

Improve the construction of school community to promote the quality and balanced development of education

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ABSTRACT

High-quality and balanced education is the core goal of education in the new era, and the construction of school district communities is regarded as an important path to solve the problem of uneven resource allocation and promote multi-stakeholder collaborative education. This article conducts an analysis from three aspects: core concepts, practical dilemmas, and practical paths. It points out that currently, there are challenges such as lagging school district division, unbalanced resource concentration, and unclear responsibilities of the main bodies. It is necessary to take measures such as dynamically adjusting the scope of school districts, establishing a multi-department collaborative mechanism, building an "Internet + resource platform", and improving compensation policies for vulnerable groups.

KEYWORDS

School Community Construction; High-quality and Balanced Education; Collaborative Education

The balanced development of education serves as the foundation for building a high-quality education system and is also a crucial guarantee for achieving social equity. At present, the issue of uneven allocation of educational resources in China remains prominent. The disparities between urban and rural areas, among schools, and the differentiation among various groups have restricted the in-depth promotion of educational equity. Taking school district communities as the entry point, this paper systematically analyzes the theoretical mechanisms and practical challenges of promoting educational balance, and puts forward targeted policy suggestions, aiming to provide references for optimizing the education governance system and driving the high-quality and balanced development of education.

1 Core Concepts of School Community Construction and Educational Balance

1.1 School Community (Spatial Attributes, Functional Attributes)

A school community refers to a multi-stakeholder collaborative network that takes a specific geographical area (such as streets and townships) as the basis, with schools and communities as the core carriers, and integrates educational resources and social service functions. Its "spatial attributes" emphasize the physical concentration and sharing of educational resources within the region. For example, schools, community activity centers, cultural venues, etc. together form an educational ecosystem; its "functional attributes" are reflected in the deep integration of educational services and social governance.

1.2 High-quality and Balanced Education (Resource Fairness, Equal Opportunities, Quality Improvement)

High-quality and balanced education includes three aspects: First, "resource fairness", that is, breaking down the barriers to the allocation of resources between urban and rural areas and among schools, and ensuring the reasonable allocation of elements such as teachers, facilities, and courses; second, "equal opportunities", which means that through policy guarantees and mechanism innovation, the gaps in educational opportunities for students caused by family backgrounds and regional differences can be narrowed; third, "quality improvement", that is, pursuing higher-level educational achievements on the basis of balance, such as the development of students' core literacy and the characteristic development of schools. These three aspects complement each other and jointly constitute the connotation of educational fairness in the new era.

2 Practical Dilemmas in the Current Construction of School District Communities

2.1 Policy Level

(1) Vague School District Division Standards and Insufficient Cross-regional Collaboration

Currently, the division of school districts in China mostly relies on administrative instructions and the household

registration system, lacking a scientific basis for dynamic adjustment, resulting in a mismatch between the number of schools within some school districts, the student source structure, and the actual needs (Wang, J. J. 2022). For example, in newly developed urban areas, the population is growing rapidly, but the construction of educational resources lags behind, while in "old and dilapidated" school districts, resources are left idle due to population outflow. At the same time, the lack of a cross-regional collaboration mechanism and administrative barriers have restricted the flow of resources between urban and rural areas and across county regions. For example, the policy of "strong schools leading weak schools" in a certain province is difficult to implement due to the hierarchical management of finances, and there are great obstacles to the cross-regional transfer of high-quality teachers.

(2) Unclear Boundaries of Rights and Responsibilities for Community Participation in Education

Although policies encourage community participation in education governance, the current laws and regulations have a vague definition of the functions of communities in the construction of school districts. Communities are often simplified as "cooperators" and lack the right to speak in decision-making, resulting in low efficiency in resource coordination. For example, in some areas, community libraries and cultural stations are out of touch with the curriculum needs of schools. When communities want to introduce off-campus practical bases, they face problems such as complex approval procedures and unclear responsibility attribution, creating a dilemma of "having power but no responsibility" or "having responsibility but no power".

2.2 Resource Level

(1) Concentration of High-quality Resources in Key Schools and Limited Community Support for Ordinary Schools

Affected by historical investment and policy preferences, high-quality teachers, funds, and equipment have long been concentrated in key schools, forming the "Matthew Effect". However, due to the insufficient economic level and the underdevelopment of social organizations in the communities where ordinary schools are located, it is difficult to obtain additional support. For example, a key middle school in a county town has standardized laboratories and provincial-level renowned teachers, but other schools in the same community even rely on financial allocations for the renewal of basic teaching aids, and the channels for community enterprises' donations are scarce, further widening the gap between schools.

(2) Urban-rural Differences in the Application of Information Technology

Educational digitalization provides the possibility for resource sharing, but there are significant differences in urban and rural infrastructure and digital literacy. Urban school districts can achieve course live broadcasts and inter-school lesson preparation through "smart campuses", while rural areas still face problems such as low network coverage and insufficient information technology skills of teachers. For example, although a township school in a mountainous area in the west is equipped with online education equipment, due to unstable network and lack of teacher training, the equipment has been idle for a long time, and the "digital divide" between urban and rural areas has instead become a new obstacle to balanced development.

