

# Problems in Balanced Development of Compulsory Education and Optimization Strategies of Public Policies

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**Abstract.** The supply of basic public services concerns the survival and development of all citizens. Equally enjoying basic public services is the basic right of them, while promoting the equalization of basic public services is the fundamental responsibility of the government. With the continuous advancement of service-oriented government construction, the equalization of basic public services is increasingly valued. Compulsory education is an important part of the basic education system as well as a basic public service, whose development is not only an important way to realize the equality of education, but also an inherent requirement for the equalization of basic public services. At present, there are still some retarding factors in the development of compulsory education. To this end, it is necessary to optimize public policies to promote the balanced development of compulsory education. In this paper, the optimization path of compulsory education policy will be explored through the analysis of the imbalance phenomenon in the supply of basic public services of compulsory education among regions, urban and rural areas, schools and groups, so as to promote the balanced development of compulsory education.

**Keywords:** Compulsory Education; Balanced Development; Public Policies; Optimization Strategies.

## 1. Connotation of Balanced Development of Compulsory Education

First, balanced development of education refers to ensuring equal rights and obligations of education for citizens or future citizens through laws and regulations, providing relatively equal educational opportunities and conditions through policy formulation, adjustment and resource allocation, and adopting objective attitude and scientific and effective way to achieve the relative balance of educational effect and chance of success.[1]

Second, educational balance essentially refers to the educational ideal that educational institutions and educatees enjoy equal treatment in educational activities and the educational policy and legal system that ensure their practical operation under the control of the educational equity thought and the principle of educational equality.

Third, the balanced development of education mainly refers to the balanced development of education between different regions, different schools in the same region and different groups in the same school in China; in terms of the time process, it mainly means that students have relatively equal enrollment opportunities at the starting point, process and result of receiving education, experience roughly equal educational resources and conditions, and can embrace as much development and growth as possible.

Fourth, the balanced development of education mainly involves three levels: the balanced development between regions, the balanced development between schools within regions and the balanced development between groups. Special attention should be paid to the education of vulnerable group.

Fifth, the balanced development of education in a narrow sense refers to the balanced and coordinated development of the subject of education responsibility (i.e. the government or the school, etc.) by obtaining relatively equal resources. In a broad sense, it refers to the balanced development of the educated group by obtaining equal education rights, conditions and resources.

## **2. Problems in the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education**

Compulsory education is responsible for training the basic quality of the citizens and guaranteeing their most basic right to subsistence and development. Its public nature is increasingly prominent, so it is the basic responsibility of the government to provide equal compulsory education for every citizen. However, the current balanced development of compulsory education faces the following problems:

### **2.1 Disharmony between Compulsory Education Planning and the Requirements of Balanced Development**

The disharmony still exists between the current compulsory education planning and the balanced development of compulsory education to some extent, and it is not strong enough to lead the balanced development of compulsory education.

First of all, there is an imbalance in the emphasis on compulsory education planning. In recent years, the central government and its departments have attached great importance to compulsory education planning, and also required local governments to make scientific planning for compulsory education, so as to promote its balanced development. However, some regions still have not stressed compulsory education planning sufficiently, and failed to promote the demonstration and formulation of planning effectively. For example, with the progress of urbanization, increasing rural population of compulsory education age enters cities, which has a profound impact on the allocation pattern of urban and rural compulsory education resources. In this context, local governments and education departments need to predict and make scientific plans in advance, while some regions do not underscore the guiding role of planning and fall into the situation of passive response. [2]

Secondly, the formulation of compulsory education planning in some regions is not scientific enough. A scientific planning should be both forward-looking and feasible, while some localities fail to strictly follow scientific principles in formulating compulsory education planning. Many places are in haste in the county school layout planning, and lack rigorous demonstration as well as consideration for the local economic and social conditions, population trends, traffic conditions, parents' needs, cultural habits and other factors affecting the school layout, which affects the scientific nature of the planning and is difficult to play a leading and promoting role in the balanced development of compulsory education.

In addition, the compulsory education planning of some regions is not fully implemented, where its objectives will not be achieved and the planning will be meaningless. This is also the case in compulsory education planning. Although some localities have made compulsory education planning, they have been shelved and failed to be implemented in practice.

### **2.2 Disharmony between Local Government Resource Allocation and the Needs of Balanced Development of Compulsory Education**

Since the reform and opening up, the allocation of compulsory education resources in China has shown a trend of gradually moving up from the grassroots level to multi-level governments. Although the main responsibility of compulsory education resource allocation has gradually moved up and the role of central and provincial governments has been increasingly strengthened, the mode of compulsory education resource allocation in which local governments assume the main responsibility has not been fundamentally changed. However, due to the long periodicity and regional spillover of compulsory education investment, the inconsistency between the cost and income of local government investment and that between the term of local government officials and the period of compulsory education investment will weaken the motivation of local government investment in compulsory education.[3] Therefore, the mode of compulsory education resource allocation with local governments as the main bearer does not fit the requirement of the balanced development of compulsory education, nor does it work.

