

Research on Education Equity of County High School in China

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Abstract: This paper mainly focuses on the phenomenon of 'county collapse' in China in recent years and a series of educational inequality problems caused by it. The county high schools play an important role in elementary education, but recently it have shown a downward spiral. Educational equity is an important guarantee for social mobility and long-term stability of the country. Therefore, the author mainly analyzes the reasons for the 'county collapse' and the unfair phenomenon of county high schools from four aspects: the government's management investment in basic education resources, the quality of students generated by market regulation, the quality and loss of teaching teachers supported by county schools, and the educational support based on families. Finally, according to the four reasons, the paper puts forward the improvement measures from the aspects of legislative law enforcement, government administrative management and value advocacy, and fundamental education concept of parents' support.

Keywords: Education equity, County High School Education, Compulsory education, County general high school.

1. Introduction

Educational equity has always been the crucial theme and sander the international society and chinese society concerned about. As an important way to achieve social equity and ensure social mobility, educational equity is of great significance to balanced regional development, China's social transformation, and ensuring social stability.

County schools are the important position for realising the functions of elementary education in China and the last mile to achieve equity in education. More than 2000 counties hold over 50% students in China, and they are the underbelly of Chinese education and the basis on which general education is built.

High school education is the irreplaceable part of the elementary education, which carries two important educational functions. As the highest stage of the elementary education, the teachers in these schools must teach students adequate basic knowledge, the abilities and skills to use old knowledge and get new knowledge and provide enough quality education to help students achieve better adulthood.

However, in recent years, the county high school education has been faced with the problems of insufficient funds, backward teachers, loss of students, reduced public trust, insufficient

decentralization of teaching management, unclear division of executive powers and insufficient decentralization, which has seriously affected the realization of educational equity.

Therefrom, based on the above discussion, the author will mainly discuss the county education equality problem in China, analyze the cause of the problem and figure out how to solve it through reasonable law in order to achieve the education equality in the county high schools.

2. County high school education fairness problem: phenomena and reasons

2.1. The county high school education investment is obviously unfair.

Currently, compared with the city, the Chinese government has problems of the insufficient and unbalanced investment in high school education in counties, which is mainly due to the 'county-oriented' management system of high school education.

'County-oriented' management system mainly means that the central and provincial governments only have the responsibility of planning, setting standards and supervision for rural basic education; in addition to the responsibility of transfer payment to county-level governments in special poverty-stricken areas, prefecture-level governments basically only play the role of inspection and supervision. The county-level government takes the main functions of the elementary in the development jurisdictions[1]. Although this kind of management system can give more management power to the county-level government, so that it can be carried out with greater flexibility, more local conditions to run a school. However, giving more management power means the responsibility used to be taken by other liability subjects is reduced, which brings the reduction in government revenues. At the same time, although the high school education is the highest stage of the county elementary education, the county-level government is more willing to invest limited financial resources in public transport construction and other projects because of the longer payback period of the elementary education and the graduates who have strong human capital spillover cultivated by county high schools. Thus, a 'crowding out effect' is formed on the investment of high school education funds in the county[2].

2.2. The phenomenon of loss of students in the county high school education

Recently, The phenomenon of "county high school collapse" in China's county high school education refers to the unbalanced allocation of various resources in the field of county and urban ordinary high schools. The school-age population pursues high-quality educational resources to form inter-regional population migration, followed by the continuous decline of county ordinary high school[2]. The concentration of 'key middle schools' in the early stages of China's senior secondary education reflects the value of elitist education, which makes a large number of high-quality educational resources flow to urban areas. This promotes the development of the urban key high schools, especially the "Super High School", but at the same time, it lays a foreshadowing for the 'county high school collapse' caused by the unbalanced allocation of educational resources between the city and the county.

The large-scale operation of super-secondary schools, their well-funded operation and teacher reserves, and their monopoly on non-geographically restricted quality student sources have had a greater impact on schools in county high schools and secondary schools in the county that are smaller in scale, short of funds, with insufficient autonomy in school management, and insufficiently iterative in terms of teacher reserves and teacher competence. At the same time, the siphoning effect caused by the Super High School greatly affects the quality of the student population in county high schools. By setting up branch schools or cooperating in a mega-school model, the super high schools are once again 'harvesting' sub-optimal student sources through grouping, further monopolising student sources and expanding their influence and control over local education. The decline in the quality of the student population will further affect the progression rate and the enthusiasm of teachers and other

teaching staff to teach. Suffice it to say, Super High School deeply influences the roots of education--student source, destroying the teaching regenerative force and the internal development momentum.

