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The Causation Analysis of Over-education in China

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Abstract: With more and more mismatches between jobs and education degrees in China, the meaning of education, social environment, and pedagogy are reviewed. The paper points out the prevalence of over-education in China and analyzes its causation from two aspects. A growing body of literature investigates the pedagogy and the way of student study. Chinese students are relatively passive on study and are considered learning machines. The pedagogy in school gives them more pressure and cruel competition in the labor market pushes them to study so hard. So far, however, there has been very little discussion about the nature of education. In contrast to the pursuit of high scores, there is much less about the effects of parents' and teacher's high requirements for children on education. This paper mainly discusses the reasons of over-education in China, and from the data analysis, it shows that there is not only a problem with the involution, but also the social trend that will cause the over-education in China. The synthesis of current research is beneficial for schools and society to reexamine the distorted education, understand the real meaning of education and how to match it with the labor market.

Keywords: over-education, pedagogy, "Double Reduction" policy

1. Introduction

Currently, over-education is a huge obstacle for candidate to get an appropriate job. Compared with the problems caused by the mismatch of major, the problem brought by over-education is more irreversible and will cost more time and money. Existed research tell us the outcome and detailed phenomena of it and how it affects the labor market such as lowering wages. However, although the over-education cannot be eliminated since there is no completely equality on every people, it can be reduced in several ways.

This paper mainly analyzes the causation deeply from different perspectives, and finds out how these independent variables change in response to the compulsory education policy and "Double-Reduction Policy". In order to dig into the essence of over-education and the force that push students, teachers, and society to peruse higher degree, this study uses the documentary analysis and search for the cross correlation of each potential variables. Besides, it jumps out from the school to family, analyzes the social factors and the correlation with labor market that trigger the over-education. This multi-dimensional discovery can increase the public's consciousness and emphasis on education. In the labor market, education degree not only acts as a dependent variable, but also a independent variables which will change the overall tendency of the labor market. Therefore, understanding how these variables complement each other could help schools, society, and the government to reduce the

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high academic demands on Chinese students, thereby improving the overall social climate of higher education.

2. The Background of Over-education in China

Almost all parents want their children to graduate from famous universities and get a high degree. However, when a larger number of highly educated people flock to the labor market, the value of a high degree becomes less ponderable, and the educational mismatch appears. In the beginning, the goal of the 9-year compulsory education policy, which was issued in 1986, is to make sure students in rural areas or a poor family can receive an equal chance to go to school and be educated. But it simulated other students in the middle or upper class, making them feel more competitive in finding jobs. Therefore, such excessive expansion also brings excessive education.

Students tend to follow the trend and spend more time studying to get a higher degree and compete with peers. Credential inflation causes increasing employment pressure on college graduates which has intensified the public's panic that education is useless and harmed the healthy development of education. For example, news in Wuhan showed that applicants for toilet keepers are required to have a bachelor's degree or above, and in Harbin, 3,000 college students applied for cleaning jobs [1].

Over-education, also called excessive education, refers to education due to excessive expansion. With the rapid growth of the number of higher education graduates, the supply of labor is more than the actual needs of the labor market, which makes the education workers engaged in by education level not match with their work and leads to "high to low" (high degree but relatively lowly jobs). Such highly educated unemployment reveals the waste of education resources. In 2018, China's higher education has expanded dramatically since 1999, with the gross enrollment rate reaching 48.1% [2].

3. The Concern of Over-education

Such highly educated unemployment reveals the waste of education resources and increases the time to enter the labor market. Currently, China has one of the lowest retirement ages in the world, which means that workers' working time is further reduced, especially for the people who spend several years to get a high diploma such as doctor and post-doctor.

From Figure 1 attached below, it can be seen that the number of students who get higher education balloons from 1990 to 2000. The reaction to compulsory education policy is obvious and straightforward.

