

Strategies for Improving Educational Opportunities for Children from Disadvantaged Families from the Perspective of Educational Equity

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Abstract: Educational equity, as an extension and concrete embodiment of the concept of social equity in the field of education, is not only the core value and fundamental goal of educational modernization, but also closely related to the long-term development of education. As a special group in society, whether children from disadvantaged families have equal educational opportunities and enjoy equal educational resources is an important reflection of the implementation of educational equity. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the strategies for improving the educational opportunities of children from disadvantaged families from the perspective of educational equity. First, the author explains the connotation of educational equity and educational opportunities; then, after defining the concept of disadvantaged families, the author explores the factors affecting the educational opportunities of their children and analyzes the current situation; finally, the author discusses the corresponding enhancement strategies in order to improve the educational situation of the children of disadvantaged families and promote educational equity.

Keywords: Educational Equity, Disadvantaged Families, Educational Opportunities

1. Introduction

Currently, with the rapid development of China's social and economic development, although the overall quality of national quality and education quality has been improved, but the widening gap between regions, urban and rural areas, so that the problem of educational equity is becoming more and more prominent, especially the problem of educational opportunities for children from disadvantaged families has become a hotspot for research in the field of educational equity. Looking back at the long history, from the democratic concept of education of "education for all without discrimination" put forward by Confucius more than 2,000 years ago to the equal opportunities in education advocated by us today, the unremitting pursuit of the goal of equity in education has been manifested by human beings. As a special group in society, disadvantaged families, of which poor farmers, laid-off and unemployed people and migrant workers in cities are the three main components, are in a disadvantageous position in terms of access to education and quality education resources because of their poorer economic conditions and lower social status. Therefore, improving the educational opportunities of children from disadvantaged families is an important manifestation of the implementation of educational equity, as well as an important way to implement the concept of people-centered governance, build a harmonious society and maintain social justice.

2. Connotation of Educational Equity and Educational Opportunity

2.1 Connotation of Educational Equity

As one of the characteristics of the democratization of education, educational equity is the extension and embodiment of social equity in the field of education. Tracing the history of the evolution of educational equity, it can be found that, as a unique educational attribute, educational equity is not naturally formed, but gradually developed with the change of time and educational progress. Educational equity has different characterizations in different countries and at different times, and different scholars have different interpretations of the concept of educational equity. At present, academics take the report "Equality of Educational Opportunity" submitted by Coleman to the Congress in 1966 as the starting point for the study of educational equity.^[1] The report states that home schooling is significant in the development of learning behaviors and academic achievement of young

people. Under the influence of this report, scholars have focused their research on educational equity on the relationship between family background and children's educational outcomes. For example, Chunling Li argues in her study the importance of family background on children's educational outcomes, and supports the view of social stratification, i.e., children born in favorable family backgrounds enjoy more quality educational resources than children from disadvantaged families. [2] Domestic scholars' definitions of educational equity mainly fall into the following categories. Initially, educational equity mainly includes two aspects of educational rights and equal educational opportunities. [3] Later, relevant scholars defined educational equity as the free and equal choice and enjoyment of equal public educational resources for all members of the society, covering various aspects such as fairness in the starting point of education, fairness in the process of education, and fairness in the result of education. [4] At present, the educational equity advocated by our country involves two aspects, namely, fair education and fairness in education. The former is based on social problems to examine the fairness of education, emphasizing the static form of educational fairness, i.e., realizing fairness; the latter is based on educational problems to cognize the fairness of education, emphasizing the dynamic development of educational fairness, i.e., focusing on fairness. [5] In a word, educational equity lies in ensuring that all members of the society can freely and equally access and utilize equal public educational resources, with equity in the starting point of education, equity in the process of education, and equity in the results of education as the main signs.

