

Research on the Impact of Education Involution on County-level Education Development

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Abstract: *Education involution is an unhealthy competition in education caused by the differentiation of high-quality educational resources. This research finds that the main reasons for the internal competition in county-level education lie in the limited high-quality educational resources in counties, parents' high educational expectations, and the single evaluation mechanism of the college entrance examination. The involution in education has increased family education anxiety and intensified unhealthy competition; has increased the educational expectations for teachers, leading to teacher pressure; has disrupted the educational atmosphere in the county and affected social equity in the county. In response to the education involution in county-level education, proposed countermeasures including changing the concept of family education, providing educational resources with digital technology, and supporting fair school operation with policies.*

Keywords: Education involution, Educational equity, County development.

1. Introduction

Education involution has become a universal phenomenon in Chinese education. Whether it is higher education or basic education; Whether it is educational practice or educational research; Whether it is urban education or county education, you can see the shadow of "inner volume". China's education has gradually sunk from the competition of college entrance examination to the various stages of "junior high school to junior high school", "primary school to junior high school" and "kindergarten to primary school", showing a trend of younger age. County education, as an important part of basic education in China, is not only related to the overall quality and balanced development of the national education system, but also plays an important role in promoting the level of county education, the realization of education equity and the development of county economy. However, the existing educational resources in the county are difficult to meet the needs of the people, which leads to the phenomenon of internal education. The main manifestations are irrational competition, an extremely utilitarian and short-sighted educational model, which goes against the laws of education and students' growth. Although more and more documents have been issued to alleviate the educational burden, students' academic load is getting heavier and heavier, parents are experiencing anxiety, and there is excessive competition in schools.

2. The Reason of the County Education Involution

2.1 County Quality Education Resources are Limited

The imbalance of educational resources is one of the important reasons for the unbalanced development of education in our country. When high-quality educational resources fail to meet the educational demands of people in counties, the phenomenon of educational over-competition will arise, further leading counties and schools to be drawn into the competition for high-quality educational resources. Firstly, in terms of the allocation of educational resources, high-quality and advanced educational resources are often

first allocated to cities, resulting in differences in resources. The educational infrastructure in counties has gradually improved, but it always lags behind that in cities. Secondly, in terms of high-quality teaching staff, due to the limited educational funds in counties, their salaries and welfare benefits are not as high as those in cities [1]. When it comes to choosing a school, teachers with high academic qualifications and strong abilities often choose to apply for jobs at schools in the city first. Most of the teachers allocated to the counties are the leftovers from urban competition, and there is a shortage of high-quality teachers. Secondly, schools at all levels and of all types in the county are consciously or unconsciously classified into different grades. Key high schools, key junior high schools, and even primary schools are all competing in secret. The school offers admission based on grades. After enrollment, students are divided into key classes and non-key classes. After analyzing the educational advantages, infrastructure, teaching staff and other conditions of county-level schools, parents, in order to obtain better educational resources, passively involve their children in unhealthy competition, further leading to educational over-competition.

2.2 Parents Have High Educational Expectations

The cultural root of educational involution lies in parents' eagerness for their children's success, which prompts them to attach importance to their children's education. Almost every parent has the wish for their children to become successful and outstanding. Parents in counties are even more so than those in cities. What is success? Have a good job. How to define a good job? That must be leaving the county town and living in a first-tier city, earning a lot of money and leading a life free from worries about food and clothing. How to have a good job? It relies on education. Success achieved through education is legitimate. After going through the rigorous selection process of examinations and entering domestic universities, one gains the opportunity to find a good job. Therefore, parents in county areas exhaust their energy on a piece of paper named Diploma, drawing their children into the maelstrom of educational competition. Parents in county areas have an extreme pursuit of prestigious schools and directly link their children's academic rankings to their future success.

In addition to academic performance, they also expect to cultivate all-round students who are versatile, have strong leadership skills and good eloquence, in order to adapt to the fierce competition in the future. They usually compare their children with others. In order to “not let their children fall behind at the starting line”, parents spare no expense in investing in after-school tutoring funds, arranging a large number of subject tutoring classes and interest classes for their children, and striving for better educational opportunities for them [2]. These expectations themselves stem from love and responsibility, but in a highly competitive social environment, they have been distorted and manipulated, becoming an important driver that intensifies the “educational involution”.

