



Study on the Path of Promoting Educational Equity from the Perspective of Regional Differences

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Abstract. Equity in education is the foundation of social equity. China has been promoting equity in education for many years through policies, laws, and economic inputs. However, inequalities in education have not been fully eliminated, this has also led to discussions on the issue of equity in education in China. This paper analyses the educational disparities that currently exist between urban and rural areas in China. This paper summarised the current characterization of educational disparities between urban and rural areas in China. On this basis, this paper concludes that there are four main factors that contribute to the urban-rural education gap: education funding, regional economy, resources, teachers, and families. Based on this, the paper makes the following recommendations: more precise allocation of education funds, focus on reducing economic disparities between urban and rural areas, improvement of education policy support for backward areas, improving financial support for disadvantaged students, improvement of the law on equity in education, improvement of the remuneration of rural teachers, provide more learning opportunities for rural teachers, developing a specialized curriculum based on rural localities.

Keywords: Educational Equity, Urban-Rural Differences, Education

1 Introduction

Education, as a way for human beings to spread knowledge, plays a crucial role in the development of human history. China, as a socialist country, pursues a society of common prosperity, which provides possibilities for educational equity [1]. In China, whether education is fair or not is a factor affecting social development. China has been paying attention to the issue of educational equity, from the universal implementation of compulsory education to the expansion of colleges and universities are constantly promoting educational equity, but the phenomenon of educational inequity still exists.

In China, the early implementation of the theory of "urban-rural dichotomy", followed by rapid economic growth, has led to the formation of a large urban-rural economic disparity. The large urban-rural economic disparity has led to the phenomenon of urban-rural educational inequity, and educational inequity has in turn contributed to the widening of the economic gap, forming a vicious circle. How to break the phenomenon of urban-rural education inequity is the focus of this paper.

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2 Characterisation of Urban-Rural Differences in Education

After 1978 China's education development increased at a rapid rate, followed by the expansion of higher education in 1999, China's educational opportunities have increased dramatically, and by 2022, China's gross enrolment rate in higher education has reached 59.6% [1]. However, the problem of educational inequality still exists in China.

2.1 Unequal Investment in Education between Urban and Rural Areas

China's investment in basic education has been increasing year by year, but the overall investment level in urban areas is higher than that in rural areas, and the gap between urban and rural areas is gradually widening. According to the 2007-2019 Statistical Yearbook of China's Education Expenditure, during the period 2013-2019, the gap in per capita education expenditure between urban and rural areas in China has gradually widened. In 2019, the ratio of per-pupil funding for rural primary schools to urban primary schools in China was 0.83, and the ratio of per-pupil funding for rural junior high schools to urban junior high schools in China was 0.71[2]. The data show that, in China, there is a gap between rural and urban areas in terms of per-pupil education funding for compulsory education. Per-pupil funding in rural areas is generally lower than per-pupil funding in urban areas. And this gap is even more pronounced at the middle school level. This means that State spending on education is uneven between urban and rural areas.

2.2 Unequal Distribution of School Facilities and Teacher Resources

China's rural teachers are weak. China's rural teachers suffer from the dilemma of the average age of teachers, the lack of teachers in some subjects, and the relatively low professional level of teachers [3]. According to the Report on the Development of Rural Education in China, 2020-2022, in the countryside, the proportion of teachers over 55 years of age reached 8.8 percent, 5.5 percent higher than in urban areas. In addition to this, due to geographic location and financial allocation problems, rural schools generally show a lower penetration rate of multimedia classrooms than an urban phenomenon, and the use of multimedia equipment in some rural schools is low, which also leads to the level of teaching informatization in the countryside is generally lower than that in the city [4].

Differences in the level of teachers further contribute to differences in the level of cognition between urban and rural students. Upon comparison, there is a large gap between the cognitive abilities of students in rural areas and those in urban areas [5].

2.3 Differences in the Philosophy of Family Education

Differences in educational attainment among students of the same age are strongly influenced by generation. In China, parents in rural families are generally less educated

than parents in urban families, and in the countryside, parents' educational attainment plays an important role in influencing whether their children can receive higher education [6]. In China, due to their lower economic level, rural families spend less on their children's education than urban families. At the same time, some parents in rural families, due to their low level of education and the influence of the concept of the times, invest relatively less in their daughters' education, and even prevent their daughters from pursuing higher education.

