

Using the Hukou System to Alleviate Inequity in Education of China

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Abstract: Education is one of the important components of basic public services that contribute to equalizing every citizen's right to education and life-changing purposes. Education has been popularized in urban areas but has lagged in rural areas due to significant differences in educational resources. In addition, urbanization has increased the population's spatial mobility, and the migrant population is increasingly becoming an important part of the total urban population. However, migrant workers' children are still less educated than resident children. Society is also paying more attention to the education of migrant children. This paper first clarifies the meaning of educational equity. Secondly, this paper focuses on the educational inequity problem under the urban-rural household registration system. This perspective focuses primarily on inequality in urban versus rural education resource allocation, migrant versus inflow education, and college entrance examination policy. These three inequalities are measured through fairness in the starting point, the process, and the outcome of education. Again, this paper compares the educational situation in the United States and provides experiences that can be drawn from to make suggestions for enhancing educational equity in China. Finally, based on the previous analysis, this paper addresses the problems in educational equity by improving the household registration system to make suggestions for improvement.

Keywords: Educational Equity, Household Registration System, Education Reform

1. Theoretical Overview

1.1. Overview of Educational Equity

According to Brighthouse et al., [1], educational fairness involves three aspects: starting point fairness, process fairness, and results fairness. According to Duan[2], the interpretation of this three fairness is: To achieve fairness; everyone must receive education equally and realize their potential creativity. Economic income, gender, ethnicity, culture, family background, and other factors cannot affect their education. Learning can be fair when all learners are treated equally at all stages of the educational process. Education fairness refers to the equality of educational opportunities and effects, reflecting the quality and equality of academic performance.

However, under the existing social conditions, absolute equity in education cannot be achieved, not only because of the constraints of limited social resources but also because of the differences in each person's position, the resources he/she possesses, and the concepts he/she holds. Therefore, educational equity is a relative equity, not an absolute average, and there are specific differences and educational levels.

1.2. Overview of the Household Registration System

According to Tang and Wu (2022)[3], at present, the household registration system in China, in a narrow sense, refers to a legal system in which the state collects and registers a wide range of basic personal information such as births, deaths, permanent addresses, and kinship relationships of citizens in China following the law to confirm them. In a broader sense, the attributes of household registration location and household category shown in the household registration have led to the derivation of various dependent benefit systems and involve every aspect of social life. Therefore, in the broad sense, the household registration system, in terms of content, not only collects and manages basic population information but also is closely linked to the welfare provisions system such as health care and social insurance; on the other hand, in terms of function, it not only has the basic functions of statistical

population quality data, proving the identity of individual citizens, and maintaining administrative order.

2. The Problem of Educational Equity under the Household Registration System

Three aspects of household registration will be discussed in this chapter. Urban and rural education resources are unequally distributed, migration-related household registration system children receive unequal education, and migration among regions in college entrance examinations creates unequal education opportunities.

2.1. Inequality between Urban and Rural Education

Financial, physical, and human resources make up education resources. Teachers are human resources, school conditions are physical resources, and funding is financial resources. Urban-rural educational resource distribution will be analyzed from these three dimensions in this subsection.

