

The Evolutionary Logic of Education Poverty Alleviation Policies since the Founding of the PRC—Based on Historical Institutionalism Paradigm

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Abstract: China has fully built a moderately prosperous society in 2020, and education poverty alleviation plays a very crucial role in it. According to the perspective of historical institutionalism, when analysing the change and evolution of China's education poverty alleviation policy since the founding of the country, we can divide it into the stages of conception, initiation, consolidation and change. Among them, 1949, 2000 and 2013 are the three important historical change points of the education poverty alleviation policy. In the new context of building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects, promoting rural revitalisation in all aspects and deepening reform in all aspects, we will continue to promote the development of China's education poverty alleviation policy, achieve breakthroughs in the original paths and policies, improve and strengthen the synergies between the relevant subjects, and realise breakthroughs and transformations in education poverty alleviation policy in the new era.

1. Introduction

At present, China has achieved the historic achievement of comprehensively eradicating poverty, with a total of more than 700 million people successfully lifted out of poverty. Education for poverty alleviation plays a crucial role in interrupting the intergenerational transmission of poverty, providing intellectual support for eliminating poverty at its source. Since the early days of the new China, China has been promoting education for poverty alleviation in various forms, such as large-scale literacy programmes and skills training for farmers. Now that China has built a moderately prosperous society in all aspects, the focus of work has shifted to how to consolidate the results of comprehensive poverty eradication and effectively connect it with rural revitalisation, a stage that will put forward higher standards and clearer tasks for poverty alleviation work in education. The most urgent task is how to deal with the new problems and tasks faced by education poverty alleviation under the new situation and background, therefore, we have collected China's activities and policies related to education poverty alleviation since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and analysed and summarized the logic of the policy evolution and turning points of the change based on the paradigm of historical institutionalism.

The thought of new institutionalism began to rise in the study of western political science in the

1980s, and it focuses on the emergence, development and evolution logic of the system. One of the three major schools is historical institutionalism, which combines historical analysis methods and institutional analysis methods to reinterpret policy content and policy process from the mesolevel [1]. The analytical perspective of historical institutionalism can better grasp the internal logic of the continuous development and change of policies. It analyses policy development, self-reinforcing processes, policy turning points and other points [2]. Its analytical framework consists of three key steps, the first step is to analyse the macro-factors affecting the system, and it conceptualises the factors affecting policies and institutions from political, economic, cultural and social perspectives. The second step is a path-dependence analysis of policy evolution, where policies and institutions gradually stabilise and are difficult to change as they are continuously implemented and modified. The third step is to analyse the turning point and power mechanism of policy change, if the policy that has been maintained for a long time wants to change, it is necessary to find the corresponding veto point of policy change. To analyse the historical institutionalism of China's education poverty alleviation policy, we firstly review the development of China's education poverty alleviation policy, then analyse it from the perspectives of policy path dependence, key turning points, and system break points and try to explore the resistance and motivation of China's education poverty alleviation policy change, and lastly look forward to exploring the direction of the transformation of China's education poverty alleviation policy in the new period and the effective entry point.

2. The development and change of China's education poverty alleviation policies

If we want to fully understand the evolution and change logic of China's education poverty alleviation policy, we must deeply understand and sort out the relationship between China's political, economic, cultural and social factors and education poverty alleviation policy based on the promulgation of major policies are taken as historical time nodes, under the key events and backgrounds such as political and ecological changes, the convening of important conferences.

2.1 Conception stage of the policy of poverty alleviation in education (1949-1978)

At the beginning of our country's existence, because of the long period of war, our education system was in a state of disrepair. Especially in the vast rural areas, not only was there no complete education system, but there was also a lack of basic education facilities, and the vast majority of peasants, who accounted for 90 per cent of the population at that time, were at the level of semi-literacy and illiteracy. Poverty alleviation through education during this period focused mainly on the development of rural education, and the overall policy was in the gestation stage, with the following specific points:

1) The ruling status of China's state organizations and the establishment of the socialist system have provided a solid foundation for the development of China's education. In the National Education Conference held for the first time in New China, "serving workers and peasants, serving the current revolutionary struggle and construction" was taken as the primary goal of education [3], which pointed out the direction and purpose of China's education poverty alleviation work.

2) Popularising the concept of education is a top priority in the cause of poverty alleviation through education. In the Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference adopted in 1949, it was pointed out that "universal education should be achieved in a planned and step-by-step manner". In response to this goal, China adopted a relief-type poverty-alleviation strategy in the early years of the founding of the nation, giving strong support in terms of human, material and financial resources on the one hand, with the aim of giving the general public more opportunities to receive basic education. On the other hand, it accelerated the spread of education through the renovation of old schools, the construction of fast-track secondary

schools for workers and peasants, and the introduction of a "multi-track" system of full-time, part-time and spare-time schools. Under the impetus of such policies, the enrolment rate of school-age children in China rose rapidly from 20% in 1949 to 62.6% in 1956; the proportion of industrial and rural students enrolled in schools rose from nearly 0% in 1950 to 34.1% in 1956; and the number of primary school students reached 116,209,000 in 1965, representing a 3.76-fold increase compared with that of 1949 [4]. These data show that our country achieved a great breakthrough in the popularisation of educational concepts at that time.

