	0.78
2005	0.85	0.83	0.78
2006	0.86	0.85	0.78
2007	0.88	0.86	0.10
2008	0.88	0.86	0.81
2009	0.89	0.87	0.83
2010	0.90	0.88	0.83
2011	0.92	0.88	0.85
2012	0.92	0.89	0.84
2013	0.93	0.91	0.85

^d. Data source: Calculated and arranged per China National Human Development Report, China Statistical Yearbook for Regional Economy and China Statistical Yearbook.

TABLE V. COMPARISON OF WESTERN AND EASTERN CHINA IN EDUCATION INDEX IN 2014

Western China	Education index	Eastern China	Education index
Inner Mongolia	0.689	Beijing	0.854
Shaanxi	0.760	Shanghai	0.807
Chongqing	0.676	Tianjin	0.791
Ningxia	0.668	Jiangsu	0.730
Sichuan	0.656	Zhejiang	0.732
Xinjiang	0.660	Guangdong	0.694
Guangxi	0.641	Shandong	0.693
Qinghai	0.627	Fujian	0.666
Gansu	0.642	Hainan	0.671
Guizhou	0.613	Hebei	0.677
Yunnan	0.613		
Tibet	0.451		
Average	0.6413	Average	0.7315

^e. Data source: China National Human Development Report 2016, China Translation Press, 2016.

In fact, there is a large gap between urban and rural education in terms of capital investment, faculty and policy welfare. In every way, rural education is inferior to urban education when it comes to education investment.[7] Every child of school age has the basic right to receive equal compulsory education. However, a large part of education expenditure is borne by the local government. Therefore, directly affected by local finance, a large proportion of education expenditure is paid by the local governments in economically developed Eastern China whether for urban or rural education, while the local governments in Western China where the economy is relatively backward undertake a smaller

part of education expenditure. Hence, the government should adjust the education expenditure policy and assign rural education expenditure to the public finance at the central level.

III. POLICY SUGGESTIONS TO GUIDE THE SOLUTION OF REGIONAL EDUCATION INEQUALITY IN CHINA UNDER MARX'S VIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF JUSTICE

Marx's theory of all-round development of human is of guiding significance to solving the problem of unfair development of regional education. According to Marx, human development has to go through three stages, i.e. the stage in which people depend on people, the stage in which people depend on things and the stage in which people depend on society. Among them, the third stage is the highest stage. In Critique of Political Economy, Marx mentioned that "human dependence is the initial form of society. Under this form, human productivity only develops within a narrow range and in isolated places. Human independence based on dependency on materials is the second largest form in which a universal social material exchange, comprehensive relationship, multifaceted needs, and a comprehensive capacity system are formed. The third stage is the free personality established based on the all-round development of human and their common social productive capacity becoming their social wealth".[8] According to Marx's view, only the third stage can contribute to realizing the free and all-round development of human. We know that the free and all-round development of human cannot do without the government's education investment and skills training. Therefore, we believe that Critique of Political Economy contains rich educational thoughts. Without investment in education, there will be no free and all-round development of human. Human capital scientist Schultz also said that education has a great impact on the quality of human resources. To put it another way, to improve the quality of human resources, it is necessary to continuously increase investment in education. It takes ten years to grow trees but a hundred years to rear people. It is impossible to smoothly cultivate talents in a short period of time. In order to improve the quality of talent cultivation in China, the government should focus on the following points:

A. *Correct the "Marketization" Tendency of Education and Confirm "Welfare, Public Benefit and Inclusiveness" as the Concept of Justice for Education*

Education is related to a country's long-term development and prosperity, determining the development and happiness of the nation. The fierce competition in today's world is actually the competition of talents. The cultivation of talents in the new era depends on fair and advanced educational concepts and systems. The government must attach great importance to the modification and improvement of educational policies and educational systems based on fairness and justice. We must confirm "welfare, public benefit and inclusiveness" as the concept of justice for educational system. Specific inclusive educational policies and educational systems should be introduced. We should balance urban and rural educational resources, distribute high-quality urban educational resources to vast rural areas, and promote the overall social development in rural areas with the development of rural education by

means of public financial intervention among provinces, cities and counties. Once the economic conditions become mature, the government should gradually balance the educational resources between urban and rural areas nationwide. The key measure is to increase the financial investment in education expenditure so as to reflect the fairness and impartiality of the educational system.

