

# *The Traceability and Prospects of Children Welfare in China*

## *--Drawing on the Experience of Developed Countries*

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**Abstract:** China's child welfare has gradually shifted from the initial gap-filling type to a moderately inclusive type, which has alleviated China's child welfare woes to a certain extent, but still leaves a gap when it comes to child welfare for families in general. This phenomenon demonstrates the need for China to keep moving toward full inclusion so that all children in the country enjoy the benefits. Faced with the shortcomings of child welfare development in China, the Through the collection and organization of literature and related data, this paper summarizes the experiences of developed countries and makes suggestions for China in moving toward a more comprehensive child welfare program based on an in-depth understanding of the development experiences of four countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan in child welfare. A quality welfare system for children, the future successors of a nation, will also contribute to the strength of the nation.

**Keywords:** children welfare, child protection, moderate inclusiveness, welfare system

## 1. Introduction

Despite the efforts of the state, society and the family, there are still many shortcomings in the development of child welfare in China from a macro perspective. While the moderate inclusion policy for children has had some success with services for children with special needs, there is a lack of research on children in general families. Since the founding of New China, the concept of child welfare has evolved accordingly, and this article examines the current state of child welfare in China through three dimensions: state, society and family. In order to improve the plight of children, a comparison of the experiences of the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan in the development of child welfare and the implementation of localized institutional measures in the context of China will be beneficial to the healthy physical and mental development of Chinese children. As children are the future builders of the country, the continuous strengthening and improvement of children's welfare will also contribute to the strengthening of the country's overall strength.

## 2. Philosophy of Child Welfare Development in China

Traditionally, the upbringing of children was considered to be an internal family affair. Since the founding of New China, children have been regarded as the future successors of the country and the

backup for its national revival. Since the reform and opening up, child welfare has developed in two directions: firstly, the one-child policy has reinforced the idea that children are the private property of the family; secondly, the signing of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* has led to the further implementation of the protection of the rights of this group. The social security system established by the state and the government, as well as the laws and regulations on child protection, consistently emphasized the importance of children's rights, basic needs and so on. In the 21st century, the concept of the child as a priority took shape and the development of the child became a matter of public concern in all areas, including health, health care, education and so on. At the same time, the concept of "putting people first" and the policy framework for children's welfare have gradually taken shape. Since the 18th Party Congress, children have been the subject of national policy investment, which will be an important step in promoting national development. At the same time, the concept of "children first, child-centred and comprehensive development" has been established. On the one hand, the government is promoting the transformation of child welfare from gap-filling to moderately inclusive, and on the other hand, it is focusing on the welfare of special groups of children, which should not be the only focus at the moment, but should be focused on all children, ensuring that all people of the same age are treated equally. In summary, this is the period in which children's awareness of their rights is fully developed, as well as the initial formation of their native mindset [1].

### 3. Participation of Different Actors in Child Welfare Services

#### 3.1. National

The state takes the lead in the development of children welfare, and needs to integrate the physical and psychological needs of children with the development of the state to provide the welfare measures needed by this group, which will be an important tool in the process of children welfare development [2]. While the results of the process of implementing the shift from gap-filling to moderate inclusiveness in child welfare on China's path towards common prosperity are undeniable, there are other issues that need to be addressed alongside these achievements. Therefore, China's moderate inclusiveness needs to be further improved, and building a fully inclusive child welfare program will be the way to go [3].

Since the State introduced moderate universal benefits, firstly, the government's leading responsibility has become increasingly prominent, and relevant laws and policy documents have been gradually systematized; secondly, the ability to provide for children in difficulty has been enhanced, and relevant standards of care have been raised and funding has increased; thirdly, the child welfare management system has been further clarified, with the establishment of child supervisors and child directors; and finally, the construction of relevant social organizations has been further accelerated. However, on the contrary, there is still a failure to implement the concept of children first and the special children, welfare benefits and welfare services included in the limitations. In addition to this, there is a multi-sectoral division of responsibilities for children and a lack of coherence; the gap between different groups of children is widening and their rights are being undermined.