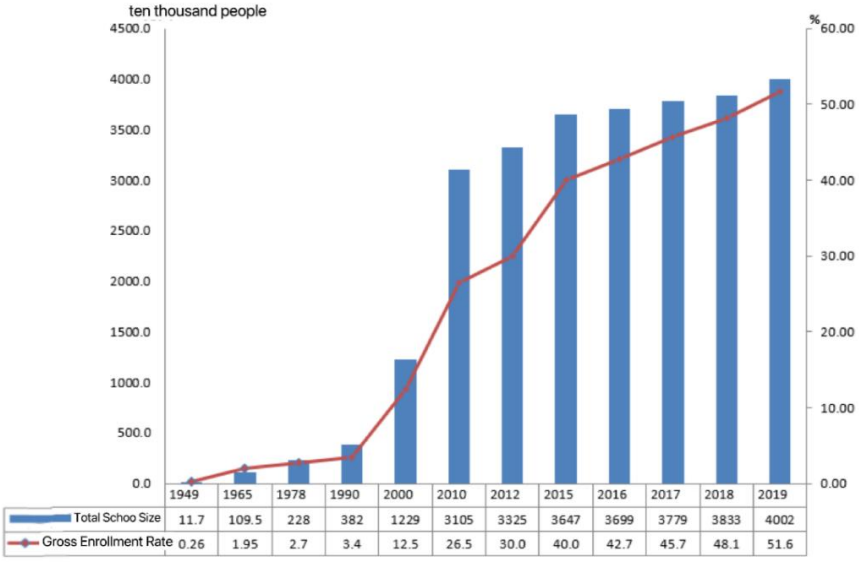

Figure 1: 2019 National educational development statistical bulletin [3].

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The social structure plays an important role: with the adjustment of economic development and industrial structure, if the overall vocational structure shows a trend of upgrading over time, the stronger its ability to absorb higher educational qualifications, the lower the probability of over-education.

Recent evidence suggests that over-education has numerous disadvantages but few benefits. It will trigger serve competition among students. Research shows that about 2/3 of primary school students and 3/4 of middle school students seriously lack sleep, and more than 70% of primary and secondary school students cannot guarantee adequate sleep, which seriously affects the normal growth and development of students' bodies [3]. Balanced development of public education should be beneficial to reduce school choice and alleviate educational competition, instead of boosting competition. Besides, over-education promotes people to spend more time on education and improving degrees instead of going to the labor market. In the past, a bachelor's degree is valuable, but nowadays, it is just a foundation or a platform for higher education. 18-year-old people should be mature, and make a contribution to society and country, but now, it is just the "beginning" of higher education, which means they may spend 6 or 7 years finishing their all education and then can jump into society. With more and more people pursuing a higher degree in education, the vacancy in occupation appears, and they will be filled at a low rate. Over-education is wasteful and shows that resources are not optimally allocated. At the same time, if excessive education is prolonged, there will be Not conducive to the development of human capital potential [4].

There are many reasons that account for over-education, such as students' obsession with academic performance and pursuit of higher degrees, or pressure from teachers or parents. The government has also issued a double reduction policy to alleviate the pursuit of grades, suggesting that students are supposed to develop in an all-around way, but this idea is difficult to be adopted by everyone, since every parent wants their children to be better than other children.

4. Excess in Teaching Methods and Higher Degree

Bing Yang, Professor of the School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University and Director of the Leadership Research Center, categorized the consequences of the banking system as "failure to succeed", which means that they are in short-term success and long-term failure [5]. Students get used to the straightforward and direct teaching method. They don't need to question the teachers or the textbook, but just follow. In order to get a higher score on the standard test, they are even supposed to learn the correct answers by rote.

Teachers apply a smooth and comprehensive "direct teaching method" to help students do better on standard-answer academic tests. They are trained to be better at following orders instead of being "themselves", and they "enjoy" the oppressed pedagogy. But in dealing with real problems or open questions, they are far behind.

Some may posit that rote learning is one part of passive learning which cannot be replaced by active learning, especially for young children who lack consciousness. However, rote learning cannot be a long-term method. Research in England shows that moderate rote learning can help students cultivate the consciousness of active studying, but rote learning cannot be a prominent pedagogy. Because in the long-run, human basic skill such as memory will be replaced by machines and the rise of automation and artificial intelligence [6].

Many students don't even know what they're pursuing, but only listen to their parents, and teachers and study hard. In primary school, students are told that only by studying hard can apply for a good middle school. When they go to middle school, they are told that only by studying hard can enter a good high school. During high school, studying hard can enter a good university and then a good job. However, the goal and slogan are too identical and general. After entering the university, the pressure drops dramatically, and students don't know what to do for a while. In the three years of high school,

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Chinese students usually study the content in two years and then spend the last year reviewing; the American educational system adds an extra year to the "transitional period" high schools to prepare students who previously focused on creativity at the expense of basic education. In the United States, the curriculum is active, the college entrance examination can be signed up for seven times a year, and the students are also active; while in China, the curriculum is passive, the college entrance examination is only once a year, so is learning. In such an environment, Chinese students have to set the goal of "studying well", they have no other choice, in order to compete with the huge Chinese study, they have to surpass them step by step.

