

A Comparison Between Chinese and American Education Models Based on Case Study of Education Assistance in China and Inclusive Education in the United States

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Abstract: Educational inequity has always been an issue that needs to be addressed in every country. However, due to the differences in social backgrounds and educational systems, the approaches taken by China and the United States are not the same. This study compares the differences in education between China and the United States through the research methods of case study and literature review, based on the study of the policies and programs of China and the United States to address this issue. China's educational assistance has narrowed the urban-rural education gap in a short period of time, and there is instability in teaching resources. Teachers' teaching skills need to be improved and educational resources optimized to ensure that the benefits of educational assistance are maximized. In the United States, inclusive education aims to ensure that all children have equal access to education, but there are still problems in practice, and there is a need to strengthen the protection of minorities so as to ensure a balanced allocation of teaching resources.

Keywords: education inequity, inclusive education, education assistance, bilingual system, comparative analysis.

1. Introduction

Education is often seen as an equalizer, providing individuals with the opportunity to escape their circumstances and pursue a better future. However, educational inequity has always been a global problem. Every country has its own difficulties in facing educational inequity. In China, the gap between urban and rural areas is obvious, especially in the underdeveloped villages where people live deep in the mountains and speak native languages. In the United States, this inequity also exists due to disparities in race and socioeconomic status. Although attempts have been made to address this issue, few previous studies have examined educational inequities in different countries or considered the testing system as a factor [1].

This study aims to seek an effective solution to the problem of educational inequity by comparing the process and outcomes of educational assistance in China and inclusive education in the United States. In addition, this paper also points out the differences in educational inequity between the two countries and their causes through case study analysis and literature review, so as to provide practical experience and new ideas for solving the problem of educational inequity.

2. Education assistance in China

2.1. Background

Education assistance is a policy made by government in order to make up for the shortage of teacher resources in rural area. Because of culture, geographic position and economy development, education in rural areas is limited by the lack of teachers, the backwardness of the teaching equipment and the short of supplemental teaching. Therefore, education equality in rural areas is low and students from those places hardly get good scores. To solve this problem, China implemented policies that encourage volunteers and teachers in urban areas to teach in rural areas, which help improve the education equality [2].

2.2. Policies and Implementation

With the support of government and the participation of non-government organization (NGO), the policy of education assistance has made great strides. Through policies for example, “Special Post Program”, “Silver Ageing Program” and “University Student Volunteer Service Program in the West”, university students and teachers in urban schools are encouraged to do education assistance and help other teachers in rural areas improve their teaching quality. In addition, NGO also play an important role by updating teaching equipment, donating students’ appliances and introducing people who want to do voluntary teaching to rural schools and so on [3].

2.2.1. Special Post Program and Silver Ageing Program

Special Post Program encourages university students to teach in rural areas by granting subsidies, covering students’ tuition fees, and offering preferential policies. It optimizes rural education resources while accumulating some social experience for college students. Upon completion of the 3-year teaching program, students can choose to take up employment, continue their studies or start their own business [3].

The politics of Silver Ageing Program is designed to help improve the teaching equality in rural areas and address population ageing at the same time. The government encourages experienced retired teachers to do voluntary teaching both online and offline by providing high salary and endowment insurance. Experienced retired teachers who lack the energy to train young students can also mentor rural teachers to improve their professionalism and teaching equality [3].

2.2.2. NGO

Besides policies and program raised by government, many none-government-organization also contribute to education assistance in China by donating money, building infrastructures in schools and introducing volunteer teachers to schools in poverty-stricken areas.

Among them, Spring Buds Project is the first organization that helps girls in poverty-stricken areas. In most regions, many girls are unable to complete their education due to the traditional values that emphasize sons over daughters, and many females get married far below the legal age for marriage. The Spring Buds program supports girls to continue their education through donations and the construction of girls’ schools. The program has deeply impacted the lives of more than 400,000 girls in China [4].

Additionally, the China Volunteer Teaching Alliance specializes in helping schools in Guizhou Province (one of the poorest provinces in China) to improve the quality of education and ensure equality in education. Every year, they organized teachers in township schools to have class online or offline. They also introduced thousands of volunteer teachers to those township schools [5].

2.3. Achievement

Equality in teaching and learning in township schools has improved to a large extent with the support of policies and non-governmental organizations, and better teachers have brought in good learning resources and teaching methods. At the same time, students' understanding of learning has changed a lot and they realize the importance of learning. This is because teachers from the city always care more about students' learning and communicate with their parents. In addition, teachers from the cities also influence the way of life in poor areas. For example, in rural areas, many children do not have the habit of bathing and changing clothes regularly, and unhygienic environments sometimes lead to the production and spread of bacteria, which can cause diseases. Volunteer teachers will impart relevant hygiene and health knowledge to raise students' awareness of hygiene and their body's immunity.

2.4. Challenge

2.4.1. Lack of teachers

Though there has been many volunteer teachers and policies encouraging teachers to teach in poverty-stricken area, teachers are still in short supply in township schools. This may be caused by the irrational teacher allocation system [6]. In Guizhou Province, teachers are assigned to each school based on the number of students in the school rather than the number of classes. As a result, rural schools with fewer students per class usually receive fewer teachers than other schools with the same number of classes but more students. Because of this, many highly qualified teachers have heavy weekly teaching loads due to the lack of teachers in the schools, which leaves them with little time off. This does not guarantee long-term equality in education in disadvantaged areas when it comes to teacher availability.

