

Situation and Reflection on Targeted Poverty Alleviation Through Education in Tibetan Area

Taking Ganzi Tibetan Area in Sichuan Province as an Example*

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Abstract—Targeted poverty alleviation through education is an important and innovative measure to solve the main social contradiction in China. Taking Ganzi Tibetan Area in Sichuan province as an example, this paper analyzes the theoretical background and current situation of targeted poverty alleviation through education in Tibetan area, and gives some suggestions based on the analysis.

Keywords—targeted poverty alleviation; education; current situation; reflection

I. INTRODUCTION

The large-scale poverty alleviation in China since 1980s has achieved great efficiency and drawn worldwide attention. As the largest developing country, China took the lead in realizing the poverty alleviation aim set forth in the UN millennium development program, which made great contribution to global poverty reduction. However, the development-oriented poverty alleviation actions have also accompanied the widening gap between the rich and the poor in poor areas. To this end, Poverty Alleviation and Development Program in Rural China (2011-2020) was promulgated in 2011, which identified the 14 concentrated most needy area, reflected the national regional coordinated development strategy, and paid attention to targeted crowd. It is designed to decrease and eventually stop unfairness, represented by elite capture, caused in the process of distributing, transferring and using of poverty alleviation resources because of subjective or objective factors, in order to ensure actual effect.

The notion of targeted poverty alleviation was first put forward by Chairman Xi Jinping in 2013, and the establishment of a poverty alleviation mechanism was first proposed in the official document in 2014, marking a turning

point from extensive style to precise style of poverty alleviation work in China. Targeted poverty alleviation is also a critical measure to solve social major contradiction mentioned in the report of the 19th CPC national congress. In this major contradiction, “unbalanced development” is mainly in the developing level gap between the eastern region and the ethnic area in the western region, and “insufficient development” is especially shown in most ethnic minority areas affected by factors such as poor geographic environment, talents shortage, etc.

As we all known, education is the one of the most durable and effective means to alleviate poverty. Hence, targeted poverty alleviation through education is an important link in building a three-dimensional poverty alleviation model and controlling poverty comprehensively from multiple perspectives. It is a key measure to block the transmission of poverty across generations and an effective means to stimulate the endogenous driving force of poverty-stricken areas.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Previous academic researches on targeted poverty alleviation through education tend to be consistent in the following aspects: first, it is a way for poverty alleviation; second, its object is the needy people; third, it is to enhance people’s scientific culture quality via spreading knowledge and skills in educational investment; fourth, the goal is to get rid of poverty. But its subject has been in dispute. Since Thomas Malthus, the British economist, focused on poverty from the perspective of economic growth in the early 19th century, foreign scholars have made explorations on this topic from views of culture, human capital and social policy system and so on. These researches show that the factors leading to poverty are complex, so the efforts to eliminate poverty are definitely diversified. Poverty alleviation through education requires multi-party cooperation, which may be one of the reasons why the subject is relatively vague.

Dr. Lin Chengdong, a forerunner to put forward the theory of poverty alleviation through education in China, discussed that education has the function of anti-poverty and can cut off the vicious circle of poverty, so education should be included

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in the allocation of resources for poverty alleviation, and public education resources should tilt towards poverty-stricken areas [1]. Later studies mainly focus more on literature review, empirical study of certain area, and specific models of poverty alleviation through education. Analysis of its theoretical background is beneficial to understand the significance of poverty alleviation through education.

A. Evolution of Equality Theory

Equality is an eternal topic and a goal for people to pursue tirelessly from the birth of mankind. The connotation of equality is constantly changing with time. The core content of modern western political philosophy originates from the principle of equal rights in ancient Greece. Plato understood equality from the possible and reasonable way, which was his most outstanding and important contribution to the ancient idea of equality. Aristotle believed that the spirit of equality embodied the essence of citizenship. The school of Romanists emphasized all people are equal before the law. The main contribution of the Stoics was to establish the concept of quasi-equality, which was a great breakthrough to the narrow concept of equality in the city-state period. Medieval Christianity advocated a deeper and more absolute equality, believing that everyone was created by god and was therefore absolutely equal in the value and dignity of life, which was the basis of endowed human rights in the bourgeois revolution. Rousseau, the father of modern democracy, held the most representative idea of equality (the guiding ideology of the French revolution), and the important source of Marx's idea of equality as well. Marx used the scientific world outlook and methodology to realize the fundamental transcendence and put forward equality with distinguishing historical and class features, that is, all members are on an equal footing in society and have equal conditions and rights to give free play to their talents and meet their needs. In different historical conditions, different classes have different understandings of equality [2].

Equality in modern times has developed into a concept with compound nature, which is a basic principle stipulated by the constitution, a basic right granted to citizens, the most universal human rights value, and an important part of socialist core values.

