

The Impact and Guarantee of Policy Changes to Migrant Children on Educational Equity in Guangzhou

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Abstract:

In 2018, Guangzhou announced that it would adjust the policy on the advancement of the high school entrance examination in other places in 2021 and relax the restrictions on the advancement of children who have migrated with their parents to Guangzhou. It is of great significance to the migrant children who are educated in Guangzhou and take the Guangzhou high school entrance examination. However, there is a lack of adequate investigation into the impact of this change on the migrant children as individuals. This study will conduct interviews with a certain number of samples based on the method of qualitative research, taking Guangzhou as the scale, to explore the subjective feelings of the migrant children about the policy changes, and analyze the impact of the policy relaxation on the academic performance of the migrant children based on their personal family background and school experience. The results show that the relaxation of the policy has a positive and encouraging effect on the academic performance which is not only beneficial to the migrant children, but also ensures a certain degree of educational equity, and also has certain reference significance for the adjustment of education policy.

Keywords: Policy changes, Educational expectations, Migrant children, Educational equity.

1. Introduction

The education of migrant children is a major problem brought about by population migration in the development of urbanization, which involves not only the issue of educational resources, but also the financial and public management departments. In the course of institutional changes and policy promotion of compulsory education for migrant children, which is a major livelihood project, with the development of the economy and the construction of public works by the state, the concept of educational fairness, balance, and quality of education is becoming a reality, and the modernization of the education governance system and education governance is also steadily advancing [1]. However, there are still difficulties for migrant children in stages outside of compulsory education, especially in local high schools, where most migrant children who do not meet the policy conditions cannot enter public schools and can only return to their places of residence to continue their studies due to the harsh conditions for further education. This exclusion of migrant children is a legacy of Guangzhou's past policy restrictions based on practical considerations [2].

In 2018, Guangzhou announced that it would relax the policy conditions from the original (three years of legal

and stable employment, three years of legal and stable residence and holding a "Guangdong Provincial Residence Permit", three years of participating in social insurance, and three years of complete junior high school registration) in 2021. This policy change of relaxation will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the education of the children of migrants.

In order to explore the subjective feelings of migrant children about this policy change and the changes in educational expectations caused by the change, this study will use qualitative interviews to collect and analyze the mental impact of policy conditions relaxation.

2. Methods

2.1 Ethics

This study is an individual-social study, and all interviews are voluntary. At the beginning of each interview, participants were given verbal and written information about the purpose of the study, giving them an advance understanding of the purpose and purpose of the interview. All participants were informed in writing and consented to record interviews, transcribe audio recordings, and publish study results anonymously. The individual undertakes to comply with the regulations on the processing of personal data for

scientific research purposes.

In order to protect the privacy of the respondents, all respondents will participate in the research interview anonymously, considering the fluency of the research record, the name of the interviewee and some personal information will be replaced in the form of pronouns and tags during the study, and all recorded data and audio recordings will

be made public after the end of the study.

2.2 Interviewees

The participants included 10 college students, aged between 20 and 22, who had received a good education, had a certain understanding of social policies, and were concerned and thinking about their own social rights and interests. The sources of participants are as follows.

Table 1. The basic information of participants

Number	Members	Gender	Household registration	Junior high school	University	Hukou
1	A	Male	Yunfu	Whampoa Military Academy Memorial Middle School	Guangdong University of Technology	Urban
2	B	Male	Qingyuan	Guangzhou No.2 Middle School	South China Normal University	Urban
3	C	Male	Qingyuan	Whampoa Military Academy Memorial Middle School	Guangdong University of Technology	Urban
4	D	Female	Yingde	Guangzhou No.2 Middle School	South China Normal University	Urban
5	E	Male	Yingde	Guangdong Foreign Studies University Experimental Middle School	Jinan University	Rural
6	F	Female	Zhaoqing	Guangzhou No.6 Middle School	South China Normal University	Urban
7	G	Male	Qingyuan	Guangdong Foreign Studies University Experimental Middle School	South China Normal University	Urban
8	H	Male	Jiangmen	Guangzhou No.6 Middle School	Jinan University	Urban
9	I	Female	Fogang	The true light middle school	Guangdong University of Technology	Rural
10	J	Male	Fogang	The true light middle school	South China Normal University	Rural

The following research will refer to this table.