3 Factors Affecting Equity in Education

3.1 Economic Factors

Differences in Government Investment in Education Funding. A scholar has summarised the 20 most frequently mentioned terms in China's education equity-related policies, the majority of these terms are related to "finance", this suggests that finance has a greater role to play in educational equity in China [7]. Differences in government funding for education affect many aspects, for example, education funding directly affects the results of the construction of school facilities in urban and rural areas, the amount of students' access to material resources for education, and indirectly affects the results of teacher recruitment and the quality of teaching in urban and rural schools, which also affects educational equity. In China, local fiscal policies differ between regions, but education funding inputs are highly correlated with local economic conditions, which leads to uneven distribution of education funding between regions [8]. In Guangdong Province, a province with a large economic gap between urban and rural areas, there is a difference of 6.08 times between the maximum value of per-pupil education expenditure (in urban areas) and the minimum value (in rural areas) in the province in 2020 [9]. Uneven per capita education expenditure is a manifestation of uneven distribution of education funding, in the case of a large urban-rural economic gap, the larger uneven distribution of education funding will lead to the lagging development of regional education in the countryside, which in turn affects the rate of further education and even the income of the subsequent employment, and finally leads to the urban-rural economic disparity to further widen, and then act on the distribution of education funding, forming a vicious circle. As an important factor in maintaining equity in education, Failure to rationalize the allocation of education funds will have more serious consequences.

Economic Disparities between Urban and Rural Areas in China. There is a certain economic gap between urban and rural areas in China, and extends to the family, economic disparities between families affect the resources that children receive for their education. In 2023, the per capita disposable income of urban residents in China will be 51,821 yuan, and the per capita disposable income of rural residents will be 21,691 yuan [10]. In rural areas, due to their remote location, complex terrain, underdeveloped industry, poor transport and difficulties in external communication, general per capita and household incomes are lower than in urban areas. Some rural residents will choose

to migrate to towns for work, but tend to be predominantly engaged in manual labor, the majority of them have lower incomes than the urban population. On the premise that there is an economic gap between urban and rural areas, modern society, in turn, is placing increasing emphasis on the family's responsibility for the expenditure on children's education [11]. Urban families with higher incomes can gain the right to choose schools for their children through higher investment in education or have more access to educational resources. While rural families with lower incomes invest even less in education, their children also receive relatively inadequate educational resources. This exacerbates the impact on education of economic disparities between urban and rural areas.

3.2 Differences in the Allocation of Educational Resources

Resource allocation affects student learning outcomes to a certain extent. At present, in China, there is a massive exodus of the rural population to towns and cities, resulting in lower enrolment rates in rural schools. Although the per pupil resources are the most compared to the next, compared with urban schools, rural schools still show the backwardness of supporting facilities. In today's technological development and integration of education, schools in urban areas have a higher penetration rate of multimedia facilities than schools in rural areas, and although the gap is narrowing year by year, the hardware supporting facilities for information technology in schools in rural areas are more inadequate [4]. At the same time, due to the education and teacher situation in rural areas, the use of information technology multimedia equipment is lower in rural area schools. This gap will lead to teaching in rural areas is more difficult than in urban areas to improve teaching methods through multimedia equipment, and the level of informatization in classroom teaching lower, and the teaching content is lagging behind. In addition to the gap in information technology facilities, due to financial reasons, the updating of desks, chairs, extracurricular books, etc. in schools in rural areas is slower and the facilities are older than those in some urban schools. These differences in resources are also factors contributing to educational inequity.

3.3 Differences in Teachers' Qualifications

Teachers' level of teaching is an important factor contributing to the disparity in the quality of teaching between urban and rural areas. In China, the main difference between urban and rural teachers lies in the quality of their teaching standards. Due to their more remote geographical location, more backward resource allocation, and generally lower salaries, rural areas are less attractive to high-quality teachers than urban areas, and most young teachers with higher teaching standards and better education are reluctant to go to rural areas to teach. This has led to an aging of teachers in rural areas, a shortage of teachers specializing in some subjects, a lower level of professionalism and inflexible teaching methods. Some young teachers in rural teaching due to the lack of external communication and learning, the lack of new media teaching platforms, teaching methods gradually "step by step" and "to the test", and the loss of innovation in teaching. Compared with rural areas, urban areas are more attractive to young

teachers with high teaching standards due to higher salaries, better facilities, better geographical location, and even a higher sense of self-identity among teachers. This contrast can lead to a relative lack of education provided by schools in rural areas, thus affecting the learning outcomes of students in rural areas. Differences in teachers' teaching standards are an important factor in educational inequity.