2.3 Single Evaluation Mechanism

If you want to change your life, the college entrance examination is the only hope. When the educational evaluation system is single and takes examination scores as the main standard to measure students' success or failure, will prompt students and parents to pay too much attention to examination scores and thus intensifies the internal competition in education. When the development goal of educational subjects is set as a single academic achievement, it will lead to a more severe phenomenon of educational over-competition [3]. First of all, China mainly uses the sum of gaokao subjects to determine the admission of different majors in different universities. Although China's new college entrance examination has made some adjustments in the selection of subjects, the overall score selection mechanism has not changed. The result of this system is that almost the only purpose of learning in middle school, especially in high school, is to prepare for the college entrance examination. This exam-oriented education is a great waste of social resources and limits the all-round development of students. Secondly, in the entire education process before preparing for the college entrance examination, students only need to learn, and schools only pay attention to the final outcome indicators, rather than the process evaluation. However, the enrollment quota of key universities is limited after all, and the enrollment quota of key universities is still very low compared with the total number of people in the annual college entrance examination, and the competition for admission to key universities is still very fierce. According to the data of the Education Bulletin during the “13th Five-Year Plan” (2016-2020) period, the proportion of secondary vocational enrollment has been stable at about 42% in five years, which means that the proportion of general high enrollment is about 58%, which indeed maintains the dynamic enrollment level of general high and secondary vocational enrollment. The system of senior high school entrance examination is divided into general positions too early, which intensifies the examination pressure and further internal examination of education.

3. The Influence of Education Involution on County Education Development

3.1 Increase the Anxiety of Family Education, Aggravate the Bad Competition

Although the state has begun to pay attention to the

development of county education, consciously provide high-quality education resources to the county. However, the current educational resources are still limited. Under the current situation of fragmented district enrollment and the introduction of the “double reduction” policy, parents still want their children to enter good schools, and bad competition for county education resources still exists. From the education, it further increases the educational anxiety of rural families. First, middle-class families in rural areas find ways to work in cities and enroll their children in county schools. Because there is no county hukou, according to the process of the work certificate, business license, etc., do your best to let the child get the opportunity to study in the county. In the context of fierce competition, it not only increases the educational anxiety of parents, but also has a great impact on the physical and mental health of children. Secondly, after the introduction of the “double reduction” policy, on the surface, large-scale after-school tutoring has been reduced, and in fact, the hidden after-school one-on-one tutoring has been intensified. The resulting increase in tutoring costs increases the family education expenditure of county parents.

3.2 Increased Expectations of Teacher Education, Leading to Teacher Stress

Under the circumstance that the majority of parents and higher education administrative departments want “student scores”, under the pressure of employment competition for college graduates, the administrators of primary and secondary schools in the county regard the examination results as the life of running a school quality and are linked to the assessment of teachers' performance. The fierce competition for resources puts the important task of education on teachers and expands the educational pressure of teachers in primary and secondary schools in counties. First of all, the internal education leads to excessive competition among teachers behind the back, leading to comparison and comparison among teachers, in order to pursue higher titles, more honors and higher scores. This kind of competition will not only damage teachers' physical and mental health, but also affect teachers' work efficiency and teaching quality. In order to pursue higher professional titles and benefits, teachers will take the initiative to take on more work responsibilities and subject tasks. In this increasingly stressful environment, teachers are physically and mentally exhausted, and it is difficult to focus on improving the quality of teaching. Secondly, teachers need to deal with a large number of teaching preparation, lesson preparation, homework correction and other tasks, time and energy are consumed almost no room. Teachers are busy in the wave of formalism and lose the opportunity to focus on the essence of education. In addition, teachers face many assessments and competitions such as title evaluation and promotion, which makes them have to invest more time and energy to meet evaluation indicators and standards.

3.3 It Disturbs the Educational Atmosphere of the County and Affects the Social Fairness of the County

High-producing families try their best to send their children to private schools outside the county, while low-producing families educate their children step by step under compulsory education. Only middle-class families continue to pursue

high-quality educational resources, so that their children can go out of the county through education. High-quality educational equity should be centered on human development, providing appropriate education for all and enabling them to have substantial freedom to choose their future lives [4]. However, the high quality education resources are limited, and the fierce competition makes the county education still retain the tradition of selecting the best. From the perspective of educational equity, educational resources should be enjoyed by every student in every county and should not be treated differently. Due to the imbalance of educational resources, it leads to the internal examination of education, and the competition for educational resources further expands the unfairness of education. At the same time, due to the existence of super high schools, the outflow of high-quality students has led to the collapse of the county, which has further worsened the county education atmosphere. Thirdly, the selection and monopoly of high-quality educational resources by middle-class families also led to the gradual decline of county social development. The education in the county has made young talents roll out of the county and are unwilling to come back to work. County education will send students out of the mountains, the outflow of high-quality talents. When choosing a job after graduating from college, most people choose to work and live in cities, and do not want to go back to work in the county. This seems to be a “success” in education, but it is actually a loss of county development.