2.3 Recruitment

In this study, a total of 10 migrant children who attended junior high schools in Guangzhou from 2015 to 2020 were recruited by means of online written contact. Due to the impact of Guangzhou's local high school entrance examination policy, these migrant children are unable to enter public high schools in Guangzhou, which means they can only go to private high schools in Guangzhou and neigh-

boring developed areas or return to their places of origin to study, which is more or less affected by the policy conditions.

Most of the samples interviewed are undergraduates, whose families have a certain economic foundation, whose economic level is higher than the average of local economic development, who have received higher education, who have shown clear self-awareness and logical

thinking in the dialogue, and have a certain plan for their own career development.

2.4 Data Collection

Interviews were conducted mainly during July 2024. The data collection method came from the interview recording of the online conference software, and after collecting and sorting, the main collection samples were the impact of policy changes on individual education, the perception of policies and the educational expectations of the samples, as well as the subjective thoughts and emotions of policy changes. The interviews were based on a semi-structured approach, with participants generally in their own homes and lasting approximately 10-20 minutes.

2.5 Guideline

Based on the theory of educational expectations and the relevant literature on the educational expectations of migrant children, the interview focuses on introducing the impact of policy changes to migrant children [3]. At the same time, policy biases and qualitative research orientations are also taken into account [4]. Before conducting the interviews, the questions were well known and understood by the undergraduates who accompanied the children, and were optimized with the suggestions of some undergraduates.

2.6 Transcription

The lead author transcribed, verified, and proofread the content of the interview, and all the work was done by the lead author. In order to prevent proofreading errors due to the individual limitations of the lead author, the transcription of the record is reviewed by the participants in advance to ensure that the transcription is clear to the participants.

2.7 Data Analysis

The collected data were collated and the interviews were divided into four aspects: college history, college plan, subjective feelings, and school expectations, and the impact of education policy changes on the education and education of migrant children was compared through these four aspects, so as to obtain the rationality and significance of policy changes.

3. Result

3.1 Sample

In the composition of the sample, two students studied economics, as well as three studied social sciences, two studied chemical engineering, two studied engineering majors, and one major studied transportation. Of these samples, eight students' hukou were urban and the other

two were rural, ensuring that differences in household registration were present as variables in the study. The 10 samples were screened to ensure that they all chose not to complete their academic careers in non-public high schools in Guangzhou due to the policy changes in Guangzhou, which has a direct impact on the equity of education due to the policy changes.

The samples were sorted by letter and serial number, and samples 1 to 10 are referred to as A-J in the following abbreviations, so as to clarify the differences between the samples and organize the interview results according to the information of the samples (as shown in Table 1).

3.2 Educational Expectations

Similar to the assumptions which follows the study of Hou, strict admission requirements have a profound negative impact on the educational expectations of migrant children and their families, while liberal conditions for further education have an incentive effect on their educational expectations [5]. In the process of interviewing the sample, it is obvious that 8 migrant children have been greatly affected by the limitation of policy, and the policy changes have a great impact on the quality of their education and their education plans in the future. Because of the fact that public high schools in Guangzhou have better students and more teaching resources, they originally had higher educational expectations and better life plans for their academic careers, but due to policy changes, they had to adjust their educational plans and enter schools with average educational resources under restrictions, which affected their family planning and their academic careers. As can be seen from the changes in the educational expectations of the sample, the strict policy restrictions on migrant children have seriously affected their further education, thus changing their plans.

