Financial Subsidies for Key Public Schools are China's Largest Inequity

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Why should I object to the burden alleviation policy recently issued by the Ministry of Education? Well, the primary reason is that, with the issue of 56 related policies since the establishment of the PRC, the burden on students is becoming increasingly heavy, and what most worries parents in China is the government’s careless policies. Because of this, I think that the Department of Education and its regional branches need to figure out the essence of the country’s manifold educational systems before taking any actions.

“The Competition of Family Background (拼爹模式)” in the United States’ Education System

What can we observe about the United States’ education system? In my opinion, it represents “the Competition of Family Background,” which is the most unjust education system in the world. “The Competition of Family Background” means that one’s family background is more influential than one’s academics—that is, family background and socioeconomic status decide the kind of school a student is able to attend, reflecting the essence of the United States as a totally capitalized market economy.

According to the 2012 high school enrollment rate in the US, the country contains 32 key high schools, of which 31 are private and only one—Hunter College High School (亨特学院)—is a tuition-free public school, ranked ninth. Key private schools account for 4% of American high schools, which are breeding grounds for American talent. Generally, those schools require wealthy parents in order to afford the tuition of 30,000 to 40,000 U.S. dollars, which is used on the highest-qualified teaching staff, the most

advanced teaching equipment, and the most comfortable school environment for their students, resulting in a 20% higher enrollment rate than normal public schools.

Setting aside those key private schools, the United States also features certain famous public schools, accounting for 5% of American high schools. What are they? Essentially, these are schools in which the local governments have invested over 50% of their collected local property taxes (房产税) on educational resources, sometimes even up to 70% of property taxes. As a result, those living in upscale communities with higher property values pay more property taxes, and as a result, their local public schools have a greater educational endowment. Generally speaking, the property taxes on upscale communities are higher than those of middle-class communities, which is, in turn, higher than that of poor communities in the city; as a result a gap in educational expenditures is produced. Obviously, the 5% of highly-regarded public schools that are located in upscale communities are not available for the masses.

Thus, the American education system is one representing “the Competition of Family Background;” that is, the education system relies on family property. The basis of power in the United States relies on money, so while ostensibly anyone can run for president or governor or senator, if one wants to win, a large amount of money is essential. So it is with education. In America, each and every student is entitled to free education, but if one aspires to obtain a top-notch education (namely, that which is available in the 5% of schools that are private), s/he has to be wealthy. Such an education system is the last one that I’d recommend China learn from.

“The Equity Model” of Japanese Education

Japanese education is an extreme example of “the equity model.” The success of Japan as a nation is inseparable from its success in education. There are two standardizations that are readily apparent in the absolute equity of Japanese education: the standardization of hardware and materials, and the standardization of the teaching staff. The first standardization was implemented almost one hundred years ago, with the result that classrooms, libraries, dormitories, sports grounds, and even the lunches served in Japanese schools across the country are completely the identical, like a copy of each other. It is worth mentioning that all this equipment is afforded by national financial subsidies. This is the typical Japanese education.

The standardization of the teaching staff deserves particular attention. In China, rural teachers would prefer to work at schools in the city with better