2.3 Subject Level

(1) Overemphasis on School Dominance and Insufficient Participation of Multiple Subjects In the current construction of school district communities, schools still play an "absolute leading" role, and communities, families, and social institutions are mostly in a passive response state. For example, parents' committees and community representatives lack substantial participation channels in curriculum design and activity planning, and the after-school services provided by social organizations are often limited in scale due to schools' concerns about "assuming responsibilities", resulting in the superficial integration of resources.

(2) Differentiation in Residents' Cognition and Willingness to Participate in Educational Affairs

Residents' willingness to participate in education governance is significantly affected by their economic level and cultural background. High-income groups actively strive for high-quality educational resources (such as promoting the premium of school district housing), while vulnerable groups are indifferent to educational affairs due to information asymmetry or livelihood pressures. For example, according to community research, more than 60% of migrant parents have never participated in school activities due to their busy work. The community education consultation council has become a meeting place for "elite parents," and the demands of disadvantaged groups have been marginalized.

3 Practical Paths to Promote Educational Balance through School Community Construction

3.1 Optimize the Top-level Design

(1) Dynamic School District Division

The current static school district division leads to a mismatch between the supply and demand of resources, and a dynamic adjustment mechanism needs to be established (Li, X. S. 2024). For example, based on the data of the permanent population, the distribution of school-age children, and the carrying capacity of educational resources, the boundaries of school districts should be updated regularly to promote the management mode of "large school districts" across administrative regions. For instance, implementing the "shared school district" system, which allows students to choose schools across streets, can alleviate the shortage of degrees in key school districts.

(2) Policy Coordination

Achieving educational balance requires going beyond the responsibilities of a single department and promoting policy linkage among departments such as education, civil affairs, and culture. For example, establishing the "Community Education Joint Conference System" to coordinate after-school services in schools, community cultural activities, and public welfare projects of the civil affairs department, and incorporating places such as community libraries and children's palaces into the educational resource sharing network.

3.2 Deepening Resource Sharing

(1) Establishing a "School District Resource Center" to Coordinate the Sharing of Facilities and Teachers

Establish a physical or virtual resource center at the school district level to integrate inter-school hardware facilities, curriculum libraries, and teacher information. For example, create a "School District Resource Cloud Platform", where schools within the region can reserve laboratories and gymnasiums, and teachers can apply for "teaching rotation" tasks across schools and have them included in the assessment; at the same time, establish a database of teachers with special skills and launch elective courses across schools (such as STEM courses) to achieve efficient resource allocation.

(2) Promoting the "Internet + School Community" Model to Bridge the Urban-rural Digital Divide

Rely on 5G, AI and other technologies to build an urban-rural integrated resource sharing platform. For example, through the "Dual-teacher Classroom", the courses of famous urban schools can be live-broadcasted to rural schools, and rural students can interact and ask questions in real time; establish a regional online teaching and research alliance, where urban and rural teachers can jointly prepare lessons and conduct evaluations. At the same time, the government needs to increase investment in rural network infrastructure construction and provide information technology training for teachers to ensure that the application of technology is truly implemented.

3.3 Strengthening Subject Collaboration

Constructing an "School-Community-Family" Education Community. Define the rights and responsibilities of the three parties through institutional design to form a co-governance pattern. Representatives from schools, community managers, parents, and social organizations jointly discuss and make decisions on matters such as the design of extracurricular activities and the opening hours of resources; simultaneously establish a "Community Parents' School" and invite experts to provide family education guidance to improve the participation ability of families.

3.4 Promoting Compensation for Vulnerable Groups

Establishing Special Funds to Provide Targeted Support for Weak Schools and Vulnerable Groups. Establish an "Educational Equity Special Fund" through channels such as financial allocations and social donations, which is earmarked for improving the hardware conditions of rural schools, subsidizing the enrollment fees of migrant children, and other purposes (Li, X. F. 2023). For example, establish an "Educational Revitalization Fund" to support schools in underdeveloped areas in introducing renowned teachers and carrying out paired assistance programs. Communities can collaborate with foundations to provide nutritious lunches and psychological health services for left-behind children.

4 Conclusion

As an important carrier for high-quality and balanced education, the construction of school district communities has opened up a new path for achieving a "quality educational environment" by reconstructing the logic of resource allocation, stimulating the vitality of multiple subjects, and strengthening the protection of vulnerable groups. However, problems such as the policy lag in dynamically adjusting school districts, the unclear rights and responsibilities of cross-departmental collaboration, and the uneven empowerment of digital technology still restrict the actual effect of the reform. In response to this, it is necessary to further strengthen the scientific nature of the top-level design, the co-construction nature of multiple subjects, and the inclusiveness of digital technology, and promote the formation of a new governance pattern of "government guidance, community support, social participation, and family linkage". Future

research can focus on long-term effect evaluation and the differentiated needs of special groups, and continuously explore a high-quality implementation model for educational balance.

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