

Original Research Article

Mechanism of Educational Targeted Poverty Alleviation in Western Developed Countries and Its Adaption for China

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Abstract: Educational targeted poverty alleviation is beneficial to strengthening the endogenous motive force of poverty alleviation, preventing the return to poverty, and blocking the intergenerational transmission of poverty, and consequently many countries have carried out some meaningful exploration. The United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and other developed countries have achieved certain improvements in the system construction of educational poverty alleviation, and their experience is worth learning. Based on the author's learning and practical experience, this work first summarized the current situation of educational targeted poverty alleviation in western developed countries. Second, it compared similarities and differences of educational targeted poverty alleviation among western developed countries. At last, it put forward the optimization direction of the targeted poverty alleviation mechanism in China's education, *i.e.*, attaching importance to the legislative work on targeted poverty alleviation, establishing priority areas for education, and promoting cross-regional coordination mechanisms for poverty alleviation work.

Keywords: Western Countries; Education; Targeted Poverty Alleviation; Reflections

1. Introduction

Educational targeted poverty alleviation means to help the impoverished people in poor and backward areas to improve their knowledge level and vocational skills, so as to block the intergenerational transmission of poverty, and finally eliminate poverty through educational aid. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Japan and other developed countries have carried out a lot of practice and exploration in the aspect of targeted poverty alleviation in education, and constructed a system from preschool education, basic education to higher education, which has achieved good results in long-term practice^[1]. Drawing lessons from the advanced experience of developed countries, China should speed up the establishment and improvement of the policy mechanism of targeted poverty alleviation in education, promote the reform of targeted poverty alleviation, and help to realize the strategic goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

2. Status of educational targeted poverty alleviation in western developed countries

2.1 Status of educational targeted poverty alleviation in the United States

Education has always played an important role in the poverty alleviation system in the United States. Former U.S.

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doi: 10.18282/le.v9i2.829

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President Johnson believes that equality of educational opportunities is essential for children to achieve a quality of life, so he promulgated and implemented relevant regulations such as the *Head Start Project* and *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* in 1965. As an early childhood development project, the former aims to pursue equity in education, combat intergenerational poverty and provide free preschool education for children living in poverty with government funding^[2], while the latter provides equal access to education for students from low-income families through special grants to local governments and schools.

In the use of poverty alleviation funds, the federal government has placed more emphasis on the performance of poverty alleviation, and carries out standardized evaluation on the operation status and effectiveness of subsidized schools. The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* requires each school district to evaluate the effectiveness of the funds allocated, adopt a unified standardized examination to evaluate the effectiveness of school teaching, and modify or adjust the allocation methods and quotas for schools with poor performance. If students fail to meet the academic standards set in advance, the school will face a crisis of trust with its funding affected to a certain extent; therefore, the school can be motivated to improve the academic performance of all students, including poverty students.

2.2 Status of educational targeted poverty alleviation in the United Kingdom

Since the United Kingdom is a welfare state, its government attaches great importance to poverty alleviation in education. After many years of development, the United Kingdom has formed a system of educational targeted poverty alleviation which includes preschool education, basic education and higher education.

At the preschool level, the United Kingdom has implemented a large number of poverty alleviation policies for poor children, such as the Green Book *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* issued in 2003, the *Children Act* issued in 2004, which sets out plans for the training, education and services of children in disadvantaged areas, and the White Book *New Ways to Reduce Child Poverty: Addressing the Causes of Poverty and Changing Family Life* issued in 2011.

In the basic education stage, the British government adopted the "Education Action Zone Plan" at the end of the 20th century^[3]. By transferring the right of education management to the weak schools in the poor and backward areas, it can attract other subjects to participate in the school management, and improve the efficiency of these weak schools through successful experience. In 2001, it issued "Teacher Continuing Education Program", making teacher training the key to improving weak schools.

In the higher education stage, poverty students can obtain government loans and subsidies. *The Education (Student Loan) Act 1990* allows full-time British students under 50 to apply to the government for student loans. Since 2006, the British government has implemented a tuition fee payment system under which students from poor families are exempted from tuition fees. The 2010 *Brownie Report* raised the minimum standard for students to start paying.

2.3 Status of educational targeted poverty alleviation in Japan

The Japanese government attaches great importance to the education of poor students. As early as the end of the 19th century, it stipulated that private primary school students from especially poor families can be exempted from tuition fees, and set up private schools specially for poor children. The basic law of education in Japan provides that all citizens have access to education, regardless of economic status or family background. In practice, the Japanese government has always adopted poverty alleviation and border support policies to revitalize education in backward regions and narrow the gap in education development among regions. The government funds the establishment of poor schools in special areas, especially in areas where the poor population is concentrated, and provides financial subsidies. Students are exempted from tuition fees and receive free school supplies, and teachers also earn more than those in average schools.

In 1954, the Japanese government stipulated that all levels of government should undertake the task of revitalizing education in remote and backward areas and should subsidize the funds spent on revitalizing education. The poverty-stricken marginal areas of Japan are divided into seven levels according to the regional remoteness. The

national and local governments increase their investment in education year by year, and stipulate that such investment can only be used to enrich the teaching facilities, improve the treatment of teachers and improve the conditions of running schools^[4].