3) We should focus on the development of education in the vast rural areas, so as to explore feasible paths for the development of a further policy of poverty alleviation through education in China. In the early years of the founding of the People's Republic of China, with the "Directives on Educational Work" put forward in 1958 as a guideline, China's rural areas gradually adopted the form of education in which schools were run by production brigades, junior high schools were run by communes, and senior high schools were run by districts and counties. At the same time, most of the rural schools were constructed by the members of the community through the form of cash-for-work, and the financial expenditures such as teachers' salaries and equipment were subsidised by the government and shared by the communes, which effectively alleviated the serious shortage of financial resources for education in China [5]. From 1949 to 1954, students of industrial and agricultural composition in China's primary schools accounted for 82%, and students of industrial and agricultural composition in general secondary schools reached more than 60%, and between 1962 and 1978, the rate of further education of China's rural primary school graduates increased by 54.1% [6]. Rural education reform provides ideas and paths for the development of China's education poverty alleviation policy, in which the basic idea of "fairness-oriented, pocket universal" provides a direction for the development of China's long-time education poverty alleviation.

2.2 The launching stage of the policy of poverty alleviation through education (1978-2000)

During the first 30 years of the founding of the State, on the whole China made certain achievements in the area of poverty alleviation through education. With the implementation of the National Reform and the strategy of reform and opening up, China has gradually entered a new period of development. Therefore, new requirements have been put forward for talents and education, but at that time, China's average illiteracy accounted for 25 per cent of the total population of the country, and individual poverty-stricken areas even reached more than 50 per cent [7]. Therefore, the pressing question is how to achieve the goal of eradicating illiteracy and cultivating the talents needed for the development of the country. At this critical point in time, the state formally incorporated the policy of poverty alleviation through education into the overall poverty alleviation strategy, and China's policy and endeavour of poverty alleviation through education entered a brand-new stage of initiation, with the following specifics.

1) Comrade Deng has repeatedly emphasised that "poverty is not socialism" and that "To build socialism, we must first get rid of poverty". These points were further emphasised at the 1978 National Education Conference and the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, marking the gradual kick-off of China's efforts to alleviate poverty through education. The most epoch-making and landmark document was the "Notice on Helping Poverty-stricken Areas to Change Their Outlook as Soon as Possible", issued by the State in 1984, in which the concept of "education for poverty alleviation" was proposed for the first time. This not only clarified the position of education poverty alleviation policy in the overall poverty alleviation policy (i.e. from the periphery to the centre of poverty alleviation), but also gained the legitimacy and institutional space for education poverty alleviation in the top-level design [8]. Subsequently, the State Council

promulgated the Regulations on the Work of Eradicating Illiteracy in February 1988, a document that clarified and detailed the methods, standards, guarantees, and assessment of literacy, and different literacy programmes and regulations were formulated in different parts of the country in response to local conditions. In 1994, documents such as the Outline for the Reform and Development of Education in China and the National Plan for Poverty Alleviation in 1987 not only re-emphasised the importance of education for poverty alleviation, but also made it clear that one of the goals was to change the backward educational situation in poor areas. The introduction of these documents gradually outlined the route and method of development of China's education poverty alleviation policy, paving the way for the subsequent substantive development of education poverty alleviation.

2) China's mechanism for alleviating poverty through education developed rapidly during this period and gradually became systematic, diversified and standardised. In 1985, the Government promulgated the Decision on the Reform of the Education System. This document pointed out the need to gradually popularise nine-year compulsory education, starting with the management system, educational ideology and educational content, thereby narrowing the gap between basic education across the country. Subsequently, in the 1994 National Plan for Poverty Alleviation in 1987, the relationship between poverty alleviation mechanisms and the education system was further clarified. The programme emphasised the principles of "hierarchical responsibility, with the province taking the lead" and "hierarchical management, with local responsibility", with the aim of achieving synergy and coordination between poverty alleviation work and education for poverty alleviation. In addition, social organisations involved in education poverty alleviation also flourished during this period, providing human, material and financial support for education poverty alleviation. Among them, the China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF), which was founded in March 1989 at the initiative of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, has played an important role in poverty alleviation in education. By 1995, the organisation had raised a total of 692 million yuan for its activities to help out-of-school children and had succeeded in rescuing 1.25 million out-of-school children.

3) In terms of the overall effect of poverty alleviation, the incidence of poverty in China has been decreasing, with the popularisation of compulsory education playing a pivotal role. The prevalence of compulsory education not only reflects a country's level of educational development, but is also a key link in ensuring educational equity, and one of the priorities of China's education for poverty alleviation has been to popularise compulsory education in impoverished areas. At this stage, China has enacted a series of policies and regulations to ensure the popularisation of compulsory education. The first was the Decision on Certain Issues Concerning the Universalisation of Primary Education, issued at the end of 1980, which clearly set out the requirement that China should fully universalise compulsory primary education by the 1980s. This was closely followed by the 1986 Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China, which clearly states that nine years of compulsory education should be fully implemented and that support should be given to the development of the economically backward areas of the country. Among other things, the National Compulsory Education Project for Poverty-stricken Areas (Phase I), implemented in 1995, was the education poverty-alleviation project with the largest investment of manpower, material and financial resources by the central government and the largest scope of coverage since the founding of the country, and encompassed a total of 852 poverty-stricken counties across the country. In addition, the education situation and school conditions in poor areas have also been greatly improved through projects such as the Prairie Fire Plan, the Spark Plan, and the Harvest Plan [9]. Through the above efforts, it can be seen that during the period from 1978 to 2000, China's education poverty alleviation policy has achieved remarkable results. In 1978, the number of primary school students in China was 146.24 million, with a net enrolment rate of 94 per cent; the

number of junior middle school students was 49.95 million, with a gross enrolment rate of 64.4 per cent, while in 2000, the number of primary school students in China had dropped to 130.13 million, but the net enrolment rate had increased to 99.1 per cent. The number of junior middle school students enrolled increased to 62.56 million, and the gross enrolment rate also improved significantly, reaching 88.6 per cent [10].