2.1.1. Urban and Rural Differences in a Teacher Strength

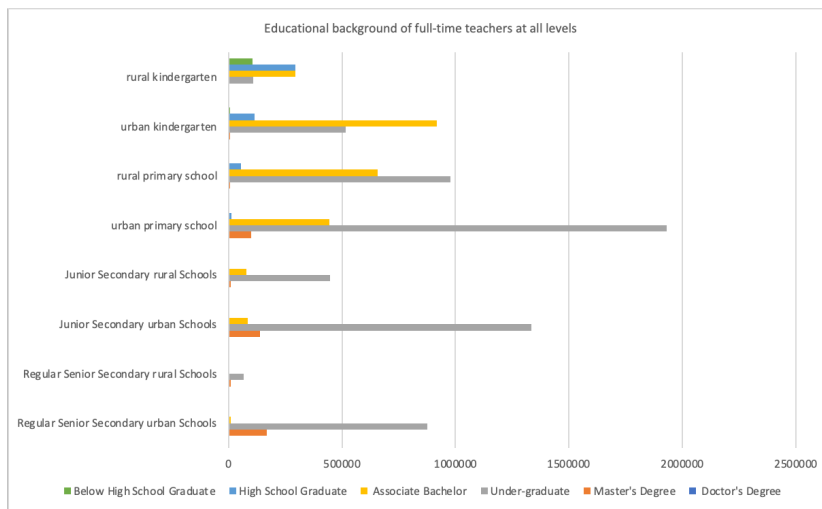


Figure 1: Educational background of full-time teachers at all levels.

Full-time teachers are more likely to have high academic standards in cities than in rural areas, especially at the regular senior secondary school stage (See Fig.1) [4]. Postgraduate degree holders in urban schools outnumber rural schools by 20 times and doctoral degree holders by 50.

2.1.2. Urban Versus Rural School Running Conditions

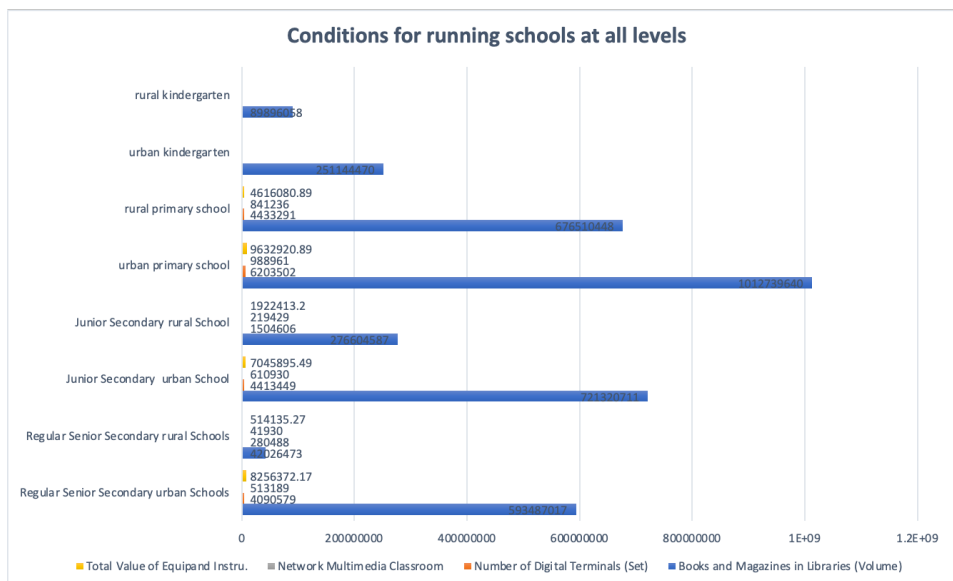


Figure 2: Conditions for running schools at all levels.

The running of schools is composed of many factors, and we focus on the assets of schools and the allocation of digital resources like books and multimedia.

Judging from the statistics for 2021 in Figure 2 regarding books and digital resources, the disadvantages of rural areas are very obvious, especially in the stage of Regular Senior Secondary Schools (See Fig.2)[4]. Book volumes in urban schools are 14 times those in rural schools; mobile devices in urban schools are 14.5 times those in rural schools.

2.1.3. Rural versus urban basic education funding differences

Only the preschool and compulsory education stages are divided into urban and rural areas in the Yearbook of Education Expenditure Statistics for 2021.