2.3. The dilemma of county high school teachers

The county high schools mainly face two problems: firstly, in terms of physical conditions, county teachers face the imbalance between the lower income and excessive workload. County high school teachers are faced with the dual dilemma of low basic income, insufficient inclination of various subsidies and preferential policies to the county, and excessive non-teaching work. Before professional self-esteem and self-realization, the satisfaction of safety assurance and basic needs is a fundamental issue that can never be bypassed[3]. The research found that comparing with the fellow teacher in the city, the civil servant in the county and the teachers assigned to rural schools, the county teachers receive the more disadvantaged and unfair treatment[4]. And we can see the significant of the treatment influences to the quality of their teaching: 1) teacher welfare has a significant impact on the quality of high school education services in the Banyuasin district; 2) the work environment has a significant impact on the quality of high school education services in the Banyuasin district area, and 3) the welfare of teachers and the working environment have a significant impact on the quality of high school education services in the Banyunsin district[5]. Therefrom, the material income conditions will be hard to lay the foundation for the professional development of teachers.

Secondly, in terms of spiritual development, county high school teachers face the problems of the lack of professional value and professional identity caused by difficult results. The reasons why the sense of professional achievement can not be gained can be divided into two parts: firstly, is the influence of the loss of high-quality students caused by siphon effect on teaching output and the frustration of teachers' work enthusiasm in county high schools. Studies have shown that teachers who teach classes with poor quality of students are more likely to leave[3]. The loss of student source and the teacher departures caused by this or the unwillingness to develop their teaching ability are the cause and effect of each other. This process has been deepen during the process of county high school collapse and finally contributes to the loss of high-quality teachers and the situation that the remaining teachers can not meet the needs of county high school students. The second reason is unreasonable management system of county high school leads to the failure of teachers' cultural expectation of teaching, causing the teachers' frustration with teaching and professional development in education.

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2.4. The weak education supports from the parents of county high school students

The problem of educational inequality in the county is not only reflected in the county's education system, but also in the family system that is closely linked and interacted with the public education system. The difference of school choice capital and cultural capital brought by the difference of parents also profoundly affects the flow and development of students in the education system, which further leads to the unfair phenomenon of education in the county.

Based on the analysis of the School Choice Capital, parents can send their children to study in better schools with School choice capital such as family economic ability or social connections for parents who hold more school choice capital in this part, they can change the situation that their children are not dominant in performance and geographical division through private capital within the family. For example, through the replacement of social capital such as economic replacement or

network resources, children with medium or low performance can enter schools and educational resources carried by schools that are higher than their own ability to match in the distribution system. Or by sending children to relatively less competitive provinces or to study abroad. This in turn leads to unfair education among students. Parents of county high school students are significantly weaker than urban parents in school choice capital, which will lead to limited opportunities for county high school students to obtain quality education. To quote the Cultural Capital, cultural capital becomes not merely an arbitrary set of elitist aesthetic and social hallmarks, but rather an adaptive set of cognitive skills – such as verbal, reading, writing, mathematics, and analytical reasoning skills – and behavioral skills – such as achievement motivation, self-regulation, and delay of gratification – that are associated with academic and, subsequently, occupational success[9]. At the same time, Bourdieu contended that the formal education system is a primary mechanism in the perpetuation of socioeconomic inequality, as it serves to legitimate the existing social hierarchy by transforming it into an apparent hierarchy of gifts or merit[8]. Furthermore, the technical competencies by which academic merit is evaluated are rooted – together with social-behavioral competencies that enable individuals to both conform and distinguish themselves – in the familial transmission of cultural capital[6]. Familial transmission of cultural capital makes those children easier to adapt and win under the the rules of an education system that is deeply tied to cultural capital[9]. Generally speaking, parents of urban middle-class children place greater emphasis on their children's education and are able to help their children's learning through their own means. In contrast, the parents of secondary school students in the county are often long-term migrant workers, and the cultural capital of the family, which tends to be more working-class in nature, may not be able to provide sufficient educational and cultural support for their children. Most parents will reciprocate the attitude of 'not demanding', because they can't help their children at all in learning, so they take the attitude of 'wherever the child can read'[4]. Because they lack enough educational experience and time and energy to teach children, they think that all the responsibilities of putting children in school should be borne by teachers, and they do not realize what kind of role or responsibility the family should play in children's education. The most common thing parents say is 'we can't manage'. Therefore, the difference in cultural capital between county and city parents will also lead to the unfair education of county high school students.