3.4 Family Differences

The family has a greater influence on the education of children, parents' level of education, whether or not the child is an only child, and family gender perspective, both affect the educational opportunities of children. In China, parents' education level has a significant impact on whether their children can receive higher education: the higher the parents' education level, the higher the chance that their children can receive higher education, which is known as intergenerational transmission [11]. Intergenerational transmission is usually divided into two influence paths: when parents have high educational attainment, the economic level of the family is correspondingly higher, and they can provide better educational resources to their children; when parents have high educational attainment, their ability to educate their children is also higher [12]. China's rural residents are generally less educated than their urban counterparts, this has led some parents to place little value on the education of their children., thus affecting the educational attainment of children. In addition to this, the proportion of only children is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. According to the theory of resource dilution, families with more children have lower expectations of academic performance and educational outcomes for individuals. In rural households with more children, parents pay less attention to a particular child, while the educational resources averaged to the child are correspondingly less, which can reduce the educational outcomes of the child compared to one-child households [5]. In the countryside, where the population is more susceptible to stereotypes, some families may affect their investment in the education of their daughters and sons, in the worst cases preventing their daughters from going on to higher or better education after the end of compulsory schooling. These differences between urban and rural families can lead to educational inequity.

4 Solution Path

4.1 Government

More Accurate Government Education Spending. In the future, the Chinese government needs to strengthen the coordination of education funding, and more accurately invest in education. Firstly, the government needs to pay attention to the uneven investment in education between urban and rural areas, and secondly, it needs to understand the actual needs of each rural area and school, identify the different needs of each school, and accurately allocate and invest in education funding. China is a vast country, and different rural areas have different economic conditions and different educational resources. The government should not make generalizations when investing in

education, but should first understand the needs before allocating funds to accurately invest, to achieve the purpose of reducing the differences between urban and rural education.

Strengthening Economic Support to Rural Areas. The improvement of the regional economy can improve the economic situation of local families, this reduces the disparity in investment in education between urban and rural families. The Chinese Government has been promoting "comprehensive well-being", reducing economic disparities between regions. In the present context, governments can strengthen the integration of social resources for poverty alleviation, improve the understanding and forecasting of the economic situation in rural areas through assessment visits, capture the variability of different regions, customize targeted support policies, and consolidate the effects of the current fight against poverty. The countryside needs to be grounded in the local, discover and promote local specialties or develop industries such as tourism. Villages have access to the Internet and the media, through emerging platforms and formats, and expanding their influence, to attract external resources. Reducing economic disparities between rural and urban areas is a way to narrow the gap between urban and rural households in terms of their financial commitment to their children's education.

Policy Compensation for Educationally Disadvantaged Areas. After the expansion of colleges and universities, China's college enrolment rate has risen, but as mentioned above, urban students have profited more from the college entrance examination expansion, which in turn has widened the urban-rural education gap. The most effective way to compensate for educational disadvantage in China is the "extra points" policy, which gives ethnic minority and educationally disadvantaged students extra points, and can directly increase the rate of progression to tertiary education in educationally disadvantaged areas. As the most effective way at present, the policy of "extra points in college entrance examination" can continue to promote the implementation of the policy to make up for the inferiority of educational resources in some areas. To make the policy of "extra points in college entrance examination" more precise for the benefit of educationally disadvantaged areas, the relevant authorities should listen to the views of the public, reducing Unjustified Extra Points that Increase the Rights and Interests of Powerful Groups, strengthening the monitoring of policy implementation, regulating the implementation of policies.