Generally speaking, with strong support from the State, China's education for poverty alleviation has achieved unprecedented development and landmark achievements in various aspects during this period. However, there are still some shortcomings. On the one hand, the policies introduced by China are still at a rather general stage of explaining the concept of education for poverty alleviation; at the same time, education for poverty alleviation focuses on the eradication of illiteracy, compulsory education and so on, while insufficient attention has been paid to pre-school education and teachers' strength. On the other hand, due to factors such as regional differences, insufficient funding and teacher strength, the effects of poverty alleviation in education vary from place to place, which to a certain extent has led to a wide gap in the level of education in different places.

2.3 Consolidation stage of the policy on poverty alleviation through education (2000-2012)

As China enters the 21st century, the work of poverty alleviation in education is gradually maturing, and different policies have been revised and improved after a period of implementation. There is a trend of close connection, coordination and interaction between policies, and the policies as a whole have begun to move towards wholeness, systematisation and scale. At the same time, education for poverty alleviation has gradually demonstrated its role in fuelling China's economic development.

1) Improving the level of educational development in the western and rural areas of the country. China has invested a great deal of human, material and financial resources in the implementation of compulsory education, but there are still a considerable number of school-age children in underdeveloped regions and rural areas who do not enjoy compulsory education. In 2003, therefore, the State promulgated the Decision on Further Strengthening Education in Rural Areas, which made it clear that doing a good job of compulsory education in rural areas was the key to the full universalisation of compulsory education in China. A series of reforms were implemented in rural areas in the areas of teaching, school-running systems, personnel systems and so on, in order to lay a good foundation for the full universalisation of compulsory education in rural areas. In 2004, the Ministry of Education issued an action plan for the revitalisation of education for the period 2003-2007. The document emphasised the need to place rural education in a crucial position, to accelerate the development of rural education and deepen rural education reform, and to promote the coordinated development of the rural economy and society, as well as of urban and rural areas. The Plan points out that although China as a whole has achieved the goals of the two bases, the development of education in the western region is still lagging behind in comparison, with a considerable number of them inhabited by ethnic minorities, who account for 83 per cent of those counties where the goals of the two bases have not been achieved. Therefore, in order to raise the level of education in the western region, it is necessary to overcome the problem of minority education development. In addition, in order to tie in with overall poverty alleviation efforts and to accelerate the achievement of the goal of education-led development in impoverished areas, the "Raindrop Programme", led by the State Council's Leading Group of Poverty Alleviation and Development, has been in operation in impoverished areas since 2006. By expanding the target group from school-age youths to young and middle-aged farmers who are on the poverty-alleviation record, the programme aims to provide support, guidance and training to people in impoverished areas, to improve their qualities and their ability to find employment and start businesses, and thus

to promote local economic development and accelerate the pace of poverty alleviation. The implementation of the "Raindrop Programme" also marked the entry of China's poverty alleviation and development work into a new stage of natural resources development and human resources development [11]. Subsequently, since 2010, China's government has promulgated a series of policies on secondary students, high school students in impoverished areas, and the development of preschool education in impoverished areas. This also marks the gradual expansion of China's education poverty alleviation from universal compulsory education and the "two bases" project to vocational education, higher secondary education and preschool education.

2) In order to fulfil its solemn pledge that "no student will be deprived of schooling because of financial difficulties in his or her family", China has been investing more and more in education to alleviate poverty. In the Education Law, it is clearly stipulated that there shall be "three increases", i.e., "the increase in financial allocations for education by the people's governments at all levels shall be higher than the increase in recurrent revenues at the same level", which implies that the financial investment in education by the governments at all levels shall be prioritised for growth, and that the rate of growth shall be higher than the rate of growth in general government revenues. This stipulation means that the financial investment in education by governments at all levels should be prioritised for growth, and that the rate of growth should be higher than the rate of growth of general government revenue. This will ensure an appropriate increase in education funding and provide sufficient financial support to improve the quality and coverage of education. "Per capita education funding for schoolchildren shall be increased gradually", the provision designed to ensure that students can enjoy year-on-year increases in education funding support while they are in school. By increasing the level of per capita education funding, schools can provide better teaching resources, improve education facilities and enhance the quality of education to ensure that students receive quality education. The provision of "gradual increases in teachers' salaries and public funding per pupil" aims to ensure that teachers' salaries are increased year by year, and that public funding per pupil is also increased accordingly. By increasing teachers' salaries, the attractiveness and motivation of the teaching profession can be enhanced, thereby improving the quality of education. At the same time, increased public funding per pupil will provide better learning resources and services and promote the all-round development of pupils; in 2003 and 2005, China issued the Decision on Further Strengthening Rural Education and the Circular on Opinions Concerning Accelerating the Implementation of the "Two Exemptions and One Subsidy" Programme in Counties That Are Key to Poverty Alleviation and Development. Circular on Opinions on Accelerating the Implementation of "Two Exemptions and One Subsidy" in Key Counties for Poverty Reduction and Development These documents clearly state the need to establish a sound mechanism for financing the schooling of students from poor families and to implement the "two exemptions and one subsidy" policy, which means that poor students are exempt from miscellaneous and textbook fees and are given a subsidy to cover living expenses for boarding students. The goal is to cover all students from poor families with financial difficulties at the compulsory education stage in rural areas nationwide by 2007, in an endeavour to ensure that no student is deprived of schooling because of financial difficulties in his or her family. The document makes it clear that the subject of the "two exemptions and one subsidy" policy is poor families in rural compulsory education, and that urban and rural families in good standing are not allowed to benefit from the policy in any way [12]. The clarity of the subject reflects the fairness and public welfare of China's compulsory education from the root. In addition, China has also increased its investment in education by constantly amending the Compulsory Education Law, for example, since 2005, China has comprehensively included compulsory education in the scope of public financial guarantee; since 2006, it has gradually exempted tuition and miscellaneous fees in all regions; in 2009, China introduced a series of policies, including the baseline quota for public funding of rural