3. Comparison of educational targeted poverty alleviation among western developed countries

3.1 Similarities of educational targeted poverty alleviation

The United Kingdom, France and Japan have similarities in targeted poverty alleviation in education.

First, they provide legal guarantee for educational targeted poverty alleviation and implement differential distribution of educational funds.

Second, they establish educational support system at all levels to strengthen the construction of teachers in poor areas.

Third, multiple parties take part in educational targeted poverty alleviation campaigns and strengthen supervision over the implementation of poverty alleviation policies.

3.2 Differences of educational targeted poverty alleviation

First, the concept of educational targeted poverty alleviation is different. As the specific situation of each country is different, the concept of targeted poverty alleviation in education is also different. The policy of educational targeted poverty alleviation in the United States embodies the idea of "being the same American citizen", the policy of educational targeted poverty alleviation in the United Kingdom is supported by the political philosophy thought of "the third way", and the policy of educational targeted poverty alleviation in Japan is based on "neoliberalism".

Second, the emphasis of educational targeted poverty alleviation is different. In order to establish a democratic society ruled by law, the United States mainly adopts compensatory policy in the process of education poverty alleviation, and realizes the balanced development of education by financing disadvantaged groups. The policy on educational targeted poverty alleviation in Japan focuses more on eliminating racial discrimination in education. Through the regular turnover of teachers in Japan, teachers in schools tend to balance, thus promoting the improvement of teaching quality in schools in remote areas.

Third, they have different educational targeted poverty alleviation policies. Through a series of laws and regulations, the United States supports and reforms weak schools, and promotes balanced development among schools. The United Kingdom helps to develop education in poor areas by setting up "education act zones" and "education priority zones", and implementing "pursue excellence in urban education programs"^[5]. Japan attaches importance to helping poor children, introducing free and compulsory education, providing scholarships for students and establishing a system of regular mobility of teachers.

4. Adaption for the educational targeted poverty alleviation mechanism from western developed countries

4.1 Attaching importance to the legislation on targeted poverty reduction in education

In order to promote the implementation of educational targeted poverty alleviation policy, developed countries will ensure this through legislation. China should also improve the relevant laws and regulations when formulating the targeted poverty alleviation policy in education:

First, the government should strengthen macro-control, urge governments at all levels to pay attention to targeted poverty alleviation in the form of laws, and establish a corresponding evaluation system to ensure the efficiency of the use of funds and the effect of educational poverty alleviation. Second, responsibilities and rights of governments at all levels and relevant education departments should be made clear, such as the scale of funding input and the principles of distribution in the targeted poverty alleviation campaign. Finally, the form of applying laws to the educational poverty

alleviation policies in poor areas should be clarified, and detailed provisions should be made on the implementation details to ensure that there are laws to be followed in the implementation of the poverty alleviation policies.

4.2 Establishing education priority zones

Both the United Kingdom and France promote priority development in poor areas and weak schools by setting up "education priority zones". China can draw lessons from the experience of developed countries and set up education priority zones in remote and poor areas through government behavior. The establishment of priority zones for education should have clear evaluation indicators, such as poverty level, ecological environment, ethnic composition, educational needs, population density, average level of education, teaching equipment and teaching staff. Education priority zones can be established only when the standards for setting education priority zones have been assessed by professionals. The government should increase the financial allocation to the "education priority zones", establish special support funds, plan the use of education funds as a whole, and help weak schools to give priority to development. It is also necessary to encourage social forces to donate and raise funds through various channels for weak schools in the "education priority zones".

4.3 Promoting cross-regional coordination mechanisms for poverty alleviation

China is a vast country with a wide range of poverty problems and complicated causes. Educational poverty alleviation must be adapted to local conditions based on national conditions and the actual situation of the poor, and the government should make overall arrangements for organizations and institutions involved in educational targeted poverty alleviation. For example, institutions should make full use of modern information technology, unblock channels of cooperation, realize information sharing on educational poverty alleviation within a certain range, and establish and improve a scientific and efficient coordination mechanism for educational poverty alleviation. The scope of responsibility of all stakeholders should be clearly defined, and all kinds of poverty alleviation resources should be rationally allocated, so as to improve the efficiency of resource allocation. On this basis, a public participation mechanism should be established to empower stakeholders with the right to know, to participate and to supervise, so as to enhance the willingness and motivation of all social strata to participate in the process of educational poverty alleviation.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, when carrying out the work of educational targeted poverty alleviation, China should actively draw lessons from the relevant experience of western developed countries. First, China should pay attention to the legislative work of educational targeted poverty alleviation, and integrate it into the scope of legal guarantee, so as to improve the quality of educational poverty alleviation. Second, the government should establish education priority zones to narrow the education gap between different regions and play the role of education in poverty alleviation. Finally, it is necessary to promote the construction of cross-regional poverty alleviation coordination mechanism and improve educational facilities, so as to achieve the goal of educational targeted poverty alleviation.

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