

## EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT: POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN CHINA

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### Abstract

This study takes China's educational equity and quality improvement as the research object, systematically analyzes the relevant policy framework and practical results, and aims to explore the synergistic path between educational equity and quality improvement. Through the research methods of policy text analysis, social impact assessment and analytic hierarchy process, this study deeply discusses the policy evolution, practical effectiveness and far-reaching impact on social development of China's education equity and quality improvement. The study found that China has made remarkable progress in improving the equity and quality of education in recent years. The implementation of the Outline of the Plan for a Powerful Education Country (2024-2035) has provided a clear direction and systematic policy support for education development. The conclusions of this study highlight that although China has made remarkable achievements in education equity and quality improvement, there are still many challenges, such as uneven resource allocation, teacher construction to be strengthened, and education evaluation system to be further improved. In the future, China needs to continue to optimize the allocation of education resources, strengthen teacher training and incentive mechanisms, improve the education evaluation system, strengthen international cooperation, and enhance the international influence of education. Through these measures, China will further promote the improvement of education equity and quality, laying a solid foundation for realizing the goal of becoming a powerful country in education.

**Keywords:** educational equity, quality improvement, policies in China

### Introduction

Educational equity and quality improvement are critical components of a nation's development, directly impacting social mobility and economic growth. In China, these issues are particularly significant due to the vast population and diverse regional contexts.

Despite significant progress in expanding access to education, China faces ongoing challenges related to rural-urban disparities, resource allocation, and teacher quality. Recent trends include the implementation of new policies aimed at reducing educational inequality and enhancing educational quality through digitalization and teacher training programs.

China's experiences and strategies in addressing educational equity and quality improvement offer valuable insights for other countries facing similar challenges. Additionally, international comparisons can provide China with new perspectives and best practices to further refine its policies.

Educational equity and quality improvement are central to China's development agenda. While China has made strides in expanding access to education, significant challenges remain, particularly in addressing rural-urban disparities and enhancing teacher quality. Current trends include policy initiatives aimed at reducing inequality and leveraging digitalization for quality enhancement. This topic is not only crucial for China's future but also offers valuable lessons for the global community, making it a vital area of international discussion.

## **The evolution of the national education policy and the present situation and the policy classification**

The scope of the research covers the evolution of China's education equity and quality improvement policies since the reform and opening up, especially the policy priorities in recent years, such as the overall requirements of "highlighting the promotion of equity and improving quality" in the Outline of the Plan for Building an Education Powerhouse (2024-2035). According to the education stage, research on the equity and quality policies in different stages of preschool education, compulsory education, high school education, higher education and vocational education. For example, the stage of compulsory education focuses on the equity of access, process and outcome, and the integrated development of urban and rural areas; Higher education focuses on the construction of "double first-class" and the equity of admission opportunities.

## **Enriching the coordinated development of educational equity and quality**

Theoretically, educational equity and quality is an important research topic in the field of pedagogy. Through in-depth study of China's policies and practices in this field, the theoretical framework of educational equity and quality can be further improved and enriched. For example, the connotation of educational equity can be discussed more deeply, and multiple dimensions such as opportunity equity, process equity and outcome equity can be analyzed, and more targeted theoretical viewpoints can be put forward in combination with China's actual situation. From the perspective of quality improvement, we can explore the evaluation criteria and influencing factors of education quality. This paper studies how China's education policies improve education quality through curriculum reform, teacher team construction, school management and other aspects, so as to provide an empirical basis for the development of education quality theory. In addition, a theoretical model of the synergistic development of educational equity and quality is constructed. Educational equity and quality do not exist in isolation, they influence and promote each other. This study aims to build a theoretical model of the synergistic development of educational equity and quality through the analysis of Chinese policies and practical cases. For example, the research on how to improve the quality of education under the premise of ensuring the equality of education and how to further promote the equality of education by improving the quality of education provides theoretical guidance for the formulation of education policies.

At the practical level, China has implemented a series of policies and measures in terms of education equity and quality improvement, such as the balanced development policy of compulsory education, the "two exemptions and one supplement" policy, and vocational education reform. By studying these policies and practices, successful experiences can be systematically summarized, such as effective practices in narrowing the gap between urban and rural, regional and inter-school education, and innovative measures in improving the quality of education. At the same time, it can also find the existing problems and shortcomings, such as the deviation in the process of policy implementation, unreasonable resource allocation and other problems, and analyze the causes, so as to provide reference for subsequent policy adjustment and improvement.