It is worth noting that most of the samples chose private high schools in neighboring educationally developed areas, and two of them chose to return to their hometowns to study in high schools, indicating that there are certain practical differences in the educational resources between private high schools and public high schools in Guangzhou, also reflecting the educational differences between economically developed and economically backward areas represented by Guangzhou.

3.3 Differences

In the interviews, there are many differences between the children of migrants in rural areas and those of other cities.

The first is the family environment between rural and urban areas. Due to the constraints of economic conditions and infrastructure, the sample subjects of rural hukou in

rural areas generally live in non-wealthy families, and poverty plays a large role in education investment, and the right to education of children in rural areas may not be guaranteed due to the impact of the rate of return on education [6,7]. In addition, as the result of Zhao, with regard to children's schooling, the absence of parental presence can have a serious negative impact on academic performance and willingness to go on to higher education [8]. Therefore, in addition to the influence of economic factors and the requirements of family integrity, the behavior of migrant children with rural hukou who follow their parents to Guangzhou to continue their studies while their parents go to Guangzhou to work, also has the consideration of improving the rate of return on education and ensuring the integrity of compulsory education. On the contrary, the children of migrants with household registration in the city choose to go to Guangzhou for education because of the excellent teachers, richer teaching resources and better teaching environment in Guangzhou, and because of the existence of policy thresholds, they complete their studies in Guangzhou at the compulsory education stage of junior high school, and try to impact better public high schools. These two types of migrant children have different purposes and different motivations for studying in Guangzhou. Of course, the family environment of individual migrant children varies greatly, and account does not exist as a decisive factor.

Naturally, there are differences in educational expectations derived from differences in family environments. Judging from the content of the interviews, some of the migrant children did not receive restrictions from the policy due to their lack of educational expectations, and returned to their hometowns or continued to study in private high schools in Guangzhou according to the original plan. On the contrary, the children of migrants who have the idea of enjoying high-quality educational resources are severely restricted by the policy, and as in other large cities, students from surrounding cities will be attracted due to the concentration of educational resources, which has led to the fact that Guangzhou's non-local high school entrance examination policy is still strictly restricted compared to other small and medium-sized cities. This strictness also stop migrant students from going to better school due to its xenophobia [9,10]. Because of this, this type of migrant children have the strongest feelings about the policy, and the reduction of their educational expectations reflects the severity of the policy, "too many conditions" and "it is too difficult to meet the conditions" are their feelings about the policy conditions.

3.4 Subjective Feelings

The subjective feelings of the migrant children are slightly

different from those of the migrant children, but they are generally stable and do not have excessive negative emotions.

As individuals with high expectations, A, B, and I all have strong feelings about the policy changes, and they believe that the restrictions of the policy have seriously affected their studies, and they have not been able to go to public high schools in Guangzhou if they fail to meet these conditions, even if their high school entrance examination scores meet the requirements for admission to these public high schools. One of the most striking examples is the case of A, who has already passed the internal entrance examination of a public high school, but still needs to score well above the local cut-off score in the high school entrance examination to be admitted to the high school. A also expressed regret about the change of policy, and hoped that educational equity could be better reflected in the future.

However, most of the children who are restricted by the policy do not have too much emotion, although the policy has changed their education plan, but except for a few individuals who show the subjective feeling of "bad luck", they do not have too many emotions about their current academic career and daily life, and "everything is the best arrangement" is the mainstream view among them. For them, the policy conditions of the high school entrance examination have nothing to do with them, perhaps because the policy of the high school entrance examination in Guangzhou, like the high school entrance examination policy in most cities, is implemented through mandatory policy tools, because the relationship between the family and the school of the migrant children is not equal, they cannot make too many positive responses to the objective threshold, even if it is their own restrictions [11]. Therefore, they do not have too much subjective feeling about the policy change.

It is worth noting that even though there is a large difference in subjective feelings, the sample has a positive attitude towards the relaxation of policy conditions, and even if they have only just received this information from the interviewee, they show good positive emotions about the more educational opportunities available to the children of migrants. This shows that the group of migrant children has quite a common goal in their pursuit of educational equity.