4. County-level Education Involution Solution Countermeasure

4.1 Change the Idea of Family Education

Education involution is largely due to parents’ high expectations of their children and excessive pursuit of grades. Therefore, in order to solve the problem of county education, we must change the idea of family education. First of all, let the county family establish a scientific concept of education and talent view. Parents should realize that the purpose of education is not only to get good grades, is more important to cultivate children’s comprehensive quality and ability. Success is not only measured by test scores, is also a child’s ability to be creative, critical thinking, team work and many other aspects. Secondly, the main responsibility of parents for implementing family education should be strengthened. Parents should take the responsibility of guiding their children to grow up healthily, by teaching them by example, cultivate their children’s correct values and outlook on life. At the same time, parents should pay attention to their children’s mental health, avoid excessive pressure, let children grow up in a relaxed and happy atmosphere. Third, parents should keep rational and calm, look at the growth of children in a correct way. Set reasonable expectations based on your child’s interests and abilities. Parents should see more possibilities for their children, instead of just focusing on their children’s grades.

4.2 Digital Technology Provides Educational Resources

Educational resources are important influencing factors to produce the internal papers of county education. At present, the development of digital intelligence technology has enabled the country to enter an era of high-level and

high-quality development. With the improvement of infrastructure, multimedia equipment has been fully covered in primary and secondary schools throughout the country. The construction of educational environment such as digital campus and digital community in county area has gradually narrowed the gap between urban and rural education resources. Therefore, providing educational resources for county education through digital intelligence technology can effectively promote educational equity. First, we will use the national smart education public service platform and national and provincial professional teaching resource libraries to help teachers and students in rural areas share high-quality education resources and achieve balanced allocation of education resources. County students can get richer knowledge through online video classes, which is conducive to the development of students. Secondly, through the integration of various digital learning resources and intellectual resources such as excellent teachers, high-quality teaching services and after-school tutoring services for primary and secondary school students in the county are provided to accelerate the improvement of the quality of education in the county. Third, digital technology can also broaden the learning styles of county students. By breaking the boundaries of time and space, primary and secondary school students in counties can study anytime and anywhere, infinite widening of students’ learning space and high-quality learning resources, and promoting education equity.

4.3 Policies Support Fair Education

The college entrance examination is a fair way to select talents, which cannot be changed to a certain extent. Therefore, other policies should be optimized to promote fair education. First of all, the implementation of the five education policy, steadily implement quality education. Through deepening the integration of ideological and political construction in primary and secondary schools, has fully developed sports, music, fine arts and labor courses, has organized a series of activities, has built a characteristic brand of “labor + research and learning”, has made use of off-campus practice venues, has carried out research courses and routes, in order to give full play to the advantages of urban resources and has improved students’ comprehensive quality and practical ability. Secondly, improve the teacher evaluation system to stimulate the motivation of teacher development. for faculty distribution system reform, perfect post performance-related pay, improve teachers’ treatment, adhere to the “work more, quality optimal reward” principle, the distribution of the tilt to first-line teachers, backbone teachers, improve the contribution of heavy performance, evaluation mechanism, select and cultivate talent, discipline leaders, class leader, young and middle-aged backbone teachers, Create opportunities for talented people to stand out and continue to develop. Third, reform and improve the teacher title evaluation and recruitment system. to simplify the evaluation procedures of professional titles, to simplify the requirements for submission of materials, to reduce unnecessary evaluation materials, to reduce the burden on teachers. to carry out regular talks and exchanges with teachers on a regular basis, to actively listen to the aspirations of teachers, to resolve their worries and hopes, to create a relaxed and stable working environment, to let teachers feel at ease teaching, to concentrate on educating.

The solution to the problem of the “involution” in county-level education requires the joint efforts of families, schools and society to create an educational environment that encourages innovation, respects individuality and emphasizes practice. It is hoped that through this research, good competitive and cooperative relationships among students can be cultivated to promote their growth and development; Reshape the county-level education ecosystem, promote educational equity, and ultimately facilitate the overall development of counties.

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