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Rural Quality Education and the Balance between Urban and Rural Compulsory Education

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Abstract On the basis of analyzing the gap between urban and rural quality education and the existing limiting factors to that in rural areas, a suggestion was proposed to promote the balanced development of rural quality education.

Key words Compulsory education, Quality education, Balanced development

The ultimate goal of compulsory education is to realize its balance in urban and rural areas, whose emphasis and difficulty all lie in improving rural compulsory education. At present, there is still a large gap between urban and rural quality education, and the quality education in rural areas is restricted by several factors. Therefore, to realize the balanced development of urban and rural education is an important way to upgrade rural quality education. The balanced development of compulsory education is essentially the balance of education quality in urban and rural areas, while the basic approach to upgrade the educational quality is to implement quality education. In a nutshell, the key to realize the balance of urban and rural education lies in the balance of quality education.

1 Gap between urban and rural quality education

1.1 Uneven distribution of teacher resources in urban and rural areas The education can not be improved without a group of high-quality teachers. There is a great gap of the teachers resources between urban and rural areas, which has seriously restricted the development of rural quality education. The teacher resources in rural areas face the following problems: firstly, the educational degree of teachers is generally low. Take Henan Province for example, of over 800 000 teachers in primary and middle schools, the teachers with junior college education degree or above account for 55.16% in rural primary schools, 32% lower than that in urban areas; and the middle school teachers with bachelor degree or above take up 25.85% in rural areas, 38% lower than that in urban areas^[1]. In addition, 33.50% of teachers in rural primary and middle schools are aged above 50, and most of them used to work in private schools. It is often the case that the teachers are the oldest in rural primary schools but the youngest in high schools, which greatly restricts the development of local primary and middle school education. Secondly, the teachers of some courses, such as English, sports, music, art and computer, are

extremely insufficient. For example, in the remote rural areas in Henan Province, every two schools has only one English, sports, or music teacher on average. These courses are either taught by other teachers or abandoned due to a lack of teachers, which has also restricted the quality education development. Thirdly, the teachers in rural areas have few chances to get trained. The issue of education expenses in rural schools hasn't been fundamentally solved, especially in middle and west poor areas, which greatly increases the burden of rural teachers. With the implementation of the teacher training program financed by the state and provincial government, some outstanding teachers have been sent out for training, and all their expenses were covered by the government. The shortage of time training is not good for improving the teachers' quality in rural areas^[2].

1.2 A large gap between the hardware teaching facilities in urban and rural areas The quality education cannot be carried out without the support of teaching facilities. In cities, most primary and middle schools are equipped with modern teaching facilities, such as computers, projector, electronic whiteboard, *etc.*, and rich teaching materials. Moreover, the students in cities have more chances to participate in various social activities and contests, which, in fact, are the most effective means of quality education. While on the contrary, in some rural schools, there is no advanced experimental devices, no libraries or even no modern teaching facilities. The students in rural areas have even little access to social activities, and there is no doubt that their quality education is seriously restricted.

1.3 Different educational concepts Highly educated and having more chances to receive various types of training, the education administrators in cities, who are usually open-minded and broad-visioned, play a decisive role in the implementation of quality education. The quality education in cities also often receives positive feedbacks from the parents. While the situation is quite the opposite in rural areas, where the administrators still follow the traditional path of exam-oriented education, and where the parents believe that to receive education is the only way to get rid of poverty and regard the marks as the only criterion of teaching quality.

2 Restrictive factors to the quality education in rural areas

2.1 Poor schooling conditions Affected by the dual urban-rural structure for a long time, the financial input in rural education is much less than that in urban areas, plus the backward economic status in rural areas, rural schooling conditions still maintain at a low level and cannot get effectively improved. In the past, the expenses for education are supported by the township-level government, in fact, by the farmers themselves, as a result, rural compulsory education can only be sustained depending on the tuition and fees claimed from the students. Although the new funding system has made up for a lack of education expenses to a certain extent, it doesn't get at the underlying root. The money for rural primary and middle school education is primarily funded by the county-level government and education departments. The already limited amount of money and resources become even less in the charge of rural schools after a redistribution. Without enough money, the schooling conditions in rural areas cannot get effectively improved. So far as the practical situation is concerned, most of the money can only be enough for daily teaching activities. A large proportion of schools in rural areas have no libraries, reading rooms, labs, *etc.* [3].

2.2 Misunderstanding of quality education The quality education needs the co-efforts of parents, schools and society. On the one hand, the parents have two distinctive attitudes towards the education of their children, some parents put quality education in opposition to exam-oriented education. They regard the marks and scores as the only criterion of education, and ask their children to focus all their energy on books. The other type of parents are short-sighted, and prefer their children to work than to study. On the other hand, some teachers partially equals quality education to the extracurricular activities, neglect the complete education system and still regard the enrollment rate as the only criterion of teaching quality. The students' homework keeps increasing instead of reducing, which brings great physical and mental pressure to the students [4]. All above problems are all caused by the misunderstanding of quality education. Since the teachers' promotion is largely dependent on their students' academic achievement, which, to a larger extent, worsens the above-mentioned situation.