2.2 Connotation of Educational Opportunity

Educational opportunity, also known as access to education, as the starting point of educational equity, whether or not it is equal is an important measure of the implementation of educational equity, the essence of educational equity from the focus on the results of the process of an important change. Prof. Wu Kangning pointed out that educational opportunities include three levels: equity in schooling opportunities, equality of opportunity to attend quality schools, and equity in participation in the educational process. The first two are based on the issue of students' choice of schools, exploring the equality of opportunity to choose schools; the latter is based on the issue of participation in the school process, exploring the equality of participation in the educational process. [6]

Whether or not educational opportunities are balanced is a measure of whether or not educational equity has been realized, and the two are mutually reinforcing and jointly promote the development of education. On the one hand, educational opportunity is the foundation for realizing educational equity. Only by ensuring that everyone has equal educational opportunities can the goal of educational equity be realized. Equitable distribution of educational opportunities means the elimination of barriers to education due to factors such as race, gender, wealth, geographical location, etc., so that everyone can receive the same education according to his or her ability. On the other hand, educational equity promotes equalization of educational opportunities. Educational equity requires the government and society to work together to ensure a balanced allocation of educational resources, reduce disparities between urban and rural areas, regions, and schools, and provide more equal educational opportunities for everyone. In general, equalization of educational opportunities contributes to the realization of educational equity, and the realization of educational equity further promotes equalization of educational opportunities.

3. Factors Affecting the Educational Opportunities of Disadvantaged Families and Their Children

3.1 Connotation of Disadvantaged Families

Disadvantaged families refer to those family groups that are in a disadvantaged position in society, and some existing literature regards disadvantaged families as a kind of vulnerable group, and domestic and foreign research on this concept is relatively rich. Foreign research on "vulnerable groups" can be traced back to the 1840s, when the rapid development of capitalism, the degree of exploitation of workers and the social class gap further widened, thus giving rise to the concept of "vulnerable groups". [7] Relevant scholars Werner divided social groups into six classes: upper upper class, upper middle class, upper lower class, lower upper class, lower middle class and lower lower class, in which the first three classes are in the absolute dominant group in society, the lower upper class, lower middle class and lower class are the groups with less capital possession in the society, and the lower lower class, because most of them don't have employment skills and have a low level of literacy. The lower and lower classes are defined as disadvantaged groups in society because they are mostly unskilled and less educated. [8] Domestic research on "disadvantaged groups" can be roughly traced back to the end of the

last century, when China was carrying out reforms from the planned economy system to the socialist market economy system, and the mode of economic development was transformed, and the economic incomes and social statuses of different regions and groups were clearly differentiated, and the development of social strata was changed, and disadvantaged groups appeared, mainly in rural areas and western regions. These disadvantaged groups mainly include the poor in rural and western areas, women, ethnic minorities, the disabled, and laid-off and unemployed people and their children.^[9]

3.2 Factors Affecting the Educational Opportunities of Children from Disadvantaged Families

In the author's opinion, the factors affecting the educational opportunities of children from disadvantaged families can be analyzed in two dimensions: objective factors and subjective factors.

3.2.1 Objective Factors

The objective factors affecting the educational opportunities of children from disadvantaged families can be analyzed from several aspects, such as policy factors, distribution of educational resources, family background, and cultural capital.

First, the implementation of educational equity policies directly affects the educational opportunities of children from disadvantaged families. In recent years, the Chinese government has implemented a number of educational equity policies, such as the “two exemptions and one subsidy” policy, which have, to a certain extent, alleviated the economic burden of disadvantaged families and provided their children with more educational possibilities. However, various problems that have arisen in the course of policy implementation, such as delays in the arrival of funds and insufficient publicity for the policies, have resulted in the failure to give full effect to the policies, thus affecting the educational opportunities of children from disadvantaged families.

Second, the uneven distribution of educational resources affects access to quality educational resources for children from disadvantaged families. In China, there are significant disparities in educational resources between urban and rural areas, regions and different schools, with high-quality educational resources concentrated in urban and economically developed areas, while rural and impoverished areas face the challenge of a lack of educational resources. It is this uneven distribution of educational resources that makes it difficult for children from disadvantaged families to access quality educational resources, thereby limiting their educational opportunities.

