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Abstract of “An Analysis of Equity in Education for Children from Vulnerable Groups”

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Abstract:

I. Manifestations of Educational Imbalance Affecting Children from Vulnerable Groups

1. Unequal educational opportunities

It is specified in the Compulsory Education Law that “all children shall receive compulsory education for the prescribed number of years, regardless of sex, nationality or race.” However, in reality a large number of those children whose parents belong to vulnerable groups are deprived of education. A survey conducted in the late 1990s shows that children’s school enrolment in undeveloped areas in Western China was only 80%. Moreover, the phenomenon of dropping out of school is very common. Schooling problems affecting children of off-farm workers also reflect inequity in education.

2. Inequity in the educational process

From a macro point of view, education funding, the number of qualified teachers, school facilities etc. all affect equity in education, among which education funding plays a decisive role. Adequate funding is dependent on the level of local economic development. Economic development also plays an important role in building a favourable educational environment and ultimately determines quality in education. Inequity in the factors mentioned above severely affects children from vulnerable groups.

3. Inequity in educational results

The existing evaluation system for education has many loopholes: the chance of success and opportunities in employment apparently differ depending on different social classes or family backgrounds to which children’s parents belong. High tuition fees and expense of changing to renowned schools make it impossible for children from vulnerable groups to have an equal opportunity.

II. Reasons of Educational Inequity Affecting Children from Vulnerable Groups

1. State investment in education is far from enough. Lack of education funding has always been an obstacle to the development of education as well as to equity in education. Although a certain degree of difference is unavoidable, as the main body of educational resource allocation, the state should do the overall planning and ensure proper allocation of educational resources, approximately ensuring equal right to education. The state should adopt policies leaning towards vulnerable groups, so that children from vulnerable groups can also have equal access to education.

2. Vulnerable groups have economic difficulties and their ideas are outdated. Life is hard for farmers in poor and underdeveloped mountain areas; their children’s education is put at a secondary position. Economic

backwardness will inevitably lead to outdated thinking. Many villages cannot afford or see any hope in education before they can have adequate food or clothing. This kind of cycle continues and inequity in education becomes more prominent.

3. Social policies and education systems are imperfect. The long-term favouring of education policies towards cities and key schools is the underlying cause of inequity in education for children from vulnerable groups.

III. Measures to Provide Equal Educational Opportunity for Children from Vulnerable Groups

1. Education policy and educational resource allocation should lean towards vulnerable groups. With the socialist market economy as the background, if the government wants to make educational development as a means of social and economic development, then as the main body of the educational resource allocation, the government should follow the principle of leaning towards the poor instead of the rich.

2. Imbalance in educational opportunities should also be addressed at the micro level: (1) curriculum design should reflect equity in education; and (2) we should ensure diversified approaches to education, prevent false equity, and strive for real equity.

3. Learn from successful experience of foreign countries. A school voucher, also called an education voucher, is one of the most radical measures of the US education reform. It is a certificate issued by the government which parents can apply towards tuition at any school they choose. Under the current national situation of China, issuing education vouchers may be referable to resolving education problems in China.