2.3 Restricted by the evaluation of exam-oriented education The effectiveness of quality education is restricted by the evaluation of exam-oriented education. Not only the evaluation of school performance by senior department but also the appraisal of teachers by school leaders are deeply influenced by the traditional exam-oriented educational system, and a new appraisal system and standards haven't yet been established. Bearing the great pressure from the senior department and searching for their own benefits, the teachers have nothing to do but to devote all their hearts and soul to improving the academic performance of the whole class, which, as a result, brings great physical and mental pressure to both the teachers and students, and greatly hinders the development of quality education.

2.4 left-behind children With a growing number of rural la-

bors working out, the issue of left-behind children has caused great concern among the public. The left-behind children, due to a lack of family care, always feel lonely, stressed, and even prone to mistakes. Both their study and mental cultivation have been greatly affected, which has increased the difficulty in carrying out quality education in rural areas.

3 Suggestions on promoting rural quality education with the theory of urban-rural equilibrium

3.1 To guarantee the education fund To carry out a new education fund system can guarantee the normal operation of schools. However, the new system also exhibits some deficiencies and needs to be improved. Thus, according to the Law of Compulsory Education, the responsibilities of government at each level could be clarified, and the investment on rural compulsory education could be improved.

Firstly, to clarify and integrate the items of expenses. The original items are classified into four categories according to their uses, including the teachers' salaries, office expense, schooling expense and special fund. To integrate these items will facilitate the government at each level to manage and regulate the fund for quality education.

Secondly, to divide the fund to each county in proportion with their financial conditions. Given that the education is funded by both the central and local government, only by clarifying their respective responsibilities can it effectively prevent the government at each level from escaping their obligations. Since the financial capacity of each county differs greatly, their financial conditions should be firstly evaluated so as to define what proportion they should share [5].

3.2 To build and improve the distribution mechanism of urban and rural quality education resources

3.2.1 To realize the balance of urban and rural teachers' resources, Local government should check the number of teachers needed, and replenish in time.

To improve the welfare of rural teachers, it is suggested that the teachers in remote areas should be subsidized and given preferable policies.

To improve the overall quality of teachers, firstly, it is advised that various forms of training should be organized to realize the sharing of excellent educational resources on via the modern distant learning technique; secondly, to encourage the primary and middle school teachers to receive paid further education. Those who have finished the graduate courses would be given priority when they apply for a promotion.

3.2.2 To achieve the balance of schooling conditions in urban and rural areas. To start with, the hardware facilities should get upgraded; secondly, the fund for rural education should get further improved for accelerating the standard construction process of rural schools and gradually narrowing the gap between urban and rural schools.

To speed up the reform of basic curriculum and carry out the quality education, the schools should exploit the potential out of every students, as well as innovate the teaching model that combines the teaching aims with the practical performance,

students' learning with the teachers' education, knowledge transmission with self-exploration. The model aims to stimulate the students' study enthusiasm, exploit their potential, highlight the teachers' leading role, activate the class and improve the learning efficiency.

3.3 To set up a resources sharing mechanism of urban and rural compulsive education By promoting the school-district and one-school systems, a community could be established to realize the sharing of educational resources between urban and rural areas. Firstly, the teachers are uniformly managed and distributed so as to flow regularly within the community, which can not only make sure the fair and even distribution of teachers resources, but also improve the teachers' salaries and lay a solid foundation for quality education. Secondly, a unified management system should be constructed, which means to promote the advanced schooling concept, management model and appraisal system within the community. Therefore, a unified management system, uniform teaching progress and unified quality appraisal system could be established. Thirdly, a sharing mechanism of teaching facilities and resources, including teaching places, facilities, softwares, and libraries, should be constructed so as to compensate for the shortage of teaching resources in rural areas^[6].

The modern distant education engineering should be actively promoted in the middle and primary schools of rural areas so as to achieve the sharing of urban and rural education resources. Given that the urban and rural education resources are unevenly distributed, it is suggested that the resources be enriched and the teachers' quality be improved with the aid of information and internet technique. By means of the information sharing platform, the children in remote areas could have a chance to receive quality education, which will be an effective way to upgrade the rural quality education.

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labor, pushing forward agricultural modernization, rural industrialization and urbanization^[16]. In addition, it is also favorable for cultivation of entrepreneurial, innovative, learning and imitating farmers. These depend on excellent entrepreneurial policies and atmosphere. It needs building agricultural entrepreneurial training mechanism, capital fund security mechanism, and entrepreneurial supporting mechanism.

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3.4 To construct a perfect care system and dynamic monitoring mechanism for left-behind children Various measures should be adopted to improve the care system and dynamic monitoring mechanism for left-behind children. Firstly, to improve the infrastructure in rural schools, so as to provide the necessary accommodation conditions for the children. Secondly, to enhance the communication between the left-behind children and their parents, so as to feedback their physical and psychological needs and enable the children to communicate with their parents by various means. Thirdly, given the large quantity and proportion of left-behind children, the schools should put forward related education. By setting up special lectures and model examples, the children could be better fit into the community, so as to develop their personality and eliminate their loneliness and sense of inferiority.

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