The development and implementation of education policy needs to be based on science-based research and sufficient evidence. Through the analysis of existing policies and practices, this study can provide empirical support for the optimization of educational policies. For example, specific policy suggestions can be put forward in view of the key problems existing in the current process of education equity and quality improvement, such as strengthening the input of educational resources in rural and remote areas, improving the teacher training system,

and optimizing the educational evaluation mechanism, so as to better promote the improvement of education equity and quality.

Educational equity is an important basis for social equity. By studying the policies and practices of education equity and quality improvement, we can better protect every citizen's right to receive quality education and promote social equity and harmonious development. For example, by studying how to provide better educational opportunities and resource support to disadvantaged groups, social inequalities can be reduced and social cohesion enhanced. Education is the cornerstone of national development, and educational equity and quality improvement are the key to achieve the national educational strategic goals. This study can provide theoretical and practical support for the implementation of the national education strategy, help China to step forward from an educational power to an educational power, and train high-quality talents for sustainable economic and social development.

### **The practical results of education equity and education quality improvement**

In recent years, China has formed a relatively systematic policy framework in terms of education equity and quality improvement. The Outline of the Plan for Building a Strong Education Country (2024-2035) clearly states that it is necessary to promote equity and improve quality, and comprehensively build a high-quality education system, including basic education, higher education, vocational education and other fields. By 2027, important progress will be made in building China into an education powerhouse, the popularization of education at all levels will continue to be consolidated and improved, and the people's sense of access to education will be significantly enhanced.

In the educational equity, the basic education stage includes two aspects. On the one hand, the urban-rural integration development: through the balanced development policy of compulsory education, the gap between urban and rural education has gradually narrowed. For example, many regions have promoted the integrated development of urban and rural education by optimizing the layout of schools and strengthening the allocation of teachers. On the other hand, digital means help enrollment fairness: In 2024, during the enrollment season of compulsory education freshmen, many provinces have adopted digital means to integrate the collection of freshman enrollment information and household registration verification into "one thing", which greatly facilitates parents and enhances the fairness and transparency of enrollment work. The stage of higher education includes the "double first-class" construction and enrollment fairness: Through the "double first-class" construction, the quality of higher education has been continuously improved, and the special enrollment plan for students in rural and poor areas has further guaranteed the fairness of enrollment opportunities in higher education. Popularization of higher education: By 2023, the number of colleges and universities in China will reach 3,074, and the gross enrollment rate of higher education will increase to 60.2%, and higher education will enter the stage of popularization.

In the improvement of education quality, the quality of basic education is improved through curriculum reform and teaching method innovation. For example, Beijing Normal University and Shunyi District jointly carried out the "basic education internal quality improvement and school management improvement" project, emphasizing the return of education to the true, to promote the all-round development of students. In terms of the quality of vocational education, through the improvement of the integration of production and education: Vocational education through the integration of production and education, school-enterprise cooperation and other ways, has cultivated a large number of highly skilled talents, providing a strong support for economic and social development.

To sum up, school education can strike a balance between equity and quality. For

example, an analysis based on data from the China Education Tracking Survey found that some schools were effective at promoting cognitive development among students, as well as at reducing the impact of factors such as cognitive basis or gender.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

In recent years, the Chinese government has implemented a series of policy initiatives, such as promoting balanced compulsory education, integrating vocational education with industry, enhancing the connotative development of higher education, and advancing the digital transformation of education. These efforts have significantly narrowed the gaps in education among urban and rural areas, regions, schools, and different groups. These policies have not only improved the overall quality of education but also laid a solid foundation for comprehensive social progress. However, challenges remain in educational equity and quality improvement, including uneven resource allocation, the need to strengthen teacher workforce development, and the need to improve the education evaluation system. Looking ahead, China needs to focus on several key areas: First, further optimize the allocation of educational resources, especially by increasing investment in rural and remote areas to narrow the urban-rural education gap. Second, strengthen teacher workforce development by providing training, incentives, and career development plans to enhance teachers' professional competence and teaching abilities. Third, improve the education evaluation system to focus on cultivating students' comprehensive qualities and avoid a single exam-oriented approach. Finally, enhance internationalization and open cooperation in education to draw on international best practices and increase China's global educational influence.

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