

Exploring the Causes and Solution of the Unequal Educational Problem in Different Regions of China

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Abstract: Nowadays, an increasing number of people are still attentive to educational issues. In respect of this issue, some researchers have found that economic level and social class in different regions of China have a significant impact on the distribution of education. However, there is a lack of unified explanation and development of the underlying contributing factors and the solutions that can solve the problem. Therefore, the main focus of this essay is a review of the research on China's uneven distribution of educational resources. The research design of this paper is as follows: Firstly, the author will collect the economic level and education distribution resource data of different regions in China. Second, the author will review existing literature, combine and analyze it with data to identify potential factors that contribute to the inequitable allocation of educational resources in China, and propose solutions to this problem. According to the findings of this review, most scholars believe that the issue of education inequality among urban and rural areas seems to be more serious, and there are many pieces of literature in this regard. However, we should pay attention to the fact that the existing literature still lacks practical application and unified theoretical support. Therefore, in the future education development, the Chinese government should provide more economic and psychological help for some poor areas, so as to achieve the ultimate goal of national education equality.

Keywords: Educational inequality, education situation of China, region inequality, rural and urban inequality, gender inequality

1. Introduction

Education issues have always been a hotly debated topic. Since the economic reform and opening-up program was started in 1978, there has been a great rise in China's economic level with the progressive development of China as a whole. China's agricultural growth has also advanced somewhat in the years that have followed. According to the National Bureau of Statistics' most recent report, in 2021, China's economic and agricultural development data, according to preliminary calculations, total annual domestic GDP reached 114,367 billion yuan, equivalent to 17.73 trillion U.S. dollars. China's total GDP is approximately equivalent to about 77% of that of the United States, reaching an unprecedented level [1]. But this remarkable economic and agricultural development is destined to have gains and losses. The high rate of growth has come at the expense of the nation's economic standards and educational opportunities. For example, in 2011, CCTV publicly criticized a university town in Henan Province for occupying too much land and

wasting resources, which has now triggered public discussion, and said that China, as a large agricultural and population country, must pay attention to the use of food and land resources. But in fact, the university town in Henan Province covers an area of only 11.7 square kilometers and contains 15 universities. By the autumn of 2012, the number of teachers and students in the university town had exceeded 180000. However, Beijing, which has the most abundant educational resources, has 132 golf courses, covering an area of 130000 mu, or 86.58 square kilometers, which is equivalent to four university towns in Henan Province. Therefore, the problem and causes of the inequality of educational resources have been re-examined.

In fact, the problem of educational inequality has been raised for a long time. More than 2000 years ago, Confucius, a famous Chinese educator and philosopher, put forward the idea of equality in education, which has an important guiding significance for the reform and development of today's education. He advocated that education should be fair, regardless of class, wealth and national boundaries. From the perspective of the theory of human nature, "Confucius said: By nature, people are nearly like; by practice, they get to be wide apart." Here, human beings exist individually. But practice is of social significance, including the impact of education and social environment on human beings. Confucius believed that the education and educational environment acquired had a greater impact on human beings. He denied that the noble class was nobler than the common people, and advocated the idea that everyone could receive education

If Confucius is the leader who put forward the idea of educational equality, James Coleman is the first person who put forward the concept of educational inequality and distinguished it. In his 1975 report, He suggested that the true goal of education should be to lessen how different students are affected unequally by environmental circumstances through the educational process, in order to lessen how these issues will affect children's future adult lives. Coleman said that if we want to achieve the goal of education equality to a certain extent, the following conditions need to be met: (1) regional economic development needs to meet the standard; (2) All students need to face learning actively; (3) Students must live in a pure school environment with only teachers and classmates, and learn without external influence[2].

This paper will mainly review the literature on the long-term problem of educational inequality in China. Sources of the paper include the National Bureau of Statistics, some professional papers, and published bibliography. The review will mainly focus on three aspects: regional inequality, urban and rural inequality, and gender inequality. The purpose of this paper is to mainly summarize the phenomenon of educational inequality in China and put forward suggestions for it.

2. Literature Review

Since ancient times, the pursuit of the concept of equality has been the goal of mankind. Many philosophers also put forward their own views on the concept of educational equality. For example, Plato. Plato advocated harmonious education. He said that all citizens, regardless of gender, whether ruled or ruler, should receive compulsory education from childhood. Education is the tool to realize the ideal country, and cultivating philosophers is the highest goal of education.

