

How Does Policy Affect the Implementation and Development of Education? Take the Policy of Allocation of Ladder Education Resources in China as an Example

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Abstract

The formation and development of a country's education system are often constrained and guided by the government and policies. Policies that conform to the law of education development and the needs of a wide range of social and economic levels will help the country's education develop steadily and receive positive educational feedback. If the implementation of the policy deviates from the major goal of educational development, and at the expense of the welfare of the majority of people, it will have a lot of negative effects on the education system, and even cause a historical regression of the education system. By analyzing the historical reasons, the current implementation and development of China's ladder educational resource allocation policy, and the impact of regional-specific policies, the author puts forward several facts, solutions, and improvement strategies from the perspective of educational leaders to change the difficulties faced by the policy.

Keywords: ladder educational resource allocation, educational development, policy impacts, solutions

1. Introduction

Here I would like to introduce to you an educational policy that has been implemented in China for decades, which is called the stepped education fund investment policy (MOE, 1978). First of all, let me briefly describe the specific content and background of the policy. China's stepped education fund investment policy is a national education policy jointly formulated by the Chinese government and the central Ministry of education and implemented by local governments. The purpose of this policy is to comply with the dilemma of weak economic power and lack of sufficient funds to achieve the development of comprehensive education investment in the early duration of China's reform and opening up, because the early stage of China's development, that is, in the 1960s and 1970s, after the founding of the people's Republic of China, China suffered a series of comprehensive and all-round historical setbacks represented by the "Cultural Revolution" (Zhao & Wang, 2020). At that stage, the Chinese government did not have enough funds, so the policymakers at that time decided to first develop coastal cities with relatively good economic and educational foundations and those local high-quality famous schools, and invest most of the funds in them. At the same time, the distribution of educational resources was mainly inclined to the above-mentioned areas. On the other hand, the government has decided to reduce or even cancel the investment in education in remote areas such as southwest and northwest China and areas with weak economic foundations, and slow down the progress of education development in these vulnerable areas through policies, to provide more opportunities and space for local economic development (Zhang, 2015). Since then, this stepped education fund investment policy has gradually formed a national development strategy with priority development as the main purpose. Its purpose is simply to give priority to the development of high-level areas at the expense of the educational development of a wider range of economically vulnerable areas.

The stepped education fund investment policy played an irreplaceable influence at that time and even in the next decades. Combined with the national conditions at that time, the Chinese government needs more sources of professional and high-quality talents to continuously promote the operation and development of the national machine, and the employment market also needs more and better labor resources to adapt to the development process of globalization (MOE, 2000). This factor is particularly important after China enters into WTO. Therefore, the situation created heroes, and the formulation and implementation of the policy met almost all the

needs of national development at that time. From the macro level, it has stabilized the development trend of the country, promoted the process of China's accession to globalization, and laid a good foundation for the subsequent rapid development. From the micro-level, the policy has indeed created many high-quality education areas and famous schools with a high international reputation and cultivated many professional talents. However, with the development of the country and the formulation and implementation of more local policies, the stepped education fund investment policy has brought more and more negative effects. The most obvious one is that educational equity has been greatly impacted (Xu, 2015). The education development of economically disadvantaged areas represented by remote areas can not get the due capital investment, and the development of regional sex education has been greatly limited. The data show that in 2003, the investment in education in coastal cities represented by Shanghai accounted for 71% of the total investment in education in China. On the contrary, the investment in education in Gansu and Tibet accounted for only 8% (MOE, 2003). Combined with Bouraudi's cultural capital theory, educational funds include school hardware facilities, teachers, and available teaching resources. From the comparison of the above data, we can draw a very obvious conclusion, that is, the educational objectives of undertaking national class classification, talent selection, and universal benefit have been affected by many variants, and educational equity no longer exists. To sum up, the policy can be regarded as a double-edged sword for the development of national education.