In the process of implementing full inclusion, it should be implemented as a complete institutional system that includes a wide range of elements such as maternity benefits and childcare services. At the same time, children in difficulty should be the basis of state protection, while all children are the ones covered by the welfare. The accurate implementation of comprehensive and universal benefits not only satisfies social equity, but also promotes balanced population development and improves the ability of families to raise children, and is a proper part of improving

the social security system. It can therefore be further implemented socially, materially and practically to ensure that the welfare of children is gradually optimized.

### **3.2. Social**

In the face of the development of child welfare in China, building a relationship between the government and society and promoting the comprehensive and rapid development of child welfare on the basis of cooperation between the two has become the way to go [4]. There are three main types of cooperation between government and society: first, direct government-society cooperation: the government provides welfare services for children through contracts with social organizations. Social organizations are supervised by the government in the process of operation; the government leads the operation and social organizations play their respective strengths to provide welfare services for children; short-term projects that would have been undertaken by the government are generally entrusted to social organizations; and orphaned children are placed in foster care with eligible families. The above approaches are conducive to the transfer of government responsibilities, but have slight difficulties in operating successfully in the short term. Secondly, social forces provide welfare services for children without a direct operational handover from the government, while enjoying preferential policies, etc. In addition, social forces will cooperate with each other to provide diversified services for children. Thirdly, there is no cooperation with the government and it is entirely initiated by individuals, which at the same time reflects the growing awareness of philanthropy.

### **3.3. Family**

The family is the primary responsibility for a child's growth and development, meeting the needs of the developmental process and providing the appropriate environment for growth. As an important site of socialization and identity for children, the family needs to take responsibility for the upbringing of children [5]. Adlerian scholars believe that a person's behaviour throughout life is shaped in the first five years of life and that the mother, as the first person to come into contact with the child, needs to nurture the child's ability to relate to those around her, maintain social interests and develop cooperation skills.

The family allowance system can also be called the child allowance system. In Western countries, the system can be divided into a social assistance model, a social insurance model and a social welfare model. In contrast, the family allowance system implemented in China is required both to protect children's rights and to adjust the national reproductive policy. At the same time, it has an investment function while alleviating child poverty. The system is currently only being piloted, and a more complete family allowance system needs to be in line with the national population policy, adapted to the level of economic development, complemented by social forces while the government plays the main role, and fully integrated with the child welfare system [6].

## **4. Children Welfare Abroad**

### **4.1. United States**

The White House Conference on Children in 1909 was an important turning point in the development of child welfare in the United States, which was designed to prevent child abuse and neglect. Since then, children have been better protected, supported, educated and provided with medical care in more ways than one, and the welfare system has been one in which the government recognizes responsibility, the social market is involved and the family is at the center.

The welfare of children in the United States can be divided into four periods. In the early years of the development of child welfare in the United States, a common phenomenon was that it would suffer from indifference or abuse, and infanticide, abandonment and children labour were commonplace. Thankfully, children were protected to some extent by the formation of the New York Child Abuse Prevention Association, at a time when the government was not yet involved in the management of children's homes. In the second period, as the government became more involved, the Children's Bureau and the Mothers' Aid Act emerged to alleviate this situation for children. There is no denying that the number of children abuse prevention associations is decreasing. In the third phase, since the institutionalization of child protection, the establishment of a mandatory reporting system has attracted a great deal of attention. At the same time, Head Start and the implementation of FAP sought to address the issue of children against poverty. In the final period of adjustment, a child protection system was established through welfare reform.

Children's safety is at the heart of child protection services. When a child is treated badly, such as through abuse, multiple subjects such as doctors, lawyers and social workers will report it. Today there is a complete system for the protection of children's rights and interests. The implementation of the AFDC has led to women's long-term welfare dependency, low work participation and migration, and the implementation of the TANF has led to a significant increase in labour market participation. These two cash payments are improving in terms of assistance to children in need. In addition, the implementation of the EITC programme has helped people to find employment on the one hand and the working class to escape poverty on the other. Finally, the child welfare system will also change if the permanent Child Benefit is implemented in the USA.

In the area of nutritional health, the NSLP, NSBP, and SFSP programs for school-age children help tens of millions of students with nutritional health issues, and the WIC helps perhaps the most successful preventive health program for poor families. Medicaid is the largest health insurance programme for the poor in the United States and is also available to the absolute poor.

Head start has been implemented to provide pre-school education for low-income families. In addition to this, the government's initiative to use education vouchers to purchase courses for disadvantaged students has made it possible for students to receive a better education [7].