Third, family economic conditions limit the proportion of parental investment in their children's education. Economic difficulties are the main source of restricted educational opportunities for children from disadvantaged families. Since disadvantaged families are mostly in a situation of low living and economic standards, this leads to their inability to have enough educational capital to pay for their children's educational expenses, and their children's educational opportunities are difficult to secure.

Fourthly, cultural capital is also an important factor affecting the educational opportunities of children from disadvantaged families. Parents with a higher level of education are often able to provide their children with more cultural resources and support, such as rich extracurricular reading materials and opportunities to participate in various cultural activities. In contrast, parents of disadvantaged families, due to the limitations of their own educational level, have difficulties in providing their children with sufficient cultural capital support, thus affecting their children's educational opportunities.

3.2.2 Subjective Factors

The subjective factors affecting the educational opportunities of children from disadvantaged families are mainly analyzed from the dimension of individual psychology. Compared with children from other families, children from disadvantaged families are more sensitive and vulnerable, and tend to bear greater psychological pressure in the process of growing up. They may feel negative emotions such as low self-esteem and anxiety because of their family's economic conditions and social status. These psychological factors not only affect their academic performance, but may also prevent them from actively pursuing educational opportunities.

4 Analysis of the Current Situation of Educational Opportunities for Children from Disadvantaged Families

The analysis of the current situation of educational opportunities for children from disadvantaged families can be interpreted from three aspects: the inequality of the starting point of education, the

inequality of participation in the educational process, and the uncertainty of educational results.

4.1 Inequality in the Starting Point of Education

The inequality of the starting point of education is mainly reflected in the inequality of access to educational resources and the inequality of enrollment opportunities. On the one hand, because of their lower economic incomes, disadvantaged families are located in economically backward places, which results in their access to educational resources often being inferior to that of economically more developed places, and their children can hardly receive high-quality educational resources. On the other hand, due to the restrictions imposed by the household registration system and the distribution of educational resources, many children from disadvantaged families find it difficult to enroll in local public schools, and they can only choose to enroll in schools with a relatively average quality of education, which inadvertently affects the quality of their children's education.

4.2 Inequity in Participation in the Educational Process

The educational process is an important part of educational activities, and whether or not it realizes the goal of two-way interaction will affect the quality of education in a class. The fairness of participation in the educational process is more concerned with the differences and specificity of the individual growth of students than the fairness of the starting point of education. ^[10] That is, on the basis of recognizing the subjective initiative of human beings, more attention is paid to the differences and uniqueness of individuals, and corresponding humanistic care and emotional support is given. In the process of school education, children from disadvantaged families may experience inequitable participation in the educational process in terms of, for example, seating arrangements, teacher attention, and curriculum choice, which may affect their academic performance and individual development.

4.3 Uncertainty of Educational Outcomes

Any form of outcome equity is a kind of equity premised on individual differences. The same is true of educational outcome fairness, which, as a kind of educational value orientation, emphasizes the pursuit of fairness in the individual development of the educated on the basis of full consideration of the individual differences of the educated. ^[11] Education as a dynamic process of change, education results are the starting point of education and the process of education jointly influence the decision, the starting point of education or the process of education involved in any part of the unfair situation, will affect the final presentation of the fairness of the results of education. The educational outcomes of children from disadvantaged families are affected by a combination of factors, such as family economic conditions and social relations, and are therefore uncertain.