4. Discussion

According to the research, eighty percent of the migrant children interviewed in this interview were profoundly affected by the city's high school entrance examination policy, and were unable to study in the city's public high

schools because of the implementation of this policy. This not only shows that the implementation of the policy is less biased; Explain that the restrictions of the policy have a profound impact on the children of migrants, especially those who do not meet the conditions.

For the children of migrants who receive compulsory education in Guangzhou, the pursuit of a better educational environment and better educational resources are the reasons why most of the children of migrants pursue their academic careers in Guangzhou. In the case of better educational resources in the Pearl River Delta region, it is not very uncommon for the children who do not live in here to seek better education. It can be said that this is the choice of most families seeking to enroll their children in prestigious schools, but Guangzhou's high school entrance examination policy hinders this possibility. Among them, the most difficult is naturally three years of legal and stable employment and three years of social insurance. Because they do not work in Guangzhou or have lived in Guangzhou for a short period of time, it is often difficult for migrant workers to meet these two conditions, resulting in the children of migrants not being able to attend public high schools in Guangzhou, even if they have a full three-year junior high school registration. This has dealt a devastating blow to the willingness of migrant children to attend school, and further affected the enthusiasm of teachers and students to educate or receive education [12]. Therefore, although the strict education policy comes from the practical considerations of local governments for finance, population, and educational resources, the long-term implementation of this policy will undoubtedly lead to the continuous expansion of educational inequality [1]. However, policy changes have been subject to change in response to fiscal and population mobility factors. With the relaxation of policy conditions, the children of migrants do not need to meet so many conditions, which shows that Guangzhou is thirsty for foreign talents and the protection of the right to education of migrant children, under this change, more migrant children will go to Guangzhou to carry out their own studies, so as to attract their parents, that is, migrant workers and foreign talents, while enriching the population of Guangzhou, but also to cultivate more social talents, and further strengthen Guangzhou's own comprehensive strength in the feedback.

Luckily, there is also a certain lag in the policy, and the children who have been affected and those who cannot enjoy the relaxed policy have already changed their academic and career plans, which also shows that the impact of policy changes on its implementation targets is irreversible. However, the general tolerance of migrant children has diluted the negative impact of strict policy restrictions.

5. Conclusion

Research has proved that changes in education policies, especially the relaxation of the threshold for further education and subsidies, have a profound positive impact on the academic performance of migrant children, allowing them to have more possibilities and subjective initiative in learning activities such as further education. Therefore, the relaxation of education policies can effectively ensure that the children of migrants enjoy educational resources similar to those of local students, give them more opportunities to receive a good education, effectively reduce identity discrimination, and effectively maintain educational equity. It is true that this has high financial requirements for local governments, but it is undoubtedly the government's duty to protect the right to education of migrant children. Whether it is improving residents' happiness or maintaining fairness itself, a certain degree of policy relaxation can help in these areas.

There are many implications for maintaining equity in education, but the role of policy is undoubtedly important. The impact of policy changes on individual students runs through their lives, so how to maintain the fairness of the policy and how to improve the policy itself is the next thing that the government needs to consider. The change in Guangzhou's non-local high school entrance examination policy is of positive significance, which is also the next step they need to do, that is, to improve the protection of migrant children within a certain limit and continue to maintain educational fairness.

There are still some limitations to this study. Although the focus is on the subjective feelings of the migrant children, the size and diversity of the sample are still lacking, and the responses in the sample are also repetitive, which may not be representative of all the migrant children. In addition, for the efficiency of the interviews, this study did not conduct interviews for the children of migrants with a bachelor's degree or less. In order to protect the privacy of the participants and the relative objectivity of their responses, no children of migrants with mental health problems were recruited, even though their answers might change the outcome of the current interview. Due to the different emphases, this study focuses on the subjective feelings of migrant children about the changes in education policies, and there are less links to explain and analyze the policy changes in Guangzhou.

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