

Analysis of Regional Equity in Higher Education in China in the New Era

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Abstract

There is a relatively unfair issue in China's higher education, which will objectively increase the regional development gap and have a negative impact on the coordinated and stable development of the social economy. Therefore, solving the problem of educational imbalance has become one of the main tasks of China's higher education reform. By sorting out and analyzing the specific manifestations of higher education inequality, combined with the overall development of China's social economy in the new era, this study analyzes its root causes, and summarizes the reasons for regional inequality in higher education. On the basis of fully considering the particularity and complexity of higher education, we regard higher education equity as a long-term and systematic work, establish a global concept, formulate scientific reform strategies from the perspective of national strategy, effectively alleviate education inequality, and improve the scientific development level of higher education in China.

Keywords

New Era, Higher Education, Regional development, Education equity.

1. An Examination of the Equity of Regional Higher Education in China in the New Era

The existence of educational inequality will objectively increase the regional development gap and have a negative impact on the coordinated and stable development of the social economy. Therefore, solving the problem of educational imbalance has become one of the main tasks of China's higher education reform work, mainly by adjusting the allocation of educational resources, achieving relative fairness in regional higher education, and narrowing the development gap between developed and underdeveloped regions^[1]. By sorting out and analyzing the specific manifestations and causes of educational injustice, we can divide it into three levels: starting point, process and result. Based on the overall development of China's social and economic development in the new era, the above three levels of education inequality mainly cover the following three aspects.

1.1. The unfairness of the starting point of education

For fairness in higher education, starting point fairness is a key prerequisite. However, the objective existence of uneven regional development inevitably has a negative impact on starting point fairness, leading to the inability of higher education in different regions to maintain consistency in the starting point process. Specifically, there are more educational resources in the developed eastern regions, while there are insufficient educational resources in the underdeveloped central and western regions, resulting in regional differences in the quantity and quality of educational resources in regional distribution^[2]. In addition, higher education that overly relies on national finance will inevitably exhibit regional differences in resource acquisition^[4]. Before addressing the issue of regional development disparities, the funding investment in higher education will face the impact of regional imbalanced development.

1.2. Uneven distribution of universities

From the perspective of spatial distribution, there is a significant imbalance in the distribution structure of higher education institutions in China. The distribution density of universities in the economically developed areas of the eastern region is significantly higher than that in the underdeveloped areas of the central and western regions, especially in the key universities represented by the "Double First Class" construction. The problem of regional distribution imbalance is particularly serious, leading to a relative shortage and shortage of high-quality higher education resources in the central and western regions.

1.3. Uneven distribution of teaching staff

There are also prominent regional imbalances in the allocation of teaching staff, especially high-quality teaching staff represented by outstanding talents. A large number of outstanding talents are gradually flowing from underdeveloped areas in the central and western regions to developed areas in the eastern region, resulting in increasingly weak teacher resources in the central and western regions, which has had a negative impact on normal teaching work, directly leading to a continuous decline in teaching quality and an increasingly serious development imbalance problem.

1.4. The unfairness of the educational process

Looking at the current higher education reform policies in China, although they have provided certain "tilted" policies for universities in the central and western regions, the strength of relevant policies is still insufficient and cannot fundamentally solve the problem of imbalanced allocation of educational resources.

1.5. Unbalanced investment in regional higher education funds

Local governments provide the necessary funds for the development of higher education through financial allocation, which makes the level of local economic development the main determining factor that restricts the level of higher education development. Compared to other regions, the economic development level in the eastern region of China is relatively high, and local government revenue is relatively high, which can provide more funding for higher education. Due to their relatively backward economic development level, there is a significant gap between the central and western regions and the eastern regions in terms of investment in higher education funds.

1.6. The "key university" system triggers educational inequality

Use American English when writing your paper. The serial comma should be used ("a, b, and c" not "a, b and c"). In American English, periods and commas are within quotation marks, like "this period." Other punctuation is "outside"! The use of technical jargon, slang, and vague or informal English should be avoided. Generic technical terms should instead be used.

Compared with developed countries, the overall development level of higher education in China is relatively backward, and the quantity and quality of educational resources are lacking. If we pursue balanced development unilaterally, it will inevitably lead to excessive dispersion of relatively limited and scarce higher education resources, which is not conducive to the overall quality improvement of higher education. The development strategy of concentrating advantageous resources and focusing on building a group of high-level universities is beneficial for narrowing the gap in higher education between China and some developed countries. However, this biased national policy will also increase the risk of imbalanced allocation of educational resources, leading to increasingly uneven development of higher education in the eastern and central western regions, thereby affecting educational equity and increasing regional conflicts.