2. Analysis of the Policy in Depth

Since the stepped education investment policy has achieved great results both at the national level and regional level in the late last century and early this century, it has successfully developed China's education and realized the comprehensive strength and overall improvement of society and economy. Therefore, national and local governments choose to implement this policy continuously to obtain more value. However, the state rarely carries out necessary self-examination and reflection on the legitimacy and rationality of its power in the field of education, which leads to the continuous expansion and alienation of power, which violates the previous agreement that the state power should not interfere with social power wantonly (Law, 2008). With the expansion and penetration of state power, organizations and individuals in the field of education gradually lose the ability and possibility to distinguish the legitimacy of state power and resist state power. Both school leaders, teachers, and students hope to obtain more educational resources from the state. Therefore, in the process of pursuing fair distribution, the status and situation of individuals or groups are mainly not formed by the interaction of individuals or groups, but mainly depend on the deliberate decision-making of the government. The stronger, wider, and more frequent the government's ability to make decisions following distribution equity, regardless of its effect, and whether it has truly realized substantive equality. But one thing is inevitable, that is, the more the interests and conditions of individuals or groups depend on the decisions made by the government, the more they will insist on asking the government to realize some kind of distribution equity scheme they recognize (Gu et al., 2018). On the other hand, the more the government tries its best to realize a predetermined distribution mode, the more it will put the status and situation of individuals or groups under its control, and the more people believe in the effectiveness of stepped resource allocation.

When regional rational distribution becomes the dominant ideology and supports and strengthens each other with the government's action of pursuing reasonable investment, a discretionary system will be formed. In the plenipotentiary system, the power of education in society is declining (Dougherty and Macdonald, 2020). It is very difficult to obtain the power to judge the fairness of education from the state. Therefore, the paradigm of educational equity based on distribution constructs a new powerful form of the state for education, while educational organizations and individuals are unconsciously trapped in the cage of power and cannot resist power, nor can they construct an educational paradigm based on the original purpose of justice. The stepped distribution of education is only an instrumental value to ensure social order and enhance the development of education, which makes the distribution of education go astray, and the educational order has also evolved into a product of artificial design, deliberate arrangement, and organization of education to realize a specific distribution model (Wang, 2020). In this way, the equality of education in China has been seriously destroyed.

Still, the policy is also influenced by political, economic, and social factors. First, the benefit of equal educational opportunities for the least beneficiaries has been repeatedly violated by relevant policies (Baak et al., 2021). One significance of education is publicity. The government formulates distribution policies for the realization of overall interests. However, the benefits of the least beneficiaries, as an important part of public benefits, have been inevitably ignored. It shows that the distribution of educational resources in urban and rural areas is uneven, and the educational resources are inclined to the city. The distribution of educational resources between key schools and general schools is inclined to key schools. The distribution of opportunities is unequal, and there are educational privileges and educational corruption (Sullivan, 2021). For instance, the proportion of

all professional classes entering colleges and universities shows that the proportion of cadres students entering universities is dramatically higher than that of other classes, especially the students represented with the low incomes. In addition, the opportunity to enter a higher school in China mainly depends on the examination system with equal forms. However, this higher school system has been intensively damaged by educational privileges and corruption (Xu, 2015). It has become a common phenomenon to obtain additional opportunities for further education through privilege and money. For example, the distorted use of the escort system and the bonus system for excellent students have become indicators for those who possess power and wealth to compete for the mode of educational corruption.

Second, the concept of "giving priority to efficiency" in the economic area still has a place in the policy of educational resource allocation (Liu, 2013). The allocation of educational resources is facing the following basic contradictions in contemporary China. On top of that, the government needs to distribute educational resources fairly to guarantee equal and fair opportunities for policy stakeholders. On the other hand, they need to cultivate critical decisions to meet international competition and enhance competitive advantage. With a certain amount of educational resources, it is unpractical to achieve both goals. And its weight changes with the variation of the social environment. The distribution of contemporary educational resources in China integrates the current environment, and the fair distribution of educational resources has become a martyr in the field of distribution.

Third, the distribution of educational resources has introduced the market mechanism, but there is a lack of relative guidance standards (Kleinhenz, 2007). The implementation of a market mechanism in educational resource distribution is mainly to solve the issue of the shortage of educational resources provided by the state. However, the market mechanism is naturally competitive. Once the mechanism influences the field of educational resource allocation, the inclination of pursuing private benefits can not be restrained; Also, the public benefits attribute of education may still be adversely affected by the original socio-economic inequality of social members.

Therefore, the distribution policy of educational resources should enhance reasonable adjustments and control the inequality of educational resources, and the protection of the benefit of education for the least beneficiaries. Tracing back to the nature of the problem, the idea of national educational authority and society on the distribution of educational resources is the idea of efficiency first rather than the idea of fairness and justice (Meng, 2003).

3. The Policy in the Context

Now I will analyze the impact of the implementation of this policy in my region. Unfortunately, my education division is the vulnerable area identified by the policy. It is Sichuan Province in Southwest China, which means that the distribution of local education resources has been completely unfair. The consequence is that in cities and towns, "school choice" income has become the main means of income generation for schools, inter-school polarization is becoming more and more serious, and the living space of weak schools is greatly squeezed. In compulsory education, the gap in the inter-school running level directly leads to the gap in students' education quality. The imbalance between schools and the differences in origin region, and family conditions eventually lead to the unfairness of students' academic achievement and development opportunities.

