

An International Comparison of Regional Education Quality Monitoring Pattern

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Abstract

Constructing independent special organization, project commission management and under the supervision of educational administrative department are three usual patterns of international education quality monitoring. Through international comparing, regional education quality monitoring must insist on the unification of state's uniform standards and regional practices, and establishing a monitoring pattern with diversified evaluation subjects and diversification path in China. Besides, adopting professional agency of evaluation for fairness, emphasizing both on the accountability and the improvement, integrating external and internal evaluation and strengthening education inspection system are also important for establishing rational elementary education quality monitoring in China.

Key words: Region; Education quality monitoring; Pattern

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National Outline for Medium and Long-term Educational Reform and Development in China (2010-2020) indicates that, it is necessary to establish

elementary education quality monitoring system, so as to improve the quality of education. Aiming at constructing education quality monitoring network including state, province, city and county in China, National Assessment of Education Quality has been established in 2007. Due to the extensive and large area in China, the social economic environment and the historical cultural tradition in different regions are significant difference, so establishing regional education quality monitoring system is the key for the whole network. In order to improve the quality of elementary education and the balanced development of Compulsory Education in China, this study is to explore rational patterns for regional educational quality monitoring.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY MONITORING

Region is a comprehensive concept. In geography, it's defined by the features of physical geography; in politics, it refers the administrative division; in economics, it can be divided as city, country and mountain area by regional economic traits and population. Generally, any region is human-activity-geographical-environment relationship. So education in region is the system that characterizes the area or space, represents the relationship between education and social resources in this region, and embodies the unification of educational history course and future development in this region. To monitor regional education quality is to evaluate students' learning quality, physical health, mental health and other interacting factors in this region, so as to improve the quality of education. On the one hand, it supplies fundamental education data for National Assessment of Education Quality, which becomes the basis for educational decision-making. On the other hand, it promotes school improvement and guarantees every citizen in