

Equity and Excellence: How are Technological Advances Changing What We Consider the Success is in Chinese Education?

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Abstract: In recent two years, it seems that education is starting to rely more on Internet technology. Influenced by the continuous development of online technology, the standards of successful education have changed significantly. In view of the seemingly unceasing rise of Internet technology and online learning, this essay argues the changes in people's perspectives in both equity and excellence, which are always two of the primary concerns in the Chinese educational field.

Key words: equity; excellence; technological advances; successful education

1. Introduction

Known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the rapid development of modern information technology in the 21st century has significantly changed people's daily life, reshaping the whole society and culture from many aspects. Education could be easily influenced by the external environment. The emergence and prevalence of artificial intelligence, the Internet technology and social media have radically influenced the educational field. Consequently, the continuous development of the Internet has impacted the traditional perspectives in education. Many concepts of education have been deeply influenced by modern technology during the past decades, including standards of successful education (Farrell, Newman & Corbel, 2020). Among these concepts, equity and excellence are always two of the key considerations when it comes to promoting education efficiency and effectiveness (Branden et al., 2011). It is critical for the educational system to strike a balance between these two components in order to attain the standard of successful education.

2. The Changes in Equity

The importance of equity has always been emphasized in the educational field. However, this concept has changed dramatically since the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Equity in education stressed equitable access for all students several decades ago, with the goal of safeguarding children's basic rights to receive elementary and foundational education (Rautalin et al., 2018). For example, in Chinese society in 1980s, fairness meant that all pupils had the same school entry qualification, and every kid in China had the right and obligation to receive primary and foundational education under the nine-year compulsory education policy. Access to education has long been considered the most crucial facet of educational fairness, as it is a necessary component and even precondition for people to pursue a better life.

Technology has accelerated the pace of economic development in recent years, which has benefited educational environments and school equipment (Farrell et al., 2020). However, in recent years, partly due to the wide application of

Internet technology and social media, which has greatly eased the contact, a major disparity in educational fields has been seen between eastern and western places, as well as urban and rural areas. Students in urban areas, particularly in China's eastern region, typically enjoy superior learning environments and resources to students in other areas (Wen & Gu, 2017). This disadvantage has become even more apparent since the epidemic, when distant study has become mandatory during this time (Sahlberg, 2020).

For example, it may seem natural for urban students to participate in distance learning with electronic devices, yet purchasing a computer or iPad to support online courses may be costly for students from remote places. Despite the fact that many individuals say that distant learning might considerably improve education if it were not limited by time and geography, the truth is that many students still find it difficult to access online education (Sahlberg, 2020).

Many educators have pointed out that, even if all pupils are able to attend school, their subsequent development may be vastly different. Although most people think of students' learning outcomes and future development as personal issues impacted solely by their abilities and hard work, education output and transition chances may have a strong link to students' social and cultural origins (Mijs, 2015). Educators have noted that students from underprivileged backgrounds typically perform poorly in a variety of examinations and subsequent growth (Rautalin et al., 2018).

For example, since the 1990s, the ratio of students from rural and distant locations has been falling in China's best colleges (Wen & Gu, 2017). Even though these students were recruited based on their great academic performance, they typically lack the comprehensive abilities and broad perspectives that their urban classmates possess, which are typically technology-or international-related, such as computer skills. As a result, these students may still be uncompetitive in the job market.

As a result, people are gradually realizing that accessible equity is insufficient, as kids continue to experience inequity in terms of quality, opportunities, and production (Rautalin et al., 2018). Many educators believe in meritocratic education, which holds that each student deserves the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities without being influenced by other variables such as family, skin color, or gender. However, establishing a perfectly fair teaching and assessment system may be difficult, if not impossible, because even capacities are intimately linked to and influenced by social and cultural factors (Owens & de St Croix, 2020). In short, equity in education, refers to the process of providing students with greater opportunities to enable them reach their full potential.

3. The Changes in Excellence

Another important factor in identifying a successful education is excellence. Educators all throughout the world have been paying attention to the challenges caused by high-stakes and standardized exams in recent decades (Rautalin et al., 2018). China's educational system is heavily test-driven (Liu, 2017). Students and schools are required to attain satisfactory scores in authorized standardized assessments, such as the senior high school entrance examination or the college entrance examination, to demonstrate their education quality (Zhang, 2004).

Standards of excellence, like equity issues, have evolved in tandem with the advancement of modern technologies. New literacies are being created as a result of the widespread use of modern technology, and being literate in current culture means more than just reading and writing (Farrell et al., 2020). Rather, as a result of the digitization process, the ability to generate and exchange content through electronic devices and social media has become a fundamental but essential skill, similar to computer abilities (Lotherington & Jenson, 2011). A vast number of industries have been compelled to go from offline to online. Students are expected to complete and submit their homework using a computer, and more businesses are focusing on e-commerce (Farrell et al., 2020).

Because of the widespread usage of Internet technology in recent decades, communication across countries has been greatly facilitated, which places a greater emphasis on countries' international communication capabilities and educational competitiveness. On the one hand, curriculums have placed a strong emphasis on acquiring a second language, particularly English. Candidates are frequently requested to show documentation demonstrating their ability to communicate in a second language, such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) examinations (Rautalin et al., 2018).

On the other hand, society's attention has been drawn to the rankings of international-level assessments, which may affect curriculum design in the future. Rautalin et al. (2018) used the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) as an example in their research. PISA, which is led by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), provides a clear and comprehensive result for participating nations to compare teenagers' academic performance. It has a considerable impact on many countries' awareness of the importance of promoting national educational traits. To be more competitive in international contexts, policymakers tend to develop curriculums according to international standards to assist students score better in these assessments. It is not enough to excel at a local level; instead, people started to see educational performance through a worldwide lens, comparing national education to global standards. As a result, as Liu (2017) has pointed out, education in modern society is required to provide assistance in learning comprehensive and cognitive skills, allowing students to freely obtain needed knowledge and gain new capacities in their future lives.

4. Conclusion

To summarize, high-quality education stresses both equity and excellence. On the one hand, people have gradually grasped the need of not only available equity, but also opportunity and output equity. Equity refers to people's fundamental rights to access to education, regardless of their socioeconomic status, which necessitates significant and ongoing investment and equal support. Educational equity represents the level of social equity, which increases social mobility by giving ordinary people more chances to better their own lives. On the other hand, excellence in education has a significantly broader meaning besides academic performance. Whether schools could develop students with comprehensive skills and diverse capacities related to modern technology becomes a new standard of educational excellence. These two features are incompatible, and the educational system must strike a balance between them rather than overemphasizing one.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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