3.1 Impact of Key and Non-key School

For a long time, because of the limitation of regional economic development level, the serious shortage of educational resources, the unbalanced development of schools in large and medium-sized cities and economically developed areas, and the school running gap with obvious historical traces, the starting point of school development is different (Ball, 1993). In the early duration of reform and opening up, to reverse the shortage of specialized talents caused by the "Cultural Revolution" as soon as possible, more and fast talents became a strong appeal to the society. Therefore, under the condition of limited investment in education, many "key schools" have been formed and played a positive role in a specific period. However, to some extent, the policy of "key schools" only caters to the needs of traditional culture and real society for "elite education" (Meg, 2010). At the same time, under the circumstances of changes in the allocation of human resources market mechanism and increasingly fierce employment competition, the competitive pressure of higher education begins to be transmitted to basic education, so that the role of competitive and selective examinations in the stage of compulsory education is increasing, although this is inconsistent with the legal purpose. However, it can be recognized by society and parents and reflected in the government departments and school system, which is reflected in the imbalance of internal resource allocation in the field of compulsory education and the widening gap between schools. In terms of education funds, due to the sufficient funds of key schools, they can improve the school running situations and enrich the teaching equipment according to higher standards. In terms of

teachers, they can choose excellent graduates from normal colleges to teach in key schools and increase the proportion of senior teachers. In terms of enrollment, key schools are allowed to choose the best to admit new students. In terms of curriculum, key urban primary schools offer foreign language courses from grade 3, key schools can implement professional tendency classification as well (Zhang, 2010). Corresponding to the superior conditions of key schools, there are still many weak schools in most cities. Although the state has expressly abolished the policy of key schools and non-key schools, the impact of this policy still exists.

3.2 The Phenomenon of "Choosing School" Will Exist for a Long Time

In recent years, according to the basic principles of the implementation of compulsory education, the state requires that the policy of entering schools nearby has been implemented (MOE, 2005). Its purpose is to break the identity boundary between schools and students, reduce students' excessive learning burden and better implement quality education. However, in areas with wide disparities in school quality, it is difficult to implement nearby enrollment, which is difficult to satisfy the society, so many areas implement random distribution (Liu, 2002). However, due to the gap between schools and the differences in the implementation of policies in various regions, even after the implementation of policies such as nearby enrollment or random distribution, the phenomenon of "choosing school students" and the accompanying problems in the stage of compulsory education is still very obvious. Also, these problems are particularly prominent in cities, municipalities directly under the central government, and provincial capitals, including the imbalance between supply and demand in the quality of education (Sammons, 2018) "choosing a school with money" is becoming more and more common, and so on, The appearance of corruption such as "choosing schools by power" in disguise has increased the unfairness of students' enrollment opportunities.

3.3 The Problem of "Weak Schools" Is Serious

A survey of schools in Xichang (a city in Southwest Sichuan Province) in 2015 found that schools in this area were divided into ordinary schools and weak schools. The survey also shows that in rural areas, 72.2% of primary schools, and 62.5% of junior middle schools were regarded as weak schools; In the city, 24.1% of primary schools, 18.2% of junior middle schools, and 27% of high schools are weak schools (MOE, 2016). So far, there is a gap between schools in terms of material resources, human resources, and students (Braun et al., 2011). The gap between weak schools is mainly manifested in the unqualified school buildings and equipment. The quality and level of teachers are relatively poor, and the source of school students and social status are limited. Moreover, the quality of education and teaching is relatively low, and the overall management level of the school is frail. The difference in school running conditions between schools reflects the inequality in students' education quality level. In recent years, local governments have done a lot of work in transforming weak schools and narrowing the inter-school gap. However, due to overemphasizing the level of school hardware facilities, paying attention to the transformation of school external conditions and environment, and paying insufficient attention to the construction of school software, the results are not obvious. Therefore, in many aspects, the task of transforming weak schools is still very arduous.

4. Leadership Practices to Enact the Policy

According to the above analysis of the stepped education investment policy, it can be seen that when school leaders implement this policy, they will face challenges and difficulties from many parties. The only simple way to implement it is, as a principal in the survey said, to choose to quit regardless of anything. If leaders want to implement the policy smoothly, they need to analyze the difficulties and challenges faced by leaders, and then carry out the practice in line with policy adaptation, school development, and even educational equity from many aspects (Xu & Law, 2015).