compulsory education, aiming to further alleviate the burden of education on the rural economically disadvantaged families. In 2009, China introduced a series of policies, including the benchmark quota for public funding of rural compulsory education, aimed at further alleviating the burden of education on economically disadvantaged rural families. According to the Ministry of Education's bulletin on the implementation of national education expenditure over the years, in 2000, China's total State financial expenditure on education was 256.261 billion yuan, or 2.87 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The introduction of these policies has played a positive role in safeguarding the educational rights and interests of rural students and promoting educational equity. By 2012, China's national fiscal expenditure on education was 22236.23 billion yuan, accounting for 4.28 per cent of GDP.

3) In addition to increased investment in education, our compulsory education system is undergoing continuous reform. The reform of compulsory education in rural areas in China is taking place in the context of the reform of the rural economic system. In this context, a compulsory education system of "local responsibility and hierarchical management" was formed, but in practice, most of the sources of education funding in impoverished areas are mainly townships, which has, to a certain extent, led to slow or even stagnant development of rural education. In response to this situation, starting in 2000, the rural education surcharge and fund-raising, which accounted for one third of the total investment in rural education, were cancelled. The Decision of the State Council on Further Strengthening Rural Education was adopted at the Rural Education Work Conference held in 2003, which pointed out the need to comprehensively promote "reforms of the rural teaching, institutional, and personnel systems of primary and secondary schools" in rural areas, as well as to carry out the "co-ordination of three kinds of education" (general, vocational, and adult education) and 'agricultural education'. At the same time, the comprehensive reforms of "integrating three kinds of education" (general education, vocational education and adult education) and "combining agriculture, science and education" were carried out, which laid a solid foundation for the universalisation of compulsory education in China [13]. With the promulgation of these documents and policies, a good atmosphere of education and respect for teachers has gradually been formed in our society, and not only the honourable titles such as "excellent teacher", "excellent education worker", "model for teaching and educating" are set up all over the country. All over the country, not only set "excellent teacher", "excellent educator", "model of teaching and educating" and other honours and titles [12], at the same time, the continuous reform of the teacher system, improve the treatment of teachers in all aspects, and from the spirit of the material and other aspects of the contribution of the teaching force to the commendation and affirmation.

To sum up, the policy of poverty alleviation through education at this stage is a continuation and development of the policy of the previous stage. Gradually, a systematic and comprehensive education poverty alleviation system with Chinese characteristics has been formed, rapidly ameliorating the problems faced by China, such as the lack of educational resources and the varying levels of education in different regions. However, the overall situation is still at the stage of rough education poverty alleviation, and precise education poverty alleviation for remote and deeply impoverished areas has yet to be fully implemented.

2.4 Stage of change in education policy for poverty alleviation (2012-present)

With the 18th National Congress of China held in 2012, the focus of China's poverty alleviation work gradually shifted to the final stage of overcoming difficulties and reaping results from 2013 onwards. General Secretary first raised the important topic of "precise poverty alleviation" during his visit to western Hunan, and subsequently included "promoting precise poverty alleviation" in the 13th Five-Year Plan, which has led to a new era of poverty alleviation in China. China's poverty

alleviation work has entered a new era of precise poverty alleviation mode [14]. At the same time, education poverty alleviation has also entered the core position of the overall national poverty alleviation strategy, and the poverty alleviation method has also gradually shifted to the precise education poverty alleviation mode with the adjustment of the overall strategy. At this stage, poverty alleviation through education has not only been limited to the crude poverty alleviation based on the criteria of universalising compulsory education and increasing the rate of advancement to various stages of schooling, but has also demonstrated the benefits, efficiency and ultimate effects of poverty alleviation through education on the fundamental issues of promoting the development of poor areas, increasing the income of poor families and interrupting the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