## 4.2. UK

The UK was one of the first countries to legislate to safeguard the rights of children [8]. With the Beveridge Plan, child welfare policy in the UK gradually entered a golden age where children had a welfare policy equal to that of adults and were guaranteed rights in different aspects of the law. On this basis, a comprehensive and inclusive child welfare policy was achieved and the current child welfare system was built up. Children's benefits, child tax credits and other benefits are the starting point for the development of children, as well as for the purchase of services by the government.

In the development of child welfare in the UK, the 'national vision of the child' was advanced as a key idea [9]. As society became aware of the widespread poverty, neglect and abuse of children, a series of campaigns for children were launched to place them at the centre. The fact that the nation as a whole was in poor physical condition reinforced the serious lack of well-being during childhood. When this is realized, the state has a great responsibility to develop a proper child welfare system from the child's own perspective.

A central theme in the development of child welfare in the UK has been nutrition and health. The enactment of the Children's Act has resulted in the UK having a relatively comprehensive system of health services covering both infants and school children, encompassing diet and medical care for children, as well as maternal and child health and care services. The survival of infants and young children is closely linked to the physical well-being of their mothers and their care needs to be

improved. In the case of school children, the local authorities can provide improved services for their nutrition and health.

For the British model of child welfare, the government in partnership with voluntary organizations is the main one. As pioneers, voluntary organizations are important players in the school meals service and the school health service system. Voluntary organizations are able to reach out more to the children's population, to get a feel for the quality of the service in practical terms and to harness the power of the organization. There is no doubt that voluntary organizations are an important complementary force to government services for children in society.

Women's groups have been important participants and beneficiaries in the development of child welfare. Firstly, as key members advocating for child welfare in voluntary organizations. At the same time, women's reproductive attitudes are changing in line with the development of child welfare. In addition to being employed by the local authorities, their participation in public affairs has increased. Campus nurses are a social service industry created by women's groups.

### 4.3. Germany

The development of child welfare in Germany can be divided into three stages. When it was in the stage of development of the handicapped type, it was also the first in the world to have the state as the responsible body for the private sector to take the lead in child welfare and to educate different types of children for their protection, such as orphans and delinquent children. In the second phase, after the Second World War, Germany began to establish a universal system for children. The implementation of the child tax exemption policy, the creation of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, the introduction of child allowances, the introduction of maternity leave and the implementation of advance parental payments all demonstrated the inclusive character and reduced the financial burden on child-raising families. In the third stage of adjustment, while increasing the assistance services for children, the shared responsibility of fathers and mothers, the state and the family is emphasized. On the basis of supporting parental family and work balance, child welfare policy also happens to influence labour market participation. The welfare policy system for children, as an important component of social security, will play a major role in the development of human well-being [10].

### 4.4. Japan

The development of child welfare in Japan can be divided into three stages. In the first stage, Japan's concern for child welfare policy was first directed towards the protection of orphans and street children, and nurseries served mainly children who could not adequately receive care, and this was still the stage when men were raising families. With rapid economic development, it became common for the function of family care to diminish, and the policy shifted to serve all children. The government's still passive attitude to the welfare of children during this period also led to a number of adverse events and the ability to be questioned by the public. Child welfare agencies were not chosen by individuals and required permission from the government. It is therefore also a choice based child welfare policy. In the second stage, the attitude of the government began to change and a universal child welfare policy was introduced. In the face of the social phenomenon of childlessness during this period, a child welfare policy centred on the construction of nurseries was introduced. The traditional concept of care was criticized and the government became actively involved in the field of child care, and a number of policies were introduced to deal with the problem of childlessness. On this basis, the state, local authorities, businesses and communities worked together to reform the collective social consciousness. In the third stage, the government

takes on responsibility for child care in a positive way, thus being in a period of social care policy [11].

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, China's current child welfare development is still lacking in many aspects. By learning from the achievements of the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan in child welfare, and by drawing on appropriate experiences and localizing them, China can make up for its shortcomings in child welfare, so that all children can grow up healthily. Specifically, the following aspects can be implemented: firstly, establish sound child welfare laws and regulations and improve the child welfare system; secondly, build a pattern led by the state with the participation of social forces and other parties; thirdly, reduce the cost of child rearing for parents through various initiatives.

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