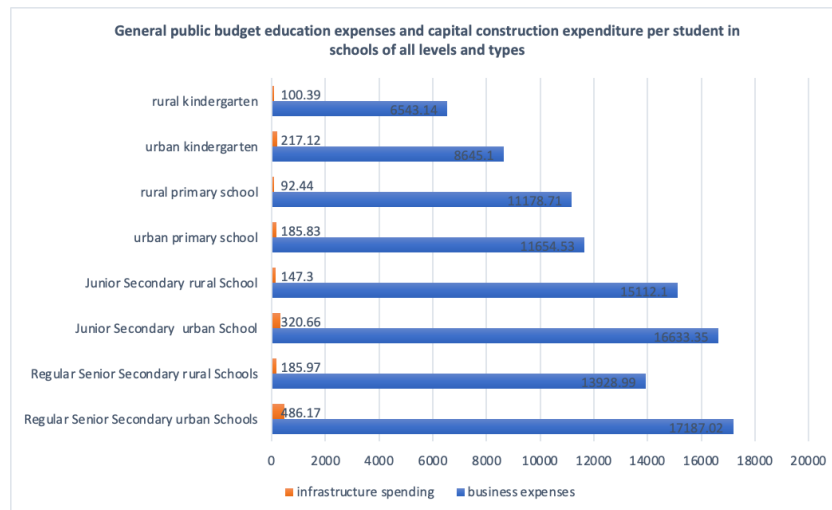


Figure 3: General Public budget education expenses and capital construction expenditure per student in schools of all levels and types.

Figure 3 shows that urban areas receive more funding for education than rural areas in 2021. At Regular Senior Secondary Schools, the funding gap is particularly pronounced[4].

2.1.4. Summary

Teachers directly affect students' learning effectiveness; using material resources such as books and libraries also determines the possibility of students acquiring knowledge from outside the classroom to improve their performance. The state's investment in education directly affects the conditions of school operations. Moreover, high school is the last entry point into higher education for basic education. The biggest difference between urban and rural basic education resources is also concentrated at this stage. Rural students are less likely to attend university because of the disparity in rural versus urban education resources.

2.2. Educational Inequality Caused by Mobility Barriers under the Household Registration System

2.2.1. Migrant Children Face Difficulties Enrolling in School

From the date of implementing the Provisional Regulations on Compulsory Education in China, children of compulsory education age have been given equal rights to education, i.e., they can exercise their right to education according to their personal needs and enjoy equal opportunities to enroll in school as others[2]. However, because the corresponding educational resources are closely linked to household registration and place of residence, the corresponding migrant children need to provide proof of their household registration to receive education locally[5]. If the corresponding people who are not local need to apply for certain certificates to borrow schooling, which makes the migrant children do not enjoy the same opportunities for education enrollment as local children. This is mainly reflected in the difficulty of education enrollment procedures in big cities. Currently, there are two main types of enrollment policies for migrant children in China's cities: point-based enrollment system and material access system[6].

In Beijing, where the material access system is implemented, migrant children must have all five certificates for admission. However, in the actual operation process, the review of relevant materials is

often more than the "five certificates," and obtaining certificates has become a massive difficulty for families of migrant children[7], which affects the chance of migrant children go to school. Shanghai implements a point-based admission system, which requires parents to use a college degree as the starting point for point-based admission. Education accounts for 17% of the total point system, using strict ratios to keep a group of people out of the door. As far as children of personnel who come to Shanghai receive compulsory education, the entry threshold has undoubtedly been raised. As of 2014, 79.5% of migrant children were enrolled in public schools, according to the China Migrant Children Education Development Report. More than 2 million migrant children are estimated not to have access to urban public schools and are forced to attend private schools or schools with poor conditions [8].

2.2.2. Backward Educational Resources for Migrant Children

Even though enrolling in private schools is relatively simple, the tuition fees are high, making it difficult for many families to pay for them. A certain amount of education has been provided to migrant children in some cities by establishing migrant schools. However, migrant children's schools are mostly funded by individuals, and their motivation is mainly to obtain economic benefits, and their educational quality, teaching conditions, and institutional norms are often incomparable to those of public schools[7].