1.7. The unfairness of educational outcomes

Due to the objective existence of practical problems such as unfair starting points and unfair processes, higher education in China will inevitably face a relatively serious problem of unfair outcomes. Although there is diversity in the manifestations of unfair results, the core issues are concentrated in the following three aspects.

1.8. Regional imbalance in higher education penetration rate

With the rapid development of the social economy, the level of higher education in China is also constantly improving, and the enrollment rate and scale of universities are constantly increasing and expanding. However, there is a prominent regional imbalance in the allocation of higher education resources, coupled with the regional unfairness of the college entrance examination admission system, which leads to a relative lack of higher education resources, especially high-quality education resources, in the central and western regions. This increases the education competition among students in underdeveloped areas of the central and western regions, resulting in a significantly lower higher education penetration rate in underdeveloped areas of the central and western regions compared to developed areas in the eastern region.

1.9. Inequality assurance

Although the nationwide college entrance examination admission system is conducive to the cross regional flow of outstanding talents, it also leads to the outflow of outstanding talents from the central and western regions, leading to an increasingly serious imbalance in human resource allocation between the central and eastern regions. Although the strategy of expanding enrollment in universities can better meet the needs of the new generation of higher education and to some extent increase the enrollment rate of higher education, it can also lead to a relatively limited and shortage of local higher education resources. It can be said that there is an inevitable connection between the expansion of university enrollment and the decline in educational quality, and this problem is difficult to effectively solve in the short term.

1.10. Unequal employment

While continuing to expand enrollment, China has relatively lagged behind in creating social employment opportunities, which objectively increases employment competition and pressure. At present, employers are overly concerned about whether students' graduation institutions belong to "985" and "211" universities, emphasizing schools over abilities, which has led to unfair treatment of graduates from some non key universities in the central and western regions when seeking employment. The issue of employment inequality not only seriously affects students' choice of applying for the college entrance examination, but also further increases the competition and education imbalance in the college entrance examination, leading to even more serious education inequality.

2. The Causes of Unfair Issues in Higher Education

In the new era of development, it is necessary to face the objective existence of regional inequality in higher education. Based on studying and analyzing its root causes, combined with its own actual development situation[3], we must accelerate the pace of higher education reform to alleviate regional inequality in higher education. Specifically, the reasons for regional inequality in higher education can be sorted and summarized from both macro and micro levels.

2.1. Macro factors

Regional inequality is the result of a combination of many factors, but macro factors play a crucial role, manifested in the national higher education system and development strategy. Overall, the college entrance examination system, the differentiated construction system of

universities, and the funding investment system are the main macro factors. Although the implementation of the above policies and systems is conducive to improving the development level of higher education in China, it will inevitably lead to varying degrees of education inequality and development imbalance for the overall development of higher education. For example, the hierarchical development model centered on key universities will lead to the eastern region becoming a relatively concentrated area of key universities, while the selective admission system for the college entrance examination will objectively lead to regional unfairness in the admission process for candidates from different regions. At the same time, it will also trigger the flow of high-quality students from the central and western regions to the eastern regions, leading to a gradual widening gap in human resource levels between the central and western regions and the eastern regions, causing imbalanced distribution of students. At the same time, a better development environment in the eastern region will also create a huge attraction for university teachers in the central and western regions, increasing the risk of excellent teacher outflow, widening the development gap between universities in the central and western regions and universities in the eastern region, and causing increasingly serious regional inequality in higher education.

2.2. Micro factors

At the micro level, the main reason for regional inequality in higher education is the higher education system itself, specifically referring to management systems, faculty, student sources, and cultural environment[5]. For higher education institutions, the above micro factors not only determine their development level, but also directly determine their core competitiveness, which is the key to the development of higher education. However, at the theoretical research level, most scholars explore and analyze the micro factors that affect higher education from the perspective of external factors, which leads to serious one-sidedness and limitations. If only micro factors are understood and analyzed as external factors, and the government and society are unilaterally regarded as the responsible subjects of higher education, ignoring the problems of universities and higher education systems themselves, it will also lead to serious metaphysical problems. In fact, universities in the central and western regions significantly lag behind those in the eastern region in terms of overall management level, which affects their scientific development. The quality and development level of teaching in universities largely depend on the level of teaching staff. The severe imbalance in resource allocation and talent loss have led to the continuous expansion of the advantages of teaching staff in universities in the eastern region, further widening the gap between the development of universities in the central and western regions and the eastern regions. In addition, universities in the central and western regions also undertake the political task of ethnic coordinated development in the enrollment and admission process, invisibly increasing their educational costs and management difficulties.

