



# Evolution and Prospect of Higher Education Compensation Policies for Disadvantaged Groups in China

Li Wang\*

Gannan Normal University, Ganzhou, Jiangxi 341000, China

Author profile: Li Wang, female, from Kai feng, Henan province.associate professor of education of Normal university of Gannan.Research Direction: Higher education equity; lifelong education and learning

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**Abstract:** This paper reviews the development process of higher education compensation policy for disadvantaged groups in China, and divides it into two stages. This policy has achieved certain results.However, there are still many deficiencies and limitations in the current education compensation policy. It should be designed reasonably and implemented efficiently for all disadvantaged groups in future and be guaranteed by a just legal system; include higher education, elementary education and family education.

**Keywords:** Disadvantaged Groups; Higher Education; Compensation; Social Mobility

The Chinese government has always been concerned about the issue of equity in higher education, especially the issue of higher education compensation for disadvantaged groups. Since 2007, a series of policies and measures have been promulgated to promote the equity of higher education. For the sake of analysis and discussion, the author divides it into two stages according to the policy content, the degree of social recognition, the degree of perfection and effectiveness of the policy: Advocacy implementation phase (2007-2011); Development phase (2012-present).

## 1. Development of higher education compensation policies for disadvantaged groups in China

### 1.1 Advocacy implementation stage (2007-2011)

#### 1.1.1 Free directional enrollment plan for normal student.

In order to encourage outstanding talents to devote themselves to the educational cause so as to enhance the faculty in the Midwestern China and further promote the interregional education equity, in 2007, the Chinese government decided to implement a free education pilot program for normal students in the normal universities directly under the Ministry of Education. Since the fall of 2007, six normal universities directly under the Ministry of Education have officially implemented free education for normal students. The tuition and accommodation fees for free normal students during the school period are arranged by the central government and the living allowance is paid for ten months, 600 Yuan per month. After graduation, free normal students must teach in primary and secondary schools where they come from, and the local government should ensure that they have staffing and posts;qualified free normal students can study for master's degree in-service.

#### 1.1.2 Midwestern enrollment program

The Ministry of Education has decided to implement the "Midwestern Enrollment Program" from 2008. The Pro-

gram is a special plan in the national enrollment plan for universities. From the increment of the annual enrollment plan for universities across the country, a part of the Program is specially allocated to the provinces with relatively rich higher education resources and high admission rate to recruit candidates from the provinces in Midwestern China with insufficient higher education resources and low admission rate. It aims to provide better education opportunities for Midwestern students and promote the equity in higher education enrollment opportunities.

## **1.2 Development and improvement stage (2012-present)**

The free normal student enrollment plan continues to be implemented, and the plan is continuously improved according to the needs of the times. In March 2018, the “Teacher Education Revitalization Action Plan (2018-2022)” issued by the Ministry of Education and other five departments proposed to improve the free education policy for normal students directly under the Ministry of Education, and renamed “free normal students” as “public-funded normal students”, and adjust the period of teaching service to six years. At the same time, some provincial-level normal universities are encouraged to implement the public-funded orientation program. The Midwestern Enrollment Program is also being implemented and dynamically adjusted according to the actual situation of each year. While carrying out the original policy, the government has introduced some new inclined helping plans.

### **1.2.1 Independent enrollment program for key universities in the midwestern regions**

In order to guarantee rural students’ access to key universities, since 2012, a number of well-known universities began to implement higher education opportunity compensation system for remote and backward rural students. Since 2014, universities such as Tsinghua University, Zhejiang University, Nanjing University, University of Science and Technology of China and Xi’an Jiaotong University have been more inclined to enroll students in poor and remote areas, offering more than 600 enrollment quotas, and some township middle schools are also included in the list. <sup>[1]</sup>

### **1.2.2 Special enrollment program for poverty-stricken areas**

In order to promote education equity, the state has implemented the macro-strategic layout of poverty alleviation in the new stage, and started to implement the Special Enrollment Program for Poverty-stricken Areas from 2012. The program is mainly aimed at candidates from areas with special difficulties. It specially arranges suitable quotas in the enrollment plan of ordinary colleges and universities, and implements the directional enrollment plan. From the beginning of enrollment in 2012 to 2018, after 7 years of implementation, the national government has continuously revised and adjusted the enrollment scale, enrollment area, enrollment colleges and universities, enrollment majors, qualifications for application, major conversion, and household registration migration according to the actual situation. The examination and verification of qualifications for the entrance examination is more stringent, the management after enrollment is more humanistic, and the enrollment scale is expanding year by year.

The Midwestern Enrollment Program has a significant effect on increasing the enrollment rate of college entrance examination in the Midwestern regions. The Independent Enrollment Program for Key Universities in Midwestern Regions and Special Enrollment Program for Poverty-stricken Areas have greatly increased the proportion and chances of students from remote rural areas entering famous colleges and universities. However, if we fill the great gap between city and rural areas, There is a long way to go.

## **2. Development characteristics of education compensation policies for disadvantaged groups**

### **2.1 Policies change from single to multiple**

In order to promote the development and equity of education, the state has issued relevant assistance policies according to the needs of different disadvantaged groups, as shown in Table 1. It can be seen from Table 1 that these policies complement each other to meet the needs of different disadvantaged groups.