The first challenge is how to give full play to autonomy to seek more social funds conducive to school development. Because the educational investment from the government can not meet the needs of educational development and is fixed, it means that if only relying on the support of the government, a school in vulnerable areas can hardly achieve the educational goal. The first is that the school does not have enough funds to provide relatively safe and well-equipped school buildings for students and teachers, and the daily work and study of teachers and students can not be effectively guaranteed. Second, it is unable to obtain sufficient sources of high-quality teachers like those enjoyed by key schools. Because there is not enough salary, welfare, and broad space for teachers' professional promotion, it is difficult for the school to attract excellent teachers. Even serving teachers will choose to leave the school because of the above factors. Third, it is unable to buy more learning resources and necessary teaching materials conducive to teachers and students' teaching, resulting in the gradual decline of teaching quality and students' level, and the reputation of the school and students' examination performance will be greatly reduced.

Therefore, as Eacott (2015) mentioned, school leaders should be more autonomous to raise more student investment and donations through social cooperation (Holloway and Keddie, 2019). There are two ways to implement this decision. First, obtain special investment by signing talent training contracts with enterprises. Just like the agreement training students rising in Southwest China, school leaders and enterprise leaders have reached an agreement, and enterprises provide school education funds to enable schools to cultivate talents, develop education and enhance the strength of schools. On the other hand, the school sends qualified graduates to the invested enterprises to help the enterprises get further development. This can also ensure a reasonable and favorable regional talent flow to achieve a win-win situation (Xu & Law, 2015). Second, strengthen inter-school cooperation and realize resource sharing. Leaders should communicate and share teaching resources with other schools in the region to give full play to the maximum value of limited funds (Gu et al., 2018). This includes the educational resources, teachers, equipment, and school activity venues obtained. In this way, leaders can concentrate the resources of each school, maximize the benefits and promote the development of their education. In addition, the way to measure the value of leadership autonomy is also obvious, which is different from the progress in the ideological field and spiritual level. If the school obtains more funds and resources to develop education, this is the most powerful proof of the success of the decision-making.

The second challenge is how to alleviate the negative emotions of teachers and students caused by the unfairness caused by the policy. As mentioned above, the implementation of the stepped education investment policy has led to education inequity across the country, widened the gap between education levels and development opportunities in different classes and regions, and formed a class gap (Gu et al., 2018). The concrete embodiment of these effects on students is that students begin to think that learning is no longer an effective way to obtain a better life and future development and that they are the victims of the state and policies, which leads to the negative emotion of weariness and self-exile (Zhao & Wang, 2020). Under the guidance of this emotion, school education is more powerless. The impact on teachers is the loss of identity and self-worth and professional self-confidence (Sellar, 2015). The purpose of teachers participating in educational work in school is to support their families and realize their self-worth. Therefore, under the influence of this policy, many teachers gradually become slack because they can't get the due salary and treatment, and no longer regard the educational purpose of educating people as the primary purpose of their work. According to the data of the 2010 Sichuan Teachers' happiness survey, 67% of teachers believe that their work lacks the meaning it should have because of the unfair distribution, 82% of teachers feel that their work pressure is great, the energy invested is not proportional to the reward, and the life happiness index is very low (SCMOE, 2010). The emergence of various factors has forced many teachers to change careers or migrate talents, which has exacerbated the decline of local teaching quality (Ball, 2003).

Therefore, school leaders have to spread correct values to students and reaffirm the importance of learning and knowledge to change their destiny. At the same time, to ensure students' learning attitude, school leaders need to implement more classroom supervision and homework review to help students get back on track (Ingvarson et al., 2007). On the other hand, school leaders need to decide whether to reduce the number of teachers or improve the welfare of teachers as much as possible. If the school really can not provide due benefits for teachers, it should reduce the number of teachers and let teachers who have no hope of education find a stage to realize their value (Karickhoff & Howley, 1997). If students' learning attitude is improved and teachers' identity and self-worth are improved under this decision-making, the feedback of teachers and students' research can become good evidence.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, through the analysis and critical thinking of the form factors, formulation background and reasons, implementation objectives and methods of the policy, as well as the impact in the implementation process and the variants of the policy itself. It is not difficult to see that the policy has indeed played a promoting role in the process of implementation, but it has also caused negative effects such as educational unfairness in the general atmosphere. On the other hand, because the policy has a long history, school leaders still need a lot of research and practice for the implementation of the policy.

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