3. Improvement Strategies for the Fair Development of Regional Higher Education in China in the New Era

In the new era and development environment, higher education inequality has become an important issue. Considering the particularity and complexity of higher education, promoting the fair development of higher education in China will inevitably become a long-term and systematic project. It is necessary to establish a global concept, formulate scientific reform strategies from the perspective of national strategy, effectively alleviate educational inequality, and improve the development level of higher education.

3.1. Optimize spatial layout

The formulation and implementation of the "Double First Class" strategy will become an effective measure to address the unreasonable spatial distribution of higher education. This strategy is conducive to optimizing China's higher education from the perspective of spatial layout, achieving a reasonable tilt of educational resources towards the central and western regions, thereby improving the construction and development level of universities in the central and western regions, alleviating the regional imbalance of higher education, and achieving coordinated and consistent social and economic development in different regions.

3.2. Overall number and proportion of key universities in the central and western regions

Focusing on promoting the construction and development of universities in the central and western regions, we need to increase the number of key universities in the central and western regions and enhance their overall development level. In specific work, it is necessary to adjust measures to local conditions, scientifically combine advanced educational experience with local realities, achieve personalized development of key universities in the central and western regions, achieve differentiated development of higher education institutions in different regions, and achieve coordinated development of higher education with regional social economy. Only by fully ensuring the construction and development level of key universities in the central and western regions can we effectively improve the rationality of high-quality education resource allocation, gradually improve the overall development level of universities in the central and western regions, narrow the gap with universities in the eastern region, and provide more and better talents for local socio-economic development. Therefore, the "Double First Class" strategy must focus on the development of universities in the central and western regions, reasonably tilt educational resources, improve the scientific and rational spatial layout of higher education in China, effectively improve the development level of higher education in the central and western regions, and achieve educational equity^[4].

3.3. First class universities in China establish branches in the central and western regions

Local governments must play their leading role and create favorable conditions for domestic key universities to establish branch schools through preferential policies. While attracting key universities to enter the central and western regions, they must gradually improve their own development level and better meet the needs of social and economic development. From the perspective of economic development level, although there is a significant gap between the central and western regions and the eastern regions, there are also certain differences in historical, cultural, and natural resources. Combining scientific development strategies and preferential policies can attract excellent talents and high-quality educational resources, improve the development level of higher education, build a reasonable flow channel of educational resources, and narrow the regional gap of higher education on the basis of enriching one's own educational resources.

3.4. Creating high-level universities for Sino foreign cooperation through foreign resources

The development of higher education cannot be complacent. In order to quickly shorten the development gap, it is necessary to actively carry out educational cooperation, take the opportunity of "Sino foreign cooperation in running schools", and jointly build world-class universities with well-known foreign universities to improve the level of higher education in China. Local governments need to formulate scientific development plans to create a favorable development environment for Sino foreign cooperative education. Starting from different levels such as policies and laws, they should provide policy and funding support, and scientifically

plan based on their actual needs. They should focus on building cutting-edge disciplines such as big data technology, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology, improve the overall development level of higher education in the central and western regions, and gradually eliminate higher education inequality.

3.5. Optimize the construction of teaching platforms

In terms of resource platform construction, there is also a significant gap between universities in the central and western regions and those in the eastern regions, which not only leads to serious education imbalance, but also is not conducive to balanced and coordinated development of the social economy and social harmony and stability. Therefore, the country must focus on promoting the construction of teaching platforms, narrowing regional disparities, and reasonably allocating educational resources.

3.6. Increase funding for higher education in the central and western regions

National and local governments need to formulate and implement preferential policies to provide strong support for their high-quality and efficient teaching work. Nowadays, the country has fully recognized the adverse effects of unfair higher education and has implemented multiple policies, focusing on ensuring the funding of universities in the central and western regions, accelerating the development speed of universities in the central and western regions, narrowing the gap between higher education in the central and western regions and the eastern regions, and achieving educational equity^[5]. Local governments need to scientifically adjust their fiscal policies, ensure education investment as much as possible, increase the enthusiasm of social forces to participate in higher education, enrich the sources of education funds, and create a good environment for the development of higher education.