2.4.2. Project Sustainability

Programs that introduce teachers from cities to township schools are unable to ensure the sustainability of the program since many teachers are unable to stay in the villages for a long period of time. Living conditions in poverty-stricken areas are relatively unfavorable, with inadequate infrastructure, and teachers' livelihoods are not guaranteed at a basic level. In particular, retired senior teachers, who account for the majority of volunteer teachers, are vulnerable to illness due to their age, yet they cannot get adequate medical care in impoverished areas. As a result, the status quo of frequent replacement of teachers in township schools occurs, which to a certain extent brings troubles to students.

2.4.3. Family Values

Laborers in poor areas usually work in other larger cities to earn money, and children who cannot follow them to live in the city due to hukou and local education policies are usually left in the village under the care and upbringing of their grandparents. However, due to the limitations of literacy and traditional conceptual thinking, elders generally believe that working is more promising and has more room for development than going to school, so they seldom care about their children's studies. This mentality inadvertently affects children's views on education. As a result of this family attitudes and environment, children are not able to consider learning as a useful and essential tool for their lives, and even if the teachers teach them well, the students believe that they will not learn anything of value in school.

3. Inclusive Education in US

3.1. Overview

Inclusive education aims to give every student equal educational opportunity, especially for students from minor ethnic groups, low-income families and students with special educational needs. Inclusive education emphasizes the elimination of the inequity of learning opportunities so that every student can receive an equal right to education.

With the promotion of federal and state government policies, inclusive education has gradually become a mainstream educational philosophy in the United States. With the publish of laws for example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), as policy support, the implementation of this concept has achieved a lot and recognized widely [7]. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal that provides free appropriate public education to children with disabilities. IDEA claim that every child with disabilities will receive standardized evaluation. According to the result of evaluation, special education shall develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each child with exceptionalities to ensure the equal education opportunities for all children. In addition, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) requires all states to set standard for students' learning, and teachers and schools should be responsible for students' study. By supervising schools and teachers, teaching equality can be improved in some schools, narrowing the gap of teaching resources [6].

3.2. Implementation

In terms of curriculum provision, students can choose different classes according to their interest. And the school provides students with diverse courses including Math, Science, Social Science and Art for them to explore themselves. For students with disabilities or minor ethnic groups, there are also special courses developed for them to ensure equality of education opportunities.

In terms of teaching Ways, the United States teachers have various teaching ways and different kinds of assignment for students. In the classes, teachers' aims is to let every student enjoy learning instead of preparing students for the test. Also, teachers also give personalized tutoring to students according to their characteristics.

3.3. Achievement and Challenge

3.3.1. Teaching quality

Scholars have proved the effectiveness of inclusive education in improving teaching equality. By developing personalized learning plan combining with different teaching ways such as online courses, group works or presentation, students' participation and completion of homework increase [8]. Also, including goals, learning resources and standard in personalized learning plan for students could significantly improve students' motivation and academic performance [9].

However, many teachers are lack of professional training about inclusive education. When facing students with disabilities or psychological disorders, they are not able to make personalized learning plan for them [10]. To solve this problem, schools should enhance professional development of teachers in inclusive education by providing relevant training and resources. In addition, due to the unequal distribution of teaching resources, it is not possible to ensure that inclusive education is available in every school, and therefore there is no guarantee that all students will have equal access to learning opportunities [11].

3.3.2. Students Diversity

Inclusive education support students with different cultural and language background. Students from different ethnic groups can enhance their cultural identity when having multi-cultural course or activities [12]. In addition, for students who are non-native English speakers, inclusive education offers them with bilingual education and service to help them overcome language barrier [13]. According to Bialystok's experiment, bilingual education highly improves students' academic performances and social integration.

4. Comparative Analysis - China vs United State

The aims of education in China and the United States are very different. China's educational assistance is aimed at improving teaching equity in urban schools and supplementing teaching resources by bringing highly qualified teachers to these schools. U.S. inclusive education, on the other hand, is committed to educating students, including those with disabilities, in ways that are appropriate for them. In addition, the strategic goals of education in China and the United States are different, which may stem from the differences between the two education systems. In China, education is test-oriented. Students' universities are based on the National College Entrance Examination. Therefore, the Chinese government tends to improve teaching equality in a more direct way and in a shorter period of time, i.e., sending excellent teachers to poor areas. However, the U.S. application is much more complex. College admissions offices look at students' GPAs, application essays, and activities, examining not only their academic performance but also their social skills, emotional development, and sense of self-worth. Therefore, to give children equal educational opportunities, students need to be guided to explore their communities and interests. Inclusive education can benefit students in the long run [14].

In terms of teaching quality, the overall quality of teaching in rural schools in China is low due to insufficient resources, but it has improved in recent years through policy support [15]. On the contrary, the quality of teaching in the United States is more balanced, but there are still large gaps in resource allocation and teaching effectiveness [16].

However, both education assistance in China and inclusive education in United State face the challenge of uneven teaching resources. In China, this is mainly caused by the economic gap between urban areas and rural areas. In United States, this could be led by the economic and races. There are also different challenges for two strategies. On one hand, Chinese government and non-government organizations need to ensure the stability and sustainability of volunteer teachers. On the other hand, US government should arrange more training for teachers in order to support inclusive education for students with disabilities or psychological disorders.

5. Conclusion

The different education system and social background in China and United States result in different solutions to tackle education inequity. China's educational assistance should stabilize teaching resources, although it has narrowed the gap between urban and rural education in a short period of time. The Chinese government could offer more courses for teachers in urban schools to improve teaching skills and optimize educational resources. On the other hand, inclusive education in United States tries to ensure equal education chances for all children but still have problem with full practice. The US government should strengthen the protection of minority groups to ensure a more even allocation of teaching resources.

Since this article is mainly based on previous study, limitation might exist. The accuracy of statistics data from previous study may be compromised because the experiments were conducted in

urban areas where it is difficult to obtain statistical data. In the future, more experimental methods can be used with larger sample to improve data accuracy.

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