1) Until 2013, China still had 82.49 million people living in poverty, most of whom had difficulty in accessing further education after compulsory education, so the new era of poverty alleviation through education has gradually shifted the focus of its efforts to areas of deep and chronic poverty, and has focused on the key regions and groups of people living in poverty therein. In the document "China's Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Programme (2011-2020)", the State clearly points out that the problem of unbalanced regional development in China is still prominent, and that some deep-rooted contradictions are still restricting the development of impoverished areas, especially the poverty alleviation of concentrated and contiguous areas with special difficulties, which is still a very arduous task. In 2013, the General Office of the State Council forwarded the Opinions of the Ministry of Education and Other Departments on the Implementation of the Education Poverty Alleviation Project. The document defines the scope of the education poverty alleviation project as concentrated contiguous areas with special difficulties. It pointed out that each region should, according to its own actual situation, start from basic education, modern vocational education, education service capacity, student financial assistance level and education informationisation, and give full play to the important role of education poverty alleviation in promoting the development of the region, so as to promote the region to get rid of poverty fundamentally. In 2016, the Ministry of Education and six other departments jointly issued the "13th Five-Year Plan for Poverty Alleviation through Education", which is the first document in China to provide top-level design and overall planning for poverty alleviation through education. It makes a coordinated deployment of education poverty alleviation work by strengthening the foundation of education poverty alleviation, enhancing the capacity of education poverty alleviation, broadening the channels of education poverty alleviation, and gathering the power of education poverty alleviation. It further clarifies the key areas and groups for poverty alleviation through education, and calls for accurate identification of the targets of poverty alleviation through education, focusing on the key counties designated by the State for poverty alleviation through education and the concentrated and contiguous areas with special difficulties, as well as on the poor, such as those with established records, with each local area accurately grasping the needs of different areas and groups for poverty alleviation through education in accordance with its own actual situation.

2) Against the backdrop of precision poverty alleviation in the new era, China's policies on poverty alleviation in education have been more precise than those of the past. Firstly, more than 20 special policy documents on education for poverty alleviation of various kinds were issued during this period. The scope covered all stages from pre-school education to higher education, and the content included macro top-level planning, pre-school education, compulsory education, high school education, higher education, vocational education, student loans, the revitalisation of higher education in central and western China, ethnic education, special education, and so on. Secondly, the policies introduced in this period are not only more purposeful and targeted, but also highly implementable, greatly enhancing the efficiency of policy implementation. For example, in the

document "The Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)", it is clear that it is necessary to promote education fairness and further shorten the education gap by tilting the resources for poverty alleviation in education to remote, rural and ethnic areas, etc., and the specific measures include the plan for the revitalisation of higher education in central and western China and the special posting plan for teachers, etc. In addition, in 2018, after the 19th National Congress, China promulgated the Implementation Programme for Education Poverty Alleviation in Deeply Poverty-stricken Areas (2018-2020), which requires China to focus its efforts in three years to ensure that deeply poverty-stricken areas complete the task of "developing education to alleviate poverty in one batch" on schedule, and the "three regions and three prefectures" are regarded as the key areas in this process. In order to achieve this goal, China has adopted a number of targeted measures to increase investment in education for poverty alleviation in deeply impoverished areas, including the precise establishment of education accounts, the steady upgrading of the level of basic public services in education, the pooling of counterpart support for education, and the tilting of new funds and programmes for education for poverty alleviation in favour of these areas. Lastly, these policies have been formulated and promoted at a more precise point in time, with a clearer problem orientation. For example, in the area of higher education, China launched the Central and Western Higher Education Revitalisation Plan in 2013, and put forward a number of opinions on deepening the reform of simplifying and decentralising government, releasing power, combining management and optimising services in the area of higher education in 2017. In terms of children's development, China revises the Programme for the Development of Chinese Children every few years according to the situation, and at the end of 2014, the country promulgated the National Plan for the Development of Children in Impoverished Areas (2014-2020) for areas with concentrated and contiguous special difficulties. In the area of preschool education, China launched its first, second and third preschool education action plans in 2011, 2014 and 2017, respectively, and then in 2021, nine departments, including the Ministry of Education, jointly promulgated the Action Plan for Enhancing the Development of Preschool Education in the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan. The introduction of all these policies signalled a more systematic and standardised approach to poverty alleviation through education in China, reflecting the targeting of precision in terms of both content and philosophy.

3) The education poverty-alleviation model has gradually shifted from a top-level institutional design to a specific, locally adapted design, and, in terms of effectiveness, has gradually shifted from the pursuit of universality to a differentiated and precise approach. With the introduction of the guiding guideline of "the province is in overall charge, the county is in charge of the implementation, and support is given to the school and to the student". In terms of poverty alleviation through education, all localities have launched specific implementation plans suitable for local conditions after carefully studying the central policies and combining with the specific local conditions. For example, the "Construction project of Rural primary and secondary school teachers in deeply impoverished Counties" and the "Warm Project of Rural remote Areas in deeply impoverished Counties" launched by Gansu Province according to the provincial conditions have been promoted by the Ministry of Education throughout the country. Lastly, China insists on promoting employment through education. It has vigorously developed skills training and vocational education in impoverished areas through financial subsidies, policy formulation and school-enterprise cooperation, thereby improving the employability and labour skills of the labour force in impoverished areas.

In the new era, China's education poverty alleviation work has gradually formed a multi-level and multi-latitude system. Qualitative leaps have been made in system formulation, policy implementation and capacity building, and education poverty alleviation work has thus ushered in a

brand new opportunity for institutional change. In the face of the challenges posed by the diversified development of the world in the future, how to adjust the development of education for poverty alleviation, break away from the existing path of dependence, and realise the transformation of policies is a major challenge for China's education for poverty alleviation in the future.

3. Path dependence and institutional breakthrough turning points in China's education poverty alleviation policies

Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor believe that when conducting historical institutionalist analyses, one should analyse the path dependence and unintended consequences that arise in the process of institutional establishment and development. Path dependence in this context was originally a concept related to economics proposed by Douglas North, and in this case it refers to the continuous self-reinforcement and consolidation of the system during the period of its existence. Kranas believes that the phenomenon of institutional change occurs in two aspects: the emergence of critical turning points and the formation of new paths [15], where the critical turning points are the conflict between the different logic and factors required at different times and the pre-existing elements, which will ultimately give the system enough motivation to change, and the existing system will evolve and solidify with the emergence of the critical turning points and the conflict. The existing system will gradually evolve and solidify with the emergence of key turning points and conflicts into a new system.