### **2.3 Obvious Inter-school Gap Caused by the Non-equal Education Policies**

Inter-school gap mainly refers to the gap in human resources, material resources and financial resources between schools of the same type in the same region and at the same level due to the unequal financial input. [4] The root cause is the Non-equal education policies that have been carried out for a long time in China, such as the elite education and key schools' policy under the principle of efficiency priority, the preferential allocation system of education finance to key schools at all levels and all kinds of education, the dual track system formed by the transformation of public schools and other bad education policies. These policies promote the improvement of some primary and secondary education quality, while unavoidably enlarging the gap between schools in resource allocation and education quality. The gap in operating conditions and quality between urban window schools and weak schools is widening, and that between rural central schools and village primary schools is widening.

The Non-equal implementation of policies and the long-term dual system of urban and rural separation have resulted in a huge gap between urban and rural economic and social development. In the field of compulsory education, there are huge differences between urban and rural schools in terms of education input, operating conditions and teachers' level. Until now, the concept of city-centered development still exists. The educational policy implementation under the influence of economic development gap also has irrationality. No matter urban or rural and whether developed economically, all levels of governments will give appropriate tilt to key schools in education finance. This also indirectly leads to a growing gap in educational conditions and quality between different schools, including the gap between "window schools" and ordinary schools in cities, and the gap between "central schools" in towns and village primary schools.

## **3. Optimization Strategies of Public Policies in the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education**

### **3.1 Leveraging the Leading Role of Planning in the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education**

Scientific compulsory education planning is not only based on the concrete reality of compulsory education development, but also practical, while focusing on the development of compulsory education goal, which is forward-looking. By formulating scientific comprehensive and special planning for compulsory education, and dynamically adjusting and implementing the above planning in promoting compulsory education, the goal of balanced development of compulsory education can be effectively approached, so as to leverage the leading role of planning in balanced development of compulsory education. Governments at all levels should pay full attention to the role of planning in the balanced development of compulsory education, earnestly establish the concept of planning first, and specify the objectives, contents and implementation measures of the balanced development of compulsory education in comprehensive and special planning. Second, the formulation of planning should be scientific. In-depth and practical investigation should be conducted before the formulation, and the extensive opinions of all parties should be taken into account, following the standard and strict procedures, in order to develop both forward-looking and feasible comprehensive and special planning for compulsory education. Third, the implementation of the compulsory education planning should be vigorously promoted.

### **3.2 Constructing an Integrated Compulsory Education Resource Allocation System**

The balanced development of compulsory education inevitably requires the change of the traditional resource allocation system that the local government undertakes the main responsibility, and an integrated compulsory education resource allocation system that does not distinguish regions, urban and rural areas, schools and groups should be constructed. First, the central government's basic position in the compulsory education resource allocation should be established. Compulsory

education has a wide range of benefits, a long investment cycle, and the central government assuming basic responsibilities will also help solve the problem of insufficient supply power of local governments. Secondly, the compulsory education resource allocation should follow the integrated allocation standard. While increasing the input of educational funds to the whole country, a complete educational resource allocation model should be established from the aspects of resource balanced allocation mechanism, educational financial supply mechanism, teacher guarantee and exchange mechanism, quality monitoring and evaluation mechanism, etc. Compulsory education, as a basic public service in different regions, urban and rural areas, schools and groups, shall be provided in a fair, just and integrated manner according to the basic allocation standards established through scientific demonstration, so as to achieve the balanced development of compulsory education. Third, priority support should be given to the allocation of resources in areas with weak compulsory education for a certain period of time. Once the development level of compulsory education in these areas reaches the prescribed standards, integrated allocation standards should be adopted in a timely manner to avoid new imbalances.

### 3.3 Improving Education Financial Policies to Promote the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education

As the publicity of compulsory education becomes increasingly evident, the basis of its balanced development mainly depends on education finance. The purpose and feasibility of educational financial policies must be taken into account when formulating them (see Table 1). The public's demand for balanced development of compulsory education is the basic basis and foundation for formulating educational financial policies. At present, there are three different public balanced demands for compulsory education in China, namely, balanced opportunities for compulsory education, equal process and conditions for compulsory education, and balanced quality of compulsory education. The balanced development of compulsory education to meet the needs of different public inevitably requires the formulation of different educational financial policies. [5]

**Table 1.** Supply Analysis of Financial Policies for Balanced Development of Compulsory Education

Supply basis	Supply guidelines	Major educational financial policies
Balanced quality of education	Vertically balanced trade finance	Reforming targeted at the balanced school funding method; improving the student financial aid system
Equal process and conditions for education	Horizontally balanced education finance	Formulating standards of public funds for primary and secondary schools; standardizing the system of transfer payments for compulsory education
Balanced opportunities for education	Educational finance neutrality	It is suggested to test and evaluate the educational financial policy.

### 3.4 Promoting Equal Implementation of Education Policies to Narrow the Inter-school Gap

On the one hand, for the construction of weak schools, they can partner with competent schools to help them make “one-to-one” adjustments according to their own actual conditions. For example, schools can apply to higher education departments to allocate an appropriate proportion of the budget income of schools with capacity to the construction of weak schools. As for rural areas and poor areas, the cities under their administrative jurisdiction should provide assistance, whether from the input of education funds or the overall mobilization of teacher resources to the grassroots level. On the other hand, school reform and competitions should be guided to produce synergistic effect in dynamic balance, and the compulsory education resource allocation should be optimized to promote the balanced development of education. Only in this way can the differences in the education resource allocation between urban and rural areas brought about by the long-term “urban-rural dualism” be reduced, and the long-term balanced development of compulsory education can be guaranteed.

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