In modern society, inequality is defined as the imbalance of development in various regions of the world, or the imposition of one person's values on another. In fact, inequality is the root cause of discrimination and stereotypes. Many people will treat those who are economically, socially or morally disadvantaged in a biased manner. The concept of education equality in modern society originated from John Rawls in the United States [3]. He put forward three principles of equal educational opportunities: 1. Provide people with equal educational facilities. 2. Let everyone receive the lowest level of education. 3. Provide special help to some vulnerable groups or special groups.

On this basis, Farrell proposed several forms of equality in education: equality of opportunity, equality of investment, and equality of results. He said that education equality would appear in different dimensions, such as nationality, region, socio-economic, gender, belief, etc. [4]. At the same time, Other scholars also showed through research that education inequality and individual income inequality are also closely related, and equal education distribution can help improve the distribution of residents' income.

However, the above aspects all define the concept of educational inequality from a qualitative perspective. In quantitative terms, there are two general categories that may be used to classify the indicators used to measure educational inequality: absolute indicators and relative indicators. The standard deviation of the years of education is what the absolute index, which reflects the average deviation between the years of education received by each individual and the average years of education.

3. Educational Inequality in China

In order to understand the multiple dimensions of educational inequality. This review mainly divides the educational inequality into three dimensions: 1. regional inequality. 2. Urban rural inequality 3. Gender inequality.

3.1. Define Educational Inequality

Throughout history, educational topics have been closely watched by people. However, the inequality of education appears frequently in China. With the change of social distribution, people's income differences and class differences have gradually increased the level of education among children, and the problem of educational inequality has gradually emerged. Therefore, in order to better ensure that everyone in China has an equal opportunity to receive knowledge, it is necessary to find out the potential causes of educational inequality and try to solve the problem.

3.1.1. Educational Inequality between Different Regions

An important part of education inequality is the inequality between different regions of China. For example, there are significant differences in the distribution and development of education between core areas and remote areas.

According to past investigations, the illiteracy rate in most of the eastern provinces in China is less than 4%. However, it has exceeded 10% in some western regions, and even more than 30% in Tibet. From a macro perspective, the proportion of people with junior high school education and above in the total population is about 50%. From 60% of the central and southeast coastal provinces, Guizhou, Yunnan and other provinces accounted for only 28%, while Tibet was the lowest: 10.8%. It can be seen that the proportion of education in western China, such as Tibet, is extremely low [4].

At the same time, Tsang found that in 1989, the ratio of the highest per capita primary education expenditure to the lowest in China was 6.4 [5]. However, in the later research of scholars, they found that since 2000, the total per capita expenditure of students in Shanghai was as much as 8 times that in the western poor areas. By comparison, it can be seen that since 1980, regional differences in education funding have begun to emerge.

Based on the educational inequality in different regions, many scholars have found that it is not enough to simply find out the problems in theory. We need more research and experiments to find out the underlying causes and propose solutions.

Since 1980, China's education reform has begun to realize the political and financial decentralization and privatize costs. These changes have mobilized new resources to support education to a large extent, but at the same time, they have exacerbated the differences in

educational resources in different regions. In this regard, some scholars, such as educational economists, have been studying the impact of regional economic development on educational inequality, so as to completely improve the problem of educational inequality.

For example, Lampton studied the educational inequality between provinces in his early research. He mainly investigated five provinces: Guangdong, Anhui, Shandong, Shanxi, and Hunan. In this regard, Lampton found that economic development is the key determinant of the differences in basic education among provinces. At the same time, he also found that political factors also had an impact [6].

At the same time, the Statistical Yearbook of China's Education Expenditure shows that in recent years, although the Chinese state and government have gradually begun to pay attention to the education subsidies in the poor areas of the central and western regions, this is far from enough. In 1995, the per capita expenditure of primary school students in China was 265.78 yuan, which was nearly 50 yuan higher than the education expenditure in western rural areas. At the same time, the per capita funding for junior high school students in China at that time was nearly twice as much as that in the western rural areas. Until 1999, the country began to gradually subsidize education funds in remote areas. But in fact, this does not solve the problem of regional education inequality. Compulsory education accounts for 56.2% of the national education expenditure; In the national budget, the proportion of compulsory education funds is 57.4%; however, the government bears more than 70% of the higher education funds for non-compulsory education. In 2001, the per capita national appropriation for college students was nearly 9000 yuan, but the per capita national appropriation for primary school students was about 530 yuan [7]. Therefore, some children in remote areas are unable to receive the primary compulsory education at all, and the education funds received by schools cannot bear the normal expenses. Even water and electricity bills have become a problem, not to mention the purchase of some new educational equipment.