B. Nationality Equality View in Marxism Theory

Marx and Engels presented a famous argument that up to now every nation has had some merit over another [3], which indicated the earliest ideological and theoretical basis of nationality equality in Marxism theory that each nation had made its own contribution to human civilization and each nation should learn virtue and merit from each other. In 1876, Engels further explained nationality equality view the proletarian held. Applying equality in general to equality in nationality is one of the greatest achievements of Marxism theory. The communist party of China not only proposes ethnic equality, but also aims to achieve it.

C. The Right to Equal Education

The earliest and most authoritative provision on the right to education equality in the world might be dated back to the declaration of the 9th congress of the international education

bureau in 1946. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* issued in 1948 stands for the basis of international law for the right to education equality, which makes the right to equal education rise from due right to legal right. There are articles stipulating the right to equal education for Chinese citizens in the *Constitution* and *the Education Law* of the PRC. However, there have been differences in the economy, environment and other fields in different region, especially in ethnic areas for a long time. Pursuing equality in form blindly might inevitably lead to inequality in fact. Considering the gap in reality, targeted poverty alleviation through education provides reasonable and necessary preferential support and care to guarantee that every citizen has the equal chance to achieve education, which is the very essence of equality.

III. CURRENT SITUATION IN GANZI TIBETAN AREA

Ganzi Tibetan areas, namely Ganzi Tibetan autonomous prefecture, the first autonomous prefecture in China, located in the northwest of Sichuan province, the southeast edge of Tibet Plateau, one of the 14 concentrated most needy area mentioned above, holds a total area of 15.3 square kilometers, 18 counties and cities, 5 of which are state-level poverty counties identified by the state council leading group for poverty alleviation and development.

In the Qing Dynasty, there were several types of schools in Ganzi Tibetan area, that is, private or community-run schools charging no tuition appeared in Kangxi year, and official schools appeared in Guangxu year. In Republican China, the central, provincial and county education management system was established. Before the democratic reform, there were only 42 modern schools, and most of the students were children of rich people, officials or gentries. Temple education was in monopoly position during that period. As a remote area with lagging economy, fragile ecological environment, scattered population, and frequent social emergencies, the education foundation in Ganzi prefecture is relatively weak. It was not until 1956 that primary schools were established in all counties. Universal primary compulsory education was realized in 2005. Nine-year compulsory education and elimination illiteracy among young and middle-aged people were accomplished in 2010. Various measures have been taken to help this key area of poverty alleviation and the effect is relatively obvious.

A. Policies and Implementation Plans

Local government and party committee attach great importance to targeted poverty alleviation through education. A number of programs, decisions and implementation plans have been issued to support and guide the work, whose focuses include promoting the balanced development of basic education, carrying out free education for 15 years, pushing forward the boarding system and centralized high-quality education project, paying close attention to the bilingual teaching of Tibetan and Chinese, making full use of the internet to improve education efficiency, and expanding the channels of talent training and employment. Some typical policies are as exhibited in the below "Table I".

TABLE I. LIST FOR TYPICAL POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

level	title
Sichuan province	Outline of medium and long term education reform and development plan of Sichuan province (2010-2020)
	Ten year action plan for education development in ethnic minority areas of Sichuan province (2011-2020)
	Sichuan 13th five-year plan for poverty alleviation
	Rules for the implementation of poverty alleviation responsibility system of Sichuan province
	Poverty alleviation through education program of Sichuan province (2017-2020)
Ganzi Tibetan autonomous prefecture	Outline of medium and long-term education reform and development plan of Ganzi prefecture (2011-2020)
	Opinions on the establishment of first-class education in Tibetan areas
	Implementation of "two exemptions" education plan for high schools in Ganzi prefecture
	Implementation plan for assistance of college students from poor families in Ganzi prefecture
	Measures for subsidizing students from poor families at non-compulsory education stage in ganzi prefecture
	Instruction on employing village preschool education counselor in villages
	Pilot scheme of supervision and evaluation for preschool education in villages

B. Financial Support

Funds for education coming from financial input, project input and partner assistance are allocated and used reasonably to targeted identified objects, which are mainly used for student education, student subsidy, school hardware construction and so on. Taking the 12th five-year budget data for example, from 2010 to 2015, a total of 15 years free education and student finance capital were up to 2.3 billion Yuan, including free tuition subsidy for secondary vocational students in Ganzi prefecture, national grant subsidies, economic difficulties students in non-compulsory education phase assistance funds, tuition award for provincial colleges and universities graduate toward basic level employment and so on. A total of 6.2 billion Yuan was allocated to improve conditions for running schools. Among them, 230 million Yuan was used for living equipment in boarding schools, and 400 million Yuan was used for purchasing experimental instruments, books and information equipment. By the end of 2015, a total of 1.26 million square meters of school space had been built, doubling the total school space of 2010. In those five years, 400 million Yuan of education aid funds from developed areas in Sichuan province and Guangdong province. But it cannot be denied that some vanity projects have been built and some education funds are wasted.