B. Improve the Compulsory Education System and Gradually Realize the Equalization of Educational Resources

In view of problems such as the non-equalization of educational resources in China, a large number of children who drop out of school in remote and poverty-stricken areas, the difficulties for children of migrant rural labors to attend school etc., the government should gradually realize the policy of equalizing the investment of capital and human resources in education nationwide. In particular, the government should enlarge the investment in education resources in poverty-stricken and backward rural areas, and guarantee that everyone has the equal access to education as soon as possible. The government ought to introduce unified national policies and educational systems on the education of children of migrant rural labors, and offer certain financial support. Local governments should establish the policy concept of "Equal Educational Rights of Children of Migrant Rural Labors" and equally treat children of migrant rural labors who work hard for the economic and social development of the local place. It is necessary to establish some public and public welfare schools to solve the difficulties for children of migrant rural labors to attend school and create a favorable educational environment for these children, so that the migrant workers can work hard wholeheartedly without having to worry about the education of their children.

C. Pay Attention to the Right to Education of Vulnerable Groups and Implement the Social Concept of Equality for all

The right to receive education is the basic right of every citizen. As stated in Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), "everyone has the right to education".[9] Currently, there are still some problems in the realization of the right to education, e.g. the education of children of migrant workers and the realization of their rights, the realization of the right to education of rural children in remote and poverty-stricken areas, the prevention of girls dropping out of school in poverty-stricken areas etc. To solve these problems, the state should also provide more financial support and policy support. For example, the education law should be improved and implemented, the public welfare system should be improved, more financial investment should be made in education in rural areas and remote areas in Western China, and the level of subsidies for out-of-school children in rural areas ought to be enhanced etc.

D. Increase the Government's Support for Rural Education in Both Capital and Human Resources

Marx's theory of equal and integrated development in urban and rural areas is of important practical guiding significance to the improvement of China's rural educational policies. Marx

believes that urban and rural development should be the development of equal rights.[10] In *District and Township System Reform and Kolnische Zeitung*, Marx mentioned that "Rheinische Zeitung put forward that urban and rural areas should have equal rights, and *Kolnische Zeitung* accepted this slogan cautiously based on the following condition: We understand equality of rights as equality of all rights rather than a dream of communism".[11] According to Marx's theory of equal and integrated development in urban and rural areas, the Chinese government should make sure that the educational policies formulated for rural and urban areas are exactly the same and consistent, and should not implement educational policies with urban-rural differences. Specifically, educational policies should be consistent and equal when it comes to investment made in education fund, teacher resources and infrastructure. The government should improve the urban-rural imbalance in the investment in children's education, implement inclusive educational policies and increase investment in finance and human resources for rural children's education. Education is a public good, and every child of school age has the right to enjoy educational services provided by the government. The government's concept of distributing educational resources should be fair, just and inclusive.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Marx's view of justice is still of extremely important theoretical value to solve the problems of Regional Education Inequality in China, facing the gap between urban and rural education as well as between education in the central and western regions, we should gradually realize the equalization of educational resources and increase the government's support for rural education in both capital and human resources.

REFERENCES

- [1] Guiren Yuan, "On Marx's View of Justice," *Qiushi*, pp. 33-38, April 1992.
- [2] Marx, "Doctoral Thesis," *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, People's Publishing House, vol. 1, Beijing, 1995.
- [3] Yingqin Zhang, "Institutional Rationality and Welfare Justice," *China Social Sciences Press*, pp. 159, 2011.
- [4] Chengrong Duan, Danli Lv et al., "Survival and Development of Left-behind Children in Rural China: Based on the Analysis of Sixth Census Data," *Population Journal*, pp. 37-49, March 2013.
- [5] Yingqin Zhang, Weiwei Guo, "Characteristics of the Centralization of Rural Poverty in Western China and Relevant Causes," *Journal of Shaanxi Normal University*, pp. 13-20, March 2015.
- [6] "China National Human Development Report," *China Translation Press*, 2016.
- [7] Miao Li, "On the Crisis of Education Inequality Based on the Evolution of Urban and Rural Education in China," *Rural Economy*, pp. 117-121, August 2010.
- [8] Marx, "Critique of Political Economy," *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, People's Publishing House, Beijing, vol. 8, pp. 52, 2009.
- [9] Bo Zhai, "China's Approach to Education Equity and Development Orientation," *Journal of Schooling Studies*, pp. 17-19, March 2015.
- [10] Basta C, "On Marx's human significance, Harveys right to the city, and Nussbaums capability approach," *Planning Theory*, 2016.
- [11] Marx, "District and Township System Reform and Kolnische Zeitung," *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, People's Publishing House, Beijing, vol. 1, pp. 314, 1995.