3.1.2. Educational Inequality between Rural and Urban

As a country with the largest education system in the world, China's annual investment in education accounts for 4% of the country's annual GDP [8]. However, the long-term separation of urban and rural areas in China has also greatly promoted the education inequality between urban and rural areas, leaving the poor behind. This inequality is mostly reflected in the differences in basic literacy and educational achievements between urban and rural areas. Although in the 21st century, rural education has improved with the support of the state, it is still far from enough to fully realize the equality of urban and rural education.

According to the China Human Development Report, in 2000, the per capita education of rural residents was 6.8 years, while that of urban residents was nearly 10 years. In this case, the average illiteracy rate in rural areas is directly three times higher than that in urban areas. Although China has nine-year compulsory education, after nine-year compulsory education, the data shows that most of the rural population will not continue higher education because of financial problems. For example, research shows that only 8.5% of the rural population has received higher education since 2000, while the proportion of urban population is 43.5%. It can be seen that most people in rural areas are unable to access the educational conditions enjoyed by people living in cities. Their future development may also be constrained. In general, population sampling shows that in 2006, the rural population was about 700 million, accounting for nearly 60% of the total population of the country. Therefore, the limited education in rural areas not only represents a few simple regions, but also represents that 60% of the people in the country do not receive equal education. This will not only affect the future development of individuals, but also affect the future national construction[9].

Secondly, the teaching equipment in rural areas is also very poor. Data shows that there are nearly 13 million square meters of dilapidated buildings in China, and almost all of them are

concentrated in rural areas in the central and western regions. At the same time, teachers in rural areas are also very scarce. In 2005, the number of primary and secondary school teachers in China reached 10 million, but the number of rural primary school teachers and the overall teaching quality of teachers are still very low. This phenomenon is not only a superficial regional problem, but also reflected in the government's treatment of rural teachers. Because of the inequality of educational resources, rural teachers enjoy certain treatment according to the principle of inequality and ignorance. According to statistics, 8 million rural teachers need to undertake about 66 million rural primary and secondary education tasks, and transform the population burden into high-quality talent resources. However, under the poor educational environment and hard living conditions in rural areas, most rural teachers can not enjoy their rights and their wages can not be guaranteed. According to the State Council of China in 2021, Qingshuihe County, Hohhot City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has defaulted subsidies of 7.77 million yuan to 194 special post teachers since 2009. In 2020, a county in Sichuan Province has defaulted 82.9 million yuan on "five insurances and one fund" for teachers. These are not just recent problems. According to a survey conducted by the China Education Trade Union in the first half of 1999, teachers in some parts of China have been in arrears for more than 10 billion yuan. Even Guangdong Province, which is economically developed, has defaulted on teachers' salaries of 640 million yuan from 1996 to 1999 [10]. Even though the current wage release situation has improved, it cannot completely solve the problem of unbalanced rural teacher resources. If even the most basic guarantee cannot be given to rural teachers, the education of students will also be affected.

In addition to the above-mentioned shortage of teachers caused by the treatment of rural teachers, there are many other reasons that promote rural education to gradually lag behind urban education. For example, today's rural parents usually choose to leave the countryside to earn money, so that their children can be put in the care of their elders in the countryside. Statistics show that there are about 60 million left-behind children in rural areas. In this regard, the education level of left behind children is therefore limited to the rural education conditions, resulting in more than 13% of the eighth grade dropouts [8].

Secondly, some diseases may also affect the education received by children in urban and rural areas. According to statistics, only 50% of students in rural areas can receive online courses, but the remaining students have no access to online learning and no learning channels. However, only 5.7% of the students in the cities do not have access to school. This problem stems from the lack of computer and Internet connection in households due to the rural economic level [8].

Thirdly, the lack of government funding has also exacerbated the disparity in educational conditions between urban and rural areas. Without sufficient financial support, some rural families are unable to support their children to go to school, or even there are no schools in some places. In this regard, rural areas should recruit some fresh graduates, whose recruitment costs are low, and they can also provide new resources for rural education.

3.1.3. Educational Inequality in Gender

On the other hand, gender inequality is also a symbol of educational inequality in China. Due to the influence of the previous patriarchal society, China has traditionally belonged to a male dominated country. Therefore, women's opportunities (such as educational opportunities) will be much less than men's.

Fortunately, with the development of time, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, in 2020, the average time limit for men and women aged 15 and above to receive education has approached[11]. It can be seen that the education situation in China today has made progress compared with that of more than ten years ago. However, the research in this field is still limited

and disjointed. The existing research mainly divides gender inequality in China's education into two aspects: gender inequality in rural education and gender inequality in urban education.