On the other hand, some migrant children who enter public schools do not have "urban status" and do not have "school registration" in terms of teaching management, while school teaching assessment is often based on all "school registration" students. "This makes schools and teachers not value the academic performance of migrant children and therefore treat them differently from children in the inflow area. Migrant children are also labeled as "outsiders," and schools often exclude them from awards, merits, and eligibility for competitions [7].

2.2.3. Difficulties for Migrant Children to Go On to School

Off-site high school entrance examinations and college entrance examination policies have been promulgated by local education departments to solve the education problem for migrants after primary education, but this is conditional. For example, in terms of policies for remote high school entrance examinations, In Shanghai, migrant children must meet one of the conditions, such as reaching the standard score to apply for public high school. Those who fail to reach the standard can only apply for secondary vocational and technical schools. In the Pearl River Delta region, only migrant children whose parents have obtained proof of stable residence and employment can apply for public high schools. Only a few with excellent academic performance can eventually enter public high schools through off-site high school entrance examinations. Therefore, under the restrictions of the application conditions, mobile children still have a much lower chance of getting into public high schools than household children of the same academic level [6].

2.3. College Entrance Examination Policies under the Influence of the Household Registration System

Because of the uneven distribution of inter-provincial enrollment quotas, there are substantial objective differences between regions, and the phenomenon of "immigration for college entrance examinations" has appeared in China[9]. To gain admission to better universities, candidates use means and channels available in provinces with lower admission scores and higher admission rates [10]. Therefore, the college entrance examination household registration system has created unfair educational opportunities[10].

For example, Henan Province has a total of 98.83 million population in 5 key universities, while Beijing has 34 key universities but only 21.893 million people. According to the admission ratio of Tsinghua University and Peking University in each province in 2022, the admission ratio in Beijing is 1.019%, while the admission ratio in Henan is as low as 0.034%. The admission probability in Beijing is 30 times that of candidates in Henan. Candidates also take the college entrance examination, but because of their different household registration locations, they face different endings and fates and have different university life and life.

3. Practice of Educational Equity in the United States and Implications for China

Although the United States does not influence the household registration system on educational inequity, it has the problem of educational inequity due to the difference in the status of people of color and ethnic minorities. Therefore, to reduce educational equity limitations in China, the United States can

provide inspiration and references to reform the household registration system.

3.1. Legislation to Ensure Equitable Access to Education

With the passage of the Brown Act, people began to pay attention to the education of blacks in American society[11]. With the promotion of special schools and "education vouchers," the restrictions on household registration are no longer the main reason for American students to receive an education. They can receive instruction in the cities or regions they need according to their specific conditions, and the freedom of choice is considerable[12]. From China's point of view, providing education for children accompanied by the floating population has become a complex urban development problem as urban population mobility increases. Children from migrant families find it challenging to get into public schools because of household registration restrictions, compounded by a shortage of urban educational resources.

3.2. Developing Private Schools to Promote Rational Allocation of Educational Resources

In the United States, private schools can alleviate the educational injustice caused by racial conflicts in the United States and play a perfect supplementary role in distributing educational resources in public schools[13]. In addition, private and public schools receive academic and financial support from the state government and enjoy educational funding resources[14]. In China, education is mainly based on public schools, and students are enrolled in the nearest school according to household registration standards. It is more difficult to move freely between household registrations in different provinces. Private schools generally charge more expensive fees in cities with faster economic development. Another type of private school opened with the increase of migrant children. Such schools typically need no better conditions, low teaching quality, and varying levels of teachers, making it difficult to provide students with good education[7]. Therefore, fair opportunities for migrant children to go to school have not been realized, and at the same time, citizens' right to equal access to educational resources has been denied.