5. Strategies for Improving Educational Opportunities for Children from Disadvantaged Families from the Perspective of Educational Equity

5.1 Government Level: Increase Policy Support and Investment

The government should formulate more perfect education policies and increase the support for children from disadvantaged families. First, improve the education policy system. The government should formulate fairer and more reasonable education policies to ensure that children from disadvantaged families enjoy equal rights in school enrollment, further education and employment. It should face up to the differences in education between regions, urban and rural areas, and schools, avoid the tendency to “urbanize” and “elitize” educational resources, and ensure that students in rural areas and economically backward areas have a fair starting point for their education. For example, a more precise policy of financial assistance should be implemented for students in impoverished areas to ensure their access to education. Second, increase investment in education. The government should increase financial support for the construction of educational infrastructure in rural and remote areas in order to improve the educational environment of schools; at the same time, it should set up a special fund aimed at providing financial assistance for the education of children from disadvantaged families; in addition, it should stimulate the strength of all sectors of the community to devote themselves to the cause of public welfare in education, so as to form a diversified investment mechanism for education. Thirdly, the construction of information technology in education should be promoted. Modern

information technology should be utilized to narrow the education gap between urban and rural areas and between regions, and more quality learning opportunities and resources should be made available to children from disadvantaged families through the construction of distance education platforms and the promotion of online education resources.

5.2 School Level: Optimizing the Allocation of Educational Resources and the Teaching Environment

Schools should uphold the concept of fair education and strive to optimize the allocation of educational resources and improve the teaching environment. First, implement a balanced allocation of educational resources. Schools should adhere to the principle of fairness, rationally allocate educational resources, and ensure that each class and each student can enjoy relatively equal educational resources, especially for classes and schools with a concentration of children from disadvantaged families, they should be given equal allocation of educational resources. Second, students should be given appropriate humanistic care. According to the individual differences of the children of disadvantaged families targeted selection of personalized education, to help students choose the appropriate path to success, in addition, teachers should respect the students' right to choose their own education, in the teaching process to show humanistic care. Third, strengthen the construction of teachers. Improving the overall quality and teaching level of the teaching force is the key to enhancing the educational opportunities for children from disadvantaged families. Schools should strengthen the training and assessment of teachers to ensure that every teacher has solid professional knowledge and good teaching ability.

5.3 Family Level: Improving Parents' Educational Quality and Participation in Education

Parents should endeavor to improve their own quality and level of educational concepts, and actively participate in the education process of their children. First, raise parents' awareness of education. Use publicity and education to increase parents' concern and participation in their children's education; at the same time, guide parents to form a correct educational philosophy, i.e., to focus on their children's all-round development rather than academic performance; in addition, encourage parents to actively participate in the educational activities of the school, and to strengthen communication and cooperation with the school, so as to jointly promote their children's development. Second, strengthening family education guidance. In response to the low educational level of parents of disadvantaged families and their lack of experience in family education, the Government and social organizations can provide family education guidance services. By organizing family education lectures and providing family education consulting services, they can help parents master correct family education methods and skills, thereby improving the pertinence and effectiveness of family education. Third, create a good family atmosphere. A good family atmosphere is one of the most important conditions for the healthy growth of children. Parents should strive to create a warm.

5.4 Social level: Creating a Fair and Harmonious Educational Atmosphere

All sectors of society should work together to create a fair and harmonious educational atmosphere, and jointly safeguard educational equity and social justice. First, strengthen social propaganda and guidance. Through media publicity and public welfare activities, we will strengthen the promotion of the concept of educational equity, guide all sectors of society to pay attention to the education of vulnerable groups of children, and create a good atmosphere for educational equity in the whole society. The second is to encourage the participation of social forces. Encourage and support enterprises, social organizations and other social forces to participate in public welfare education, to provide more educational support and help for vulnerable groups of children. For example, we can set up education funds, carry out school activities and other ways to provide financial assistance and academic counseling services for children from disadvantaged families. Third, establish a monitoring mechanism and evaluation system. Establishing a sound monitoring mechanism and evaluation system for educational equity will monitor and evaluate the performance of the government, schools, families and other parties in the work of educational equity to ensure that all policies and measures are effectively implemented and achieve real results.

6. Conclusion

Whether children from disadvantaged families, as a special group in society, have equal access to

education and enjoy equal educational resources is an important reflection of whether educational equity is realized. It has been found that a four-pronged approach involving schools, society, families and schools is conducive to enhancing their educational opportunities and realizing educational equity.

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