In the national research in 1990, Connelly and Zheng mainly investigated the difference between the enrollment and graduation rates of teenagers and found out the determinants of the difference. The final result shows that residence and gender are the two biggest factors that cause the difference between the enrollment rate and the graduation rate. Especially for girls in rural areas, their education resources are much less than that of boys because they are in rural areas and girls. In addition, the comparative analysis of different provinces shows that there are significant differences in the gender differences reflected in the enrollment rates of different provinces in the world. This is mainly reflected in the rural areas of Shandong, Hunan, Sichuan, Jiangxi and other provinces (more than 10%)[12].

Some qualitative studies also reflect the inequality of gender in rural areas' education. For example, Li and Tsang studied 400 rural households in four rural areas in Gansu and Hebei. The results show that the parents' expectation of girls' education in a family is far lower than that of boys. Therefore, people have in mind that boys should have a higher level of education than girls [13].

Because in the urban environment, children can receive better educational resources and socio-economic status. Therefore, their educational problem is far better than that in rural areas. However, some studies have shown that gender differences also affect students' future development. For example, the survey conducted by Broaded and Liu in 1996 shows that gender has a greater impact on the choice of high school, which has since become the family background and parents' education level. This is because some female students will take more factors into consideration when making decisions, such as their family background, economic status, social status, etc. Therefore, the study found that boys continue to choose higher education rather than vocational education than girls[14].

The above paragraphs illustrate causes of educational inequality in urban and rural context. In this section, the debate focuses on the causal links from a gender perspective. The primary factor leading to gender inequality in education is the influence of traditional gender concepts. Such traditional gender concepts come from China's gender system. The social gender value of our country originates from the hierarchy centered on the patriarchy. In feudal society, women existed to meet their husband's physiological needs, raise children, wash clothes and cook meals. As a result, women are forced to rely on men and men are superior to women. The continuous spread of this phenomenon has formed the traditional gender concept and still has an impact on today's social life.

The second is the influence of political, economic and cultural factors. From a political standpoint, although our laws stipulate that men and women enjoy equal status. However, women have a lower voice in actual government decision-making. As women's political status is lower than that of men, it is easy to repatriate women's rights and interests due to the lack of women's views when making policies. These factors will also have a negative impact on women's educational resources.

3.2. Suggestions of Improving Educational Inequality

Educational inequality has always been a much discussed issue in China. Although in recent years, the Chinese government has made many improvements in popularizing basic education. However, at the level of primary education in some regions, serious educational inequality still exists. Based on the above three dimensions, China still needs more research and methods to thoroughly achieve the ultimate goal of China's education equality.

Due to the lack of education funds, some rural areas are unable to provide teachers with their due rights and interests, let alone ensure that every child has access to basic education. In this regard, the Chinese government should rationally allocate funds to education in remote areas, improve the

level of running schools, improve teaching equipment and improve human resources for economically underdeveloped areas, so as to promote the balance of education between rural and urban areas.

Fairness is relative. In the field of education in China, the Chinese government still needs to constantly strengthen and improve the regulatory system of education equity, strengthen the supervision and supervision of municipal governments and education departments, resolutely resist corruption, and adhere to the transparency of the path of education funds, so that the people can see the real destination of funds.

Although the current national policy of nine-year compulsory education stipulates that children should at least finish junior high school. However, children in some places begin to go out to work after finishing primary school. In this regard, the government should compulsorily ensure that students complete basic education and provide financial assistance to some needy families. At the same time, the government should also work with schools to do a good job of ideological work for students and parents, stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning, and do not let parents have the idea that it is useless to study, rather than make money and work.

4. Conclusions

Educational inequality has existed in Chinese society since ancient times. In this regard, this paper mainly describes the potential causes and improvement of education inequality based on the above three dimensions of education inequality through literature review. Through the literature review of this paper, this paper finds that the problem of educational inequality has always been a serious problem that needs to be solved in Chinese society. To some extent, scholars have reached a consensus that education inequality between urban and rural areas is the most serious problem. At the same time, this paper also summarizes and suggests the existing literature, and provides reference materials for more people who want to understand and analyze the problem of educational inequality. According to the analysis, although some people have noticed the inequality of education. But China still has a long way to go before it can really solve this problem. Theoretically, there are some knowledge differences in the fairness of completing Chinese education. This needs to be addressed in more research in the future. At the same time, many existing literatures lack a certain theoretical framework. Although many scholars are studying the problem of educational inequality, few people really find the root of the problem and take effective measures to solve it. Therefore, in the future development of education, researchers should do more research on the theoretical framework to find the most effective solution to the problem of educational inequality in China, while the Chinese government should make rational use of resources to help the Chinese region achieve the ultimate goal of educational equality as soon as possible. From a political perspective, the Chinese government should provide economic assistance and psychological construction for poor areas to ensure that all Chinese citizens can receive the same education.

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