C. School System

A comprehensive school system whose major framework covers free public preschool education, balanced compulsory education, high-quality-resources-concentrated high school education, secondary vocational education and adult education has been established. The structure and layout of the schools has been optimized. As can be seen from the data in "Table II", from 2010 to 2017, the total number of schools of all kinds did not increase but decreased despite the continuous investment of poverty alleviation funds, primary schools in particular. This is due to the implementation of boarding education, the establishment of a centralized high-quality school project. The integration of the original compulsory education resources, to a certain extent, solved the difficulties such as far apart home and school because of a vast territory with a sparse population.

TABLE II. SCHOOL STATISTICS IN GANZI TIBETAN AREA

Type Year	School totality	Kindergarten	Primary school	Middle school	Special education school	Secondary vocational school
2010	1032	320	657	49	2	4
2015	893	369	465	54	2	3
2017	859	389	413	52	2	3

^{a.} The statistics of 2010 &2015 come from Sichuan Education yearbook published by Sichuan Education Press.

^{b.} The statistics of 2017 come from work summary of Ganzi education bureau.

The data in "Table III" shows that by the end of 2015, the number of students receiving compulsory education had reached 131,000, the retention rate of students receiving nine-year compulsory education had increased from 68% in 2010 to 93.7%, and the number of students receiving high school education had reached 12,073, a net increase of 59% over 2010. However, it must be noted that the number of students on campus sometimes fluctuates and does not increase continuously. In addition to the geographical environment and other objective factors, parents do not pay enough attention to education is one of the important factors. For example, some parents indulge or even encourage children to stay away from classes to earn money by digging cordyceps in the proper season. Another important reason is that most people in Ganzi Tibetan area believe in religion, which makes temple education occupy part of the students.

TABLE III. STUDENT STATISTICS IN SCHOOLS IN GANZI TIBETAN AREA

Type Year	Student Totality	Students in Preschool	Primary School Students	Junior Middle School Students	Senior Middle School Students	Students in Secondary Vocational School
2010	166765	14175	105955	34287	8665	3683
2015	175218	25644	97110	34187	12073	6204
2017	179393	27526	97091	35282	13364	6109

^{a.} The statistics of 2010 &2015 come from Sichuan Education yearbook published by Sichuan Education Press.

^{b.} The statistics of 2017 come from work summary of Ganzi education bureau.

D. Teaching Staff

Teaching staff has always been one of the biggest difficulties in the education in Tibetan areas meet because of high altitude, bad weather, inconvenient transportation and other reasons. Through introducing talents from outside and internal training, the quality and quantity of teaching staff has been improved to a relatively large extent. According to the data provided by the education bureau at the end of 2017, the total number of teachers reached 14,377, including 12,888 full-time teachers. However, as the number of school students in the prefecture increases year by year, there are still some problems. The teaching staff without dynamic adjustment after the approval in 2012 is seriously insufficient, especially in the remote villages. Besides insufficient personnel, poor job attraction, uneven distribution and outflow of the teaching staff are factors affecting education development.

IV. CONCLUSION

Compared with most parts of Sichuan province, education in Ganzi Tibetan area with weak foundation is still at a low and unbalanced level. Different from other poverty alleviation projects, targeted poverty alleviation through education has a significantly longer period for benefits returning. Some short-sighted local officials only focus on their achievements during their administration. Targeted poverty alleviation through education in Ganzi Tibetan areas still has a long way to go. Great attention should be paid to seek for solution.

A. Service and Supervision

It is necessary to improve service and strengthen supervision to teaching activities, especially in remote villages, in order to solve practical difficulties caused by traffic inconvenience, poor environment and material shortage, and to guarantee the normal teaching in schools. It is also necessary to strictly supervise the allocation and use of funds for education. A relative scientific and reasonable funding system should be formed. Feasibility assessment and effect evaluation should be advocated and supervised.

B. Faculty Construction

The following measures are suggested to optimize the structure and enhance the quality of the teaching staff: making full use of network information technology and bilateral training with other partners to cultivate the existing teachers; making preferential policies from raising income, tax relief, housing, work content and so on to attract and introduce talents; taking innovative measures such as the unified teacher rotation system deployed by the government, or cloud resource sharing in counterpart assistance.

C. Coordination Among Multiple Subjects

The Chinese government has played an important top-down administrative role in targeted poverty alleviation through education. However, education governance is a structured behavior process, which requires rational interaction and consultation among the government, market, school, social organizations and other subjects, and ultimately maximizes the public interests in the field of education [4]. Only by mobilizing the forces of industry and society and forming a multi-subject cooperation pattern can promote the work. In addition to the leading role of the government, the division of labor and cooperation among various functional departments, and the participation of social organizations, parents of students is also an important subject. After all, support to children from parents to receive education is an essential way to improve the quality of the population in poor areas, promote economic and cultural development, and finally get rid of poverty. Furthermore, the positive role played by unique temple education in Tibetan areas should not be ignored, which will form an effective complement with school education. Temple education imparts the philosophy of human behavior, emphasizes respect for teachers, pays attention to practical teaching, advocates concentrated recitation and fosters debate ability [5]. All these are worthy of reference for modern school education.

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