3.3. Diversification of Promotion Standards to Achieve Equity in Quality Educational Outcomes

In the United States, whether it is a national educational test or a regional academic evaluation, test scores are not the only criterion for entering a higher school. Most of these examinations are used to test the attainment of education standards and are not directly related to further education; the study focuses on stretching and accepting the quality of teaching and is not a conclusive evaluation of the qualities that individuals should possess when entering higher education; the final purpose of the examination is to educate more effectively. The goal is not to increase the enrollment rate of education codes [15]. In China, the entrance examination is a choice in life for Chinese students. The test score is significant to realize the turning point of life in the selection. However, China's college entrance examination household registration system leads to different opportunities for candidates with different household registrations to obtain higher education, such as Beijing and Henan. Household registration has virtually become a difficult obstacle to the transition of their life, and it will significantly impact their future study and employment. This is the denial of the fairness of educational results regarding rights.

3.4. Summary

Education in the United States is not fair but relatively modest, and it also has problems [16][17][18][19]. But we can take the strengths and make up for the weaknesses, so this chapter takes American education as an example and focuses on its efforts to promote educational equity in three aspects: fairness in opportunity, fairness in the process, and fairness in the outcome, and summarizes from them the thinking paths that are conducive to achieving equity in education in China.

4. Household Registration Reform Suggestions for Promoting Educational Equity

The duality between urban and rural areas' household registration systems has resulted in identity differences between the urban and rural populations, resulting in differences in the enjoyment of different public services by various household registrations, especially education services. Therefore, the household registration system reform should bear the brunt of promoting educational equity. At the same time, to address the educational needs of migrant children, increase investment in rural areas to compensate for rural education's unfairness.

4.1. Household Registration Should be Reformed

4.1.1. Step 1: Taking away the Added Value of Household Registration

There is no inseparable relationship between education and household registration, so the restrictions imposed by homeowner registration on education must be broken. To change the way of managing the household registration process. Departments responsible for household registration should focus on basic daily administration such as registration confirmation, registration, and citizens' fundamental population information changes.

4.1.2. Step Two: Narrowing the Rights Gap Between Rural and Urban Hukou

On the one hand, the boundary between rural and urban household registration should be gradually diluted. The same public service policy should be formulated and implemented, and the same rights should be given to people with new household registration through procedures. On the other hand, it is necessary to reduce the identity difference between rural and urban household registration by establishing a unified household registration management system.

4.1.3. Step Three: Equalize Public Services and Achieve Free Migration of the Population

The wide opening of the household registration system must be based on a sound public service system. Only when the public service can fully meet people's needs for educational resources can the free migration of the population be realized in a true sense.

4.2. Make Rural Education More Legal and Financially Secure

First, improve the laws and regulations to ensure fair access to education. Second, rationally allocate investment in rural education. Lastly, rural education must be improved in quality, and the government should increase the construction of rural teachers.

4.3. Properly Address the Educational Needs of Mobile Populations

4.3.1. Ensure that Migrant Children have Access to Education

Regarding enrollment, the education department should simplify children from migrant families enrolling in school at the place of arrival. Conditions that limit the admission of these migrant children to higher education should be gradually abolished, and the proportion of migrant children to higher education should be expanded to ensure the safety of migrant children can enjoy local students in public schools have the same application conditions.

4.3.2. Teacher Rotation System

Implementing the teacher rotation system allows teachers to rotate among different school districts and allocate teacher resources on average so that students can enjoy high-quality teacher resources without having to relocate their household registration or change school districts. This will also, to a certain extent, Alleviate household registration restrictions on unequal enrollment opportunities for students.

5. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the educational differences under the urban-rural dual household registration, the education differences of the floating population in the place of inflow, and college entrance examination differences in admission rates in each province to conclude that the System for registering households has a hindrance to the fairness of education. Advocate breaking the boundaries of identity and realizing the household registration system reform to eliminate the human factors of educational injustice. By comparing education In the United States and China, draw lessons that can be used for reference. Finally, suggest that the Registration of households is being reformed.

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