5. Education Anxiety after the "Double Reduction" Policy

Quality education, which focuses on the whole students and their reaction, was introduced as a core way against "exam-centered" education. Schools were trying to integrate professional education and general education so that student can have more time for their own thinking and studying. Chinese education system usually emphasis and boost the all-round development in terms of student's moral, intellectual and fitness level as well as in their appreciation of aesthetics.The curriculum is only one part of the learning life and cannot replace other aspects of students' learning and development. In teaching, proper white space should be left for students to explore freely. It is this blank space that is a major factor in increasing student differentiation and personalization, allowing each student to be himself or herself, rather than an identical learning machine. However, after a decade of educational reforms, there is only a little positive impact on the overall education development [7].

In order to reduce the study pressure of students and encourage all-round development, "Double Reduction" policy was implemented in June 2021 by reducing the burden of homework and outside curriculum [8]. In the beginning, the "Double Reduction" policy seemingly implies the demise of off-campus training institutions, however, parents and students need them even more.In addition, parents' anxiety doubled because they think that without extracurricular tutoring opportunities means that the children lack a steppingstone on their goal of "good study and better university". According to Zhang (2022), some parents did not receive good education at their age, so they are now engaged in low-wage jobs, but they want their children to have more opportunities to improve their academic performance, therefore, there are more likely to support the tutoring institutions [8]. Children who have been brainwashed into thinking that grades are all that matter use tutoring institutions as a platform to seek extra assistance. In fact, it is not off-campus institution that threaten public education, but the growing dominance of private academies on education. As private educational institutions, cram schools are also a kind of education, not only to share the pressure of teachers in public school, but also a good supplement to public education. In order to enhance the overall quality of education, the government is supposed to focus on the improvement of public-school education and prevalence of compulsory so that the fairness and overall literacy skill can be increased.

If we want to reduce the anxiety of parents, to alleviate the involution between students by reducing he anxiety of parents, we need to start from the root. Parents are anxious because they fear that their children will not go to good schools or find good jobs. Yet such anxiety cannot be avoided by a single policy, for it is the inevitable result of many previous policies. The birth policy determines that most families have only one child, and this child is endowed with too much expectation and hope. Secondly, the popularization of higher education is still not enough, there are few good schools, public education resources are scarce, everyone is forced to compete. Xiulan Yu (2020), by using qualitative and quantitative research, got the conclusion that about 90% Chinese parents want their children to university and 65% Chinese parents consider going to famous school such 985 and 211 in China is of great importance [9]. However, the actual enrollment of high education is entirely different from the expectations. After the double reduction policy, these parents have fewer resources and may feel a big increase in anxiety.

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6. Conclusion

However, the causation of over-education are complicated.But most of it is analysis of teachers, schools, or parents. In the long run, other social factors are also driving the pursuit of high degrees. For example, the labor market often sees a degree as a "steppingstone" to a job interview. Easing employment pressures may be more likely to alleviate over-education. The two main reasons high-education students' study for are to find a job and improve themselves, which is beneficial for them to integrate into the society. But if the whole social climate is distorted and a high degree becomes a determining factor in HR recruitment, then more and more people will follow this trend to get a job.

Another approach is to improve the ever-present competition among students. "Double Reduction" policy is a revolutionary policy, which reflects the attitude of society and educators that good academic performance is not the most important thing. However, its implementation is a bit of a rush, leaving parents and tutoring agencies unprepared.The obstacle of the policy seems to be the insistence of off-campus training programs.

But the truth is that parents' views and social mores are deeply rooted. The double reduction seems to reduce the burden on students, but in fact it should reduce the anxiety of parents. Most students are passive groups in the study, they are brainwashed from childhood: "academic performance is the most important" or "you have to be better than others". However, this is only the goal of students at exam time, not the goal of their whole study life. The word "excellent" needs to be redefined by society, and students and parents should not be imprisoned by this kind of thinking. The purpose of learning is to enrich learners themselves and improve their literacy, rather than being a learning machine that is an everyday rote memorization of various formulas and articles but does not know the meaning behind them. It is indisputable that such deep-seated beliefs cannot be overturned in a single policy or a year or two. China is such a large country that every policy needs enough time to permeate into society. In addition, this is not only a problem that educators should consider, but also the whole society and the labor market should consider, since each process is linked to the other and complementary. Companies should also pay more attention to candidates' comprehensive ability, moral literacy, and other factors. Efforts from each side are needed to turn the tide so that students can reassess the meaning of learning.

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