3. The solutions to promoting the county high school education equity in China

3.1. The legal level

The law is a fundamental safeguard for the hard regulation of social relations and social affairs. From a legal perspective, due to the relativity, regionality, complexity and cultural nature of education, China's norms for the realization of educational equity are more confined to 'soft laws' such as general legal documents, central programmatic documents, local informal social norms, and basic legislation on compulsory education. A principle of legal behaviour around the world and throughout history: the law from below is stricter than the law from above[10]. As far as high school is concerned, because of its non-compulsory education, it is not the object of the national 'compulsory education law', so it faces the problem of lack of basic and mandatory legislation and other 'hard law' protection. The characteristics of "soft law" are non-mandatory, limited consensus and instability. At present, county high school education is mostly regulated by "soft law," which leads to insufficient enforcement intensity and rigidity of education equity guarantee at this stage.

Legislation and law enforcement are essential to the protection and promotion of equity in upper secondary education in counties. In China, we should further improve the details of legislation, so that students or parents whose rights and interests are infringed can have laws to follow and protect their rights according to law; at the same time, the intensity of law enforcement should be further

strengthened to match the strength of law enforcement with the hardness of law, so as to truly realize the normative role of law.

In addition, local legislation should be strengthened, and legal norms adapted to the local economy, politics and culture should be introduced according to the particularities of different regions, in order to regulate the issue of senior secondary education in counties more effectively and appropriately.

3.2. The government level

Under the "county-based" education pattern, the government has gained more initiative and decision-making power and should also bear more educational responsibilities accordingly. For the county government's education dilemma, a more reasonable special education funding system should be set. The main problem faced by the county government is that the provision of education funds is not enough, and it can only rely on the financial support of a higher level of administrative units.

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At the same time, the Government should also change the original utilitarian and administrative orientations in running education in the administrative process. Education is not an economy, and basic education should not be purely measured and verified by economic logic. When the decline of basic education erodes people's trust in the government, recognition of the national system and hope for the future, there is no doubt that this is the dilemma that should be taken seriously.

3.3. The family level

At the family level, parents should improve the original concept of education and school choice. Parents lack certain information channels and identification ability. They simply equate 'the best' with 'the city' and think that 'the provincial capital is better than the prefecture-level city, the prefecture-level city is certainly better than the county, and the county will be better than the countryside'. This vanity and narrow view of education and school choice have accelerated the loss of high-quality students in county high schools (P middle schools). In the development of their children's education and school choice, parents should more fully examine the extent to which the educational resources of the school match their children's educational goals, and be more concerned about and aware of their children's academic situation in order to better assist and guide their children's future education and teaching planning. They should form a stable educational plan with direction and goals, and use it as the basis for choosing a reasonable school, rather than just pursuing the best schools.

4. Conclusion

This paper focuses on the causes of the unfair phenomenon of county high school education, and makes an in-depth analysis from various perspectives. It is found that in the 'county-based' county basic education management system, the government has insufficient investment in county high schools, the siphon effect of 'super high schools' under market orientation has led to the loss of high-quality students, the lack of basic guarantee for teachers in the county has led to insufficient teachers and poor teachers, and the lack of school choice capital and cultural capital of parents in county middle schools has led to the lack of support for students' education. Based on the influencing factors of various aspects, this study makes a comprehensive analysis of the unfairness of county high school education, which is helpful to better understand the problem of county general high school education,

which plays a supporting role in China 's basic education, and to cure the problem of educational inequality from different angles. At the same time, this paper puts forward the countermeasures from the three levels of law, government and parents, and puts forward some feasible suggestions from the rigidity and strength of legislation and law enforcement, the top-level design and value orientation of government administration and the improvement of parents ' education concept for their children. It is hoped that it can provide a more comprehensive and responsible development approach for solving the educational inequality of county high schools.

This study focuses more on the causes of inequality and does not explore in depth how to better improve county high school education according to local conditions. It is hoped that in the future, we will be able to better enter the county high school field research, and explore a more local and targeted solution for the county middle school education.

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