Improving Education Subsidy Policies. The economic situation of families is an important factor that affects the rate of students going on to high school and higher education. In rural China, some extremely poor families may not be able to provide enough money for their children to continue their education in high school and beyond. For poor families, China has appropriate student financial assistance policies, such as tuition and miscellaneous fee reductions, and university-level financial assistance for the poor. In addition to financial assistance for tuition fees, candidates can apply for special volunteer batches in the college entrance examination, and there is some financial compensation for studying at specific colleges and universities. The government can

improve these policies in depth to confirm the status of poor families to provide assistance and to circumvent the situation where some poor students do not apply for poverty subsidies while some students with better financial status apply for poverty subsidies.

Improve Laws, Regulations and Policies. Laws, regulations, and policies are the hard and fast channels to guarantee educational equity. Due to economic disparities, urban families can enjoy more educational resources for their children through economic investment, and this can cause certain educational inequities. In China, the phenomenon of "college entrance examination migration" has attracted widespread attention, with some families moving their hukou to areas with insufficient educational resources to reduce competition for the college entrance examination. At the same time, some rural families have children who follow their parents as they migrate to cities to work, a group known as "migrant children". Laws and regulations need to address the situation of "college entrance examination migrants" and at the same time properly organize the education of migrant children, which is a part of China's policy that needs to be improved [4]. In addition, China needs to regulate the existence of extracurricular education at the compulsory and high school levels. Families with better economic status can invest in extracurricular education for their children to obtain better educational outcomes, but most of rural families are unable to support their children with expensive extracurricular tutoring, which creates educational inequity. Improving regulations geared towards extracurricular education can advance educational equity.

4.2 Teachers and Human Resources

Improving the Attractiveness of Schools in Rural Areas to Teachers. At present, teachers in rural areas are faced with aging teachers, lack of some subjects, and low professional level of teachers, etc. An important reason for these phenomena is that rural schools lack the power to attract young teachers and excellent teachers. Rural areas generally have poorer facilities and lower salaries than urban areas, making it difficult to attract young teachers. The Chinese government needs to strengthen the construction of school facilities, improve the treatment of rural teachers, and improve the security mechanism of rural teachers to improve the attractiveness of teachers [5]. At the same time, it is necessary to understand the real needs of rural teachers, improve the living conditions of rural teachers, pay attention to the psychological state of rural teachers, and provide a higher sense of professional identity.

Improve the Teaching Level of Teachers in Rural Areas. Teachers in rural areas generally show a lack of professional subject teachers, old-fashioned teaching methods, and less use of information technology in teaching. Schools in rural areas can promote mutual exchange and progress of teachers between schools through inter-school exchanges and school groups [13]. Schools should also arrange unified teaching training for teachers to learn novel teaching methods and new teaching content. Rural schools can also establish alliances with urban schools, urban schools in rural schools, "borrowing recruitment", or mutual exchange of teachers, to exchange teachers to the

countryside to provide titles, evaluation of excellence, and other inclinations, so that urban and rural teachers to learn from each other and exchange [14].

Use of Teaching Methods that Incorporate Rural Characteristics. In China, some rural areas are economically backward, and as a result, students have a lower sense of identity with their hometowns. Some teachers may also feel a sense of disapproval of their status as "rural teachers". In teaching, "countryside" should not be a "backward" mark, but should be based on the village to carry out teaching, so that it becomes an advantage. Rural schools can develop local school-based curricula, Schools work with teachers to research the local character, such as local cultural customs and human landscapes, and integrating them into the classroom, so that teachers and students can feel a sense of identity and pride in the countryside in the classroom [15].

5 Conclusion

Education is one of the cornerstones of social equity and is one of the key factors in the population's sense of fairness. This paper analyses the causes of educational disparities between urban and rural areas in China and provides input on how China can advance educational equity.

This paper finds that an important symptom of educational equity in urban and rural China is the lower funding for education in rural areas. The teaching environment and the quality of teachers in rural areas lag behind those in urban areas, rural families provide less educational support for their children. The main reasons for the above manifestations of inequality in education are, respectively, the irrational distribution of educational funds, there are significant economic differences between urban and rural areas, and families in rural areas do not attach sufficient importance to education. As a result of the information review, this paper summarises current effective measures to promote educational equity between urban and rural areas. The government can invest in education more precisely, and strengthen and improve the policy of assistance in poor areas. The Government can improvement of financial assistance policies for needy students, to make the policy more precise. In addition to this, the Government can improve the remuneration of teachers in schools in rural areas, to attract young teachers.

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