Table1. National Policy List for Helping Disadvantaged Groups

Policy name	Helping objects or solving problems	Starting ear
Public-funded (Free) Normal Student Program	Promote the development and equity of education	2007
College Matriculation Policy for Migrant Children	College entrance examination children of urban migrant workers	2012
Midwestern Enrollment Program	Candidates in the Midwest China	2008
Independent Enrollment Program for key universities in the Midwestern Regions	Candidates in rural and remote areas in the Midwestern China	2012
Enrollment Program for Poverty-stricken Areas	Candidates in concentrated areas with special difficulties and candidates from remote rural areas	2012

## 2.2 Policies gradually highlight humanistic care

China's support policies are from point to surface, from shallow to deep, step by step, and gradually improved. For example, the revision and adjustment of the "Special Enrollment Program for Poverty-stricken Areas". Firstly, the enrollment area and scale gradually expanded, from 680 special poor counties in 2012 to 832; secondly, students can transfer their household registration to the school location, and change their major during the school period. From 2012, it is impossible for free normal students to change their majors and transfer their household registration. After 2014, household registration can be transferred and majors can be changed, and the enthusiasm of the target group for application is greatly improved.

## 2.3 Combination of poverty alleviation and intellectual support: from material relief to human capital support

In the past, our poverty alleviation in the Midwestern regions was mainly the economic support, focusing on efficiency and material improvement, while ignoring the population knowledge, skills, and human capital. The drawbacks are obvious –it could not change the spiritual poverty of the poor, improve their ability to solve poverty by themselves, and easily lead to new poverty. The new coordinates of education equity in the new era pay more attention to people's development ability and self-hematopoietic ability. Western aid program, independent enrollment program for rural areas, three special programs, free normal students program, and college matriculation policies for migrant children all want to help with the development of human capital, fundamentally break the backward situation in the Midwestern regions, change the dual opposition between urban and rural areas brought by household registration, and gradually realize the balanced development between the Midwestern regions and the eastern regions.

## 3. Reflection and prospect

The implementation of the education compensation policies in China has achieved certain results, However, there are still certain gaps in the theoretical research and practical development of higher education compensation in China, higher education compensation can be further improved and developed from the following aspects:

### 3.1 Education compensation policies for disadvantaged groups: should be guaranteed by a fair legal system

"One of the core values of higher education is to guarantee equal access to equal rights to higher education, and to pay special attention to disadvantaged groups in relevant policy systems."<sup>[3]</sup> The protection of the rights and interests of the disadvantaged groups in higher education must be valued by the state, supported by funds, and guaranteed by the legal system. Among them, "the guarantee of the rule of law is the most important, the most basic, the most reliable and the most long-term guarantee of educational equity"<sup>[4]</sup>. Firstly, the legislation should adhere to the legislative principle of compensation for the disadvantaged. Secondly, we should learn from the experience of Western developed countries and add procedural clauses to the legislation, embodying "justice that can be seen and can be actually implemented". At the same time, the clauses on compensation for the disadvantaged should be translated into legal clauses, making it more conducive to practical operations and implementation. China's "Higher Education Law" is a declaratory legislation, and some clauses are inconvenient to implement, which is not conducive to the realization of higher education equity. Some clauses in the Higher Education Law are out of touch with the times. They should be revised and improved appropriate-

ly and innovated bravely to form a legal system in the field of educational equity with Chinese characteristics, so as to provide a strong backing and guarantee for the implementation of education compensation policies.

### **3.2 Education compensation policies for disadvantaged groups: should give full play to the main role of colleges and universities**

Colleges and universities play an important role in the implementation of the policies. As the main body of implementation, colleges and universities should provide more practical support and humanistic care for the training of students who enter schools through the helping policies. First of all, full-time teachers should be arranged to regularly and continuously care about the students' academic, life, psychology, and participation in community activities. Secondly, the unpopular and popular majors should be placed when the special programs are launched. In addition, the specialties should be dynamically adjusted according to the student's learning situation, allowing students to transfer to a relatively easy-to-learn specialty. Finally, schools should pay attention to the learning outcomes of these students and provide convenient conditions for their employment and further education. Having accepted the same education, they deserve equal employment opportunities and the ability to create happiness.

### **3.3 Education compensation policies for disadvantaged groups: higher education, elementary education and family education, none of which can be less**

Undoubtedly, higher education plays an important role in promoting educational equity, social bottom-to-upper mobility and social harmonious development. At the same time, it should be realized that the regional education gap does not start from higher education, but starts from primary education. Inequity in higher education is also a product of the uneven development of elementary education. Governments at all levels, from the central government to local governments, should pay attention to the issue of fair development of elementary education, start from the source, and adhere to the balanced development of primary education, junior high school education, and high school education. Finally, the healthy development of individuals needs the cooperation of family and school, and family education plays a very important role. the state should integrate family education into the basic public service system and provide special financial support, so as to form a family education system where the government, community, family and school interact with each other.

Education compensation has just started, and there is still a long way to go to solve the problem of education equity. We believe that the determination and wisdom of the Chinese government will eventually explore the education compensation strategies and paths with Chinese characteristics, which can make up for the damage and helplessness brought about by education inequity to the greatest extent, and achieve the relative equity of higher education.

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