3.1 Path dependence of progressive and continuous institutional development

Once a country or region has chosen a certain system for development, the system will be driven by inertia to strengthen and consolidate itself, so much so that the cost of reversal and change is greatly increased. The phenomenon of path dependence in China's education poverty alleviation policy is mainly triggered by the following factors.

3.1.1 The realities of the situation

At the time of the founding of New China and for a long time thereafter, the development of basic education in China was extremely backward. At the same time, the most urgent and realistic problem facing China at the time was how to solve the problem of food and clothing for the needy throughout the country, so education for poverty alleviation was not at the centre of the overall task of poverty alleviation at the time, and the resources and space for development were relatively limited, with many of the policies serving only to popularise and provide relief. However, with the implementation of China's reform and opening up, the State has come to realise that education is the key to interrupting the intergenerational transmission of poverty and giving new impetus to economic development. Therefore, the position of education in poverty alleviation in the country's overall poverty alleviation action has been rising, and the government has formulated new types of policies many times during this period, trying to make a breakthrough from the previous framework system. However, as China has long been under the logic of universal education in poverty alleviation, the central and local governments and relevant organisations have already produced an adaptive effect in long-term adaptation and learning, thus creating the problem of insufficient capacity for institutional innovation. The emergence of a new system will inevitably lead to collision and conflict with the old system, so for an institutional framework that has remained relatively unchanged for a long period of time, institutional innovation may bring breakthroughs and development, but it may also be risks and pitfalls.

3.1.2 High cost of policy exit

It is necessary to pay a large cost and price to make a breakthrough from the original system logic. China's education poverty alleviation policy is not just composed of some isolated important documents and policies, but is a related policy network gradually formed under the historical stage, which refers to a relevant institutional linkage between the government and other subjects around common interests in the process of policy formulation and implementation [16]. Due to China's special national conditions, the development of education poverty alleviation will be affected by more factors and involve more aspects, and the formation of the logic of education poverty alleviation system is made up of a series of related policies in addition to the important top-level design that plays a directional role. In terms of policy content, China's education poverty alleviation policies cover pre-school education, compulsory education, high school education, special education, ethnic education, and the construction of teachers in impoverished areas. In terms of the form of the policy, it includes support policies and special admission programmes for poor areas, as well as a more comprehensive financial assistance system for various stages of education. These policies in the long-term development of a relatively fixed trajectory of continuous self-reinforcement, and then formed a mutual influence, complementary, complex and systematic policy system, at this time want to achieve a breakthrough from such a policy system, to a large extent, will appear to affect the whole body, and therefore will pay a high cost of change. However, as the policy network continues to operate, the central and local governments and organisations gradually become familiar with the network's mode of operation, the cost of operation will be gradually reduced and the benefit of operation will be gradually increased, and in this kind of incremental return effect, it will be more difficult for the government to break out of the original system logic.

3.1.3 Lack of endogenous motivation among the poor

There is still a lack of endogenous motivation among some poor people in China. China's long-term education in poverty alleviation through the government and other social organisations and other external forces to use "indoctrination" resource input to poverty alleviation work, in the long term, this development approach cannot fundamentally solve the problem of poverty in local education. In contrast, by stimulating the intrinsic motivation of the population in poor areas and making good use of the external assistance of the government and social organisations, it is possible to realise the good development of poverty alleviation work in education in poor areas. However, as China's education poverty alleviation work continues to progress, backward ideas such as "waiting, relying" are gradually appearing in various provinces and regions, and the local poor people are overly dependent on the government for relief, which makes them gradually lose the intrinsic motivation to get rid of poverty on their own. In addition, the government's lack of implementation and failure to adapt to local conditions during the policy implementation stage have, to a certain extent, led to the passive acceptance of poverty alleviation policies by the local population, making it difficult for the policies to have the opportunity for further innovation and development, and making it even more difficult for China's poverty alleviation policies in education to break through the path of dependence.

3.2 The key turning point of the system-vetoing fracture change

China's education poverty alleviation policy since the founding of the country maintains a relatively stable progressive development. However, with the passage of time, this model of education poverty alleviation can no longer meet China's development needs, and at this point it is

necessary to make innovative breakthroughs in the logic of the old system, so as to change its development mode from relatively stable to spiralling upwards. The emergence of the key turning point is the best opportunity for the old system to change. There have been three key turning points in the development of China's education poverty alleviation policy, which have led to a fundamental transformation of the old system.

3.2.1 Reconstruction of the education system for poverty alleviation

New China was officially founded on 1 October 1949, just after the end of a decades-long war that had left the country in a state of poverty and weakness, and in a situation where nothing was left to chance. The National Education Work Conference held on 23rd December of the same year established the guideline of "Education for Workers and Peasants", which marked the first key turning point in the development of China's education policy for poverty alleviation. The conference pointed out two major directions for education and poverty alleviation in the new China, the first of which was to cultivate a large number of talented people to meet the needs of national reconstruction and development, and the second was to rapidly restore and establish a new type of education mechanism that would maximise the people's opportunities to receive education. In addition, the conference also established the fundamental principle of "socialist education for the people", and made rural education and universal primary education the key elements of education for poverty alleviation, setting the tone for the development of education for poverty alleviation in the following decades. In short, this key turning point successfully achieved a huge breakthrough in the field of education for poverty alleviation in China from scratch, laying a solid foundation for the country's rejuvenation and development.