3.7. Construction of research platforms for regional universities

By guiding educational resources to be reasonably tilted towards the central and western regions through preferential policies, the construction level of universities in the central and western regions can be improved, and their teaching quality and research capabilities can be improved. At the same time, combining the characteristics of regional development, we will create a group of local and distinctive advantageous disciplines, improve the utilization level of educational resources, meet the needs of local social and economic development for talent and technology, and solve the inequality of higher education while achieving coordinated socio-economic development.

3.8. Strengthen the informationization construction of universities in the central and western regions

In the process of their own development, universities in the central and western regions need to learn from each other's strengths and make up for their weaknesses. On the basis of vigorously introducing higher education resources from the eastern region, they need to improve their own educational level, effectively overcome the objective gap in educational resources, and comprehensively improve teaching quality and scientific research level. This requires a focus on promoting the level of educational informatization, achieving cross regional exchange of educational resources, and achieving full sharing and efficient utilization of high-quality educational resources, in order to make up for the inherent shortcomings of universities in the central and western regions in terms of high-quality educational resources. At the same time, universities in the central and western regions can also provide flexible teaching methods for students, allowing them to choose online and offline courses according to their own needs and preferences, improving their comprehensive quality and ability, and outputting higher level talents to society.

3.9. Strengthen the construction of characteristic disciplines in universities in the central and western regions

While continuing to strengthen the construction of basic disciplines, universities in the central and western regions also need to clarify their own advantages and focus on developing characteristic disciplines. Compared with universities in the eastern region, although the overall development of universities in the central and western regions is relatively backward, based on their own resource endowment, they can present significant regional characteristics and differential advantages in some subject areas. Key construction of related disciplines can not only create some advantageous disciplines, but also enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of universities in the central and western regions, and narrow the gap in higher education.

3.10. Optimize the construction of regional teaching staff

In addition to the reform and innovation of universities themselves, the country should also implement relevant reform strategies to create a better external environment for the development of higher education in the central and western regions, improve its construction speed and development level, and narrow the gap with the eastern region.

3.11. Talent introduction efforts in universities in the central and western regions

Talents are the foundation of development. If we want to accelerate the development of universities in the central and western regions and narrow the regional gap, the key lies in talent introduction. This requires local governments and universities to introduce attractive talent introduction policies, innovate in personnel management, salary and welfare, and enhance the attractiveness of universities in the central and western regions to outstanding talents, and enhance their teaching staff. While doing a good job in talent cultivation, management, and retention, it is also necessary to fully leverage the role of outstanding talents in improving the teaching and research levels of universities, and enhance the comprehensive strength of universities in the central and western regions. Only by ensuring the scientificity and rationality of the talent flow mechanism can we achieve the scientific allocation of educational resources in different regions and meet the innovative development needs of universities in the central and western regions.

3.12. Increase the training and exchange of teachers in the central and western regions

In response to the current situation of insufficient teaching staff in universities in the central and western regions, on the one hand, it is necessary to focus on talent training and continuously improve the comprehensive quality of teachers; On the other hand, we should pay attention to talent cultivation, balance external introduction and internal cultivation, continuously improve the work ability and comprehensive quality of university teachers, meet the talent needs of higher education development, and achieve a virtuous cycle and sustainable development of educational resources. For the vast number of young and middle-aged teachers, the state, local governments, and universities need to provide them with good development opportunities, meet their development needs through on-the-job training, further education, and other means, continuously improve their business capabilities, build good cross regional communication and interaction channels, achieve organic coordination of teacher resources, continuously improve the education level and teaching quality of universities in the central and western regions, and narrow the gap with universities in the eastern region.

The unfairness of policies and systems in higher education has led to certain problems in the allocation of educational resources, leading to a prominent imbalance in education. There is a

significant gap in the "quantity" and "quality" of higher education between developed eastern regions and underdeveloped central and western regions. The existence of this problem will objectively increase the regional development gap and have adverse effects on the coordinated and stable development of the social economy. Therefore, solving the problem of educational imbalance has become one of the main tasks of China's higher education reform. In the new era of development, it is necessary to face the objective existence of regional inequality in higher education, and on the basis of studying and analyzing its root causes, combined with our own reality, accelerate the pace of higher education reform to alleviate regional inequality in higher education. Faced with a new development environment, it is necessary to consider the particularity and complexity of higher education, establish a global perspective, formulate scientific reform strategies from the perspective of national strategy, effectively alleviate educational inequality, and improve the scientific development level of higher education.

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