3.2.2 Discovering the new value of education for poverty alleviation

With the arrival of the year 2000, the promulgation of the Programme for Poverty Alleviation and Development in China's Rural Areas (2000-2010) marked the second key turning point in China's education policy for poverty alleviation. The document clearly states that it is necessary to strengthen the comprehensive quality training of people in poor areas, promote the development of local education, and fundamentally lead the people in poor areas out of poverty and into prosperity through education. The institutional logic behind it shows that China has gradually realised the value of education in interrupting the intergenerational transmission of poverty, promoting the complete elimination of poverty in impoverished areas, and preventing the return of poverty to the areas where poverty has been eliminated. Previously, China's education poverty alleviation policy tended to take education as one of the directions of poverty alleviation, adopting resource inputs, policy support and other means to carry out relief poverty alleviation and not requiring the export of value, the result of this poverty alleviation method and concept can only be the poverty alleviation of a single field of education, and does not have much positive effect on the overall poverty alleviation situation. However, with the Outline of China's Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Programme (2000-2010), the Decision of the State Council on Further Strengthening Rural Education, the Action Plan for the Revitalisation of Education (2003-2007), and the "Two Basic Education Programmes" (2004-2010) for the western part of the country, it has become clear that education is the only way to alleviate poverty. With the introduction of such documents as the "Plan for Attacking the Two Foundations in the Western Region of the Country (2004-2007)", the State has gradually come to realise the value and function of poverty alleviation behind education, and education has been transformed from an object of poverty alleviation to a method and means of helping to alleviate poverty. Subsequently, the purpose of poverty alleviation through education in impoverished areas is not just to develop local education, but to inject new impetus into the revival

and development of local economy, society and culture through the development of education. Since this stage, education for poverty alleviation has gradually entered the centre of China's overall poverty alleviation policy, and has begun to become one of the effective ways for poverty-stricken areas in China to escape poverty and become rich.

3.2.3 Entering the era of precise education for poverty alleviation

With the continuous advancement of China's poverty alleviation task, on the one hand, China's poverty alleviation work has entered the critical stage of "fighting the battle and gnawing the hard bones" in 2012, and on the other hand, poverty alleviation through education has been incorporated into the core sequence of the country's overall poverty alleviation project. In November 2013, during his visit to western Hunan, General Secretary Xi put forward for the first time the important concept of "precise poverty alleviation", which marked the third key turning point in China's education poverty alleviation work. This turning point has made the concept of "precise poverty alleviation" gradually penetrate into the field of education poverty alleviation, especially the key idea of "poverty alleviation first helps people to be wise", which makes the mode of education poverty alleviation under the concept of precise poverty alleviation to be changed from the universal and relief type of "flooding" to the "flooding" type. The education mode of poverty alleviation under the concept of precise poverty alleviation will gradually shift from the universal and relief type of "flood irrigation" to the accurate and efficient type of "precise drip irrigation" poverty alleviation. Since then, China's education poverty alleviation policy has taken on three new features. The first is the construction of a complete policy system for precise poverty alleviation in three aspects: the design of the top-level programme, the implementation of specific methods and the improvement of the guarantee system. As a result, China's education poverty alleviation has formed a set of solid but flexible and highly implementable policy system from top to bottom, so that China's precise education poverty alleviation work can be carried out in an orderly manner. The second is the requirement to accurately identify the targets of poverty alleviation in the process of poverty alleviation, so as to realise a direct link between poverty-stricken areas and the masses and the resources for poverty alleviation in education, and to truly achieve the goal of "poverty alleviation to the household and accuracy to the person". Thirdly, poverty-alleviation policies and resources will be further tilted towards areas of key poverty and weak educational capacity, with localities combining the central documents with the actual local situation to accurately grasp the needs of local education for poverty alleviation, and focus poverty alleviation efforts on the poorest groups in the local area, so as to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of poverty-alleviation policies.

All in all, the emergence of the three key turning points has enabled China's education poverty alleviation system to seize the opportunity to adjust the trajectory of policy development in a timely manner at key points in time, break through the path dependence under the original system, and meet and promote the development of the times and the needs of the country. At the same time, it also skilfully combines the logic of the old system with the contradictions of the real needs, and thus smoothly and effectively passes through the pain period of the change of policy logic, which plays an exemplary role in the development and improvement of policies in other fields in China.

4. Future outlook of China's education poverty alleviation policy

From the beginning of the implementation of precise poverty alleviation in 2013, to the completion of a moderately prosperous society in China by 2020, to the effective connection between the results of poverty alleviation through education and rural revitalisation nowadays. Looking back on the development of education poverty alleviation policy, China has experienced

four major stages: conception, initiation, consolidation and change. Under the leadership of the Party, China has given full play to the advantages of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, accurately grasped every key turning point in history, and after accurately grasping the development of China's political, economic, social, and cultural aspects at that time, China has reasonably adjusted the direction of development of the education poverty alleviation system, so that China's education poverty alleviation work can develop in line with the times. After a long period of exploration and development, China has formed a set of concepts and experiences of education poverty alleviation with Chinese characteristics, which has provided Chinese experiences for the world of education poverty alleviation while solving the problems of the poor population in China with high quality, high level and high efficiency. However, with the passage of time and the development of the times, the more advanced education poverty alleviation system of the present time is also likely to gradually fall into a path-dependent solidification mode, just like the previous system; therefore, while maintaining the smooth operation of the existing policies, endeavouring to pursue the reforms and innovations of education poverty alleviation policies in the new era is a key point for future policy development.

4.1 From single-principle efforts to multi-principle synergistic governance

Firstly, we should fully mobilise social organisations and other non-government forces to alleviate poverty through education, so as to build a new pattern of poverty alleviation in which multiple actors work together. Looking back at the history of China's policy development, most of the changes were made in a top-down manner under the leadership of the government. In the face of the new stage of the changing environment at home and abroad, the government should take the initiative to give up the systematic development mode of taking charge of everything, and actively guide other social forces to enter into the system of poverty alleviation in education and form a diversified mode of synergistic governance, so that it can effectively deal with the unknown risks and challenges. Second, the central government's macro top-level design and local governments' localised practices should be coordinated. The central government should further promote the implementation of the policy of decentralisation and administration, and allow local governments to take the initiative according to their own situation, so as to increase the motivation and vitality of local education poverty alleviation work. For local governments, it is important to actively communicate with the central government, accurately respond to the implementation and development of local education poverty alleviation policies, and help the central government to improve and calibrate the macro system. Finally, local governments should be clear about the main role of education in poverty alleviation, and when engaging in multifaceted and coordinated actions with other social organisations, they should clearly define the division of powers and responsibilities and the relationship between the various departments and organisations, and actively share resources and information, so as to promote the implementation of poverty alleviation policies in a concerted manner, thus meeting the needs of the impoverished people at different levels.

4.2 Shifting from "quantity" to "quality"

After decades of development, China's education poverty alleviation work has achieved remarkable results, on the one hand, solved the problem of nationwide compulsory education, on the other hand, gradually expanded education poverty alleviation to pre-school education, ethnic education, special education and higher education, etc., to meet the people's needs for education at all levels. 2020 China announced that it would build a moderately prosperous society in all aspects, and then put forward a major strategy for organically connecting the results of poverty alleviation

with rural revitalisation, so the focus of education poverty alleviation should be adjusted in time. In 2020, China announced that it would build a moderately prosperous society in all aspects, and then put forward a major strategy of organically linking the results of poverty alleviation with rural revitalisation, so the focus of poverty alleviation in education should be adjusted in time. The traditional policy of poverty alleviation through education pursues high targets and high efficiency, following the principle of quantity before quality, with such standards as universal compulsory education and increased enrolment rates at all stages in impoverished areas as the main poverty alleviation goals, and the specific education needs of different impoverished areas and groups in different situations taking a back seat. In the new era of education poverty alleviation, the "quantity" advantage accumulated in the previous period should be gradually transformed into a "quality" advantage, so the logic of poverty alleviation should be changed from efficiency to effectiveness. The direction of China's education policy for poverty alleviation should be changed from a universal, relief-type model of poverty alleviation to a precise model that accurately reaches the household and helps the individual, carefully identifying the specific needs and root causes of poverty of different regions and groups, and formulating and implementing the relevant policies in accordance with the local conditions and the times.

4.3 Further shift from urban development to rural improvement

China has made rural areas the focus of poverty alleviation since the revelation stage of educational poverty alleviation, and has brought about a radical change in its educational landscape, which is most intuitively reflected in the dramatic increase in the enrolment rate at all stages of education in rural areas. However, how to promote educational equity, narrow the education gap between urban and rural areas, and strengthen the building of teachers in rural areas are the new challenges facing China's poverty alleviation through accurate education at the present time. Firstly, the central and local governments should strengthen the frequency and efficiency of communication, gain a full understanding of the educational profile of rural areas in each locality, and implement poverty alleviation policies to the quality and level of schooling in weak rural areas. Secondly, to address the problem of the wide gap in educational resources between rural and urban areas, the imbalance in educational resources between urban and rural areas can be improved by relaxing the conditions for rural students to enter urban areas to pursue their studies, by opening up online courses, and by implementing rotational teaching by urban teachers. Finally, most of the problems of education in rural areas are concentrated in the irrational allocation of teachers and the low standard of teaching. Therefore, the State should speed up the reform of the rural education system, and give greater support to policies such as the "Special Teacher Programme", the "University Student Teaching Programme", and the "Poverty-stricken Areas Teacher Training Programme", so that only by increasing the number of teachers in rural areas can we fundamentally raise the level of local schooling and teaching, and thus promote educational equity.

5. Conclusion

With the development of the times, countries all over the world have gradually realised that the rise of a country needs education as a support and assistance point, so poverty alleviation through education is an urgent problem all over the world. Through more than 70 years of exploration and endeavour, China has pioneered the cause of poverty alleviation through education with Chinese characteristics. An effective education poverty alleviation system should not only be based on the general environment of the times, but also be closely linked to the real situation and practice. The problems that need to be solved in the field of education poverty alleviation nowadays have already shifted from absolute poverty to relative poverty, but we should realise that solving the problem of

relative poverty requires our country to be more meticulous in terms of policy formulation, implementation and feedback, etc., and that it is necessary to carry out locally adapted and time-appropriate change and innovation. In addition, we should strengthen international exchanges and co-operation on education for poverty alleviation, and, while learning from and drawing on excellent poverty alleviation experiences abroad, we should use the discourse system of education for poverty alleviation with Chinese characteristics to present our concepts of education for poverty alleviation, so as to further enhance the influence of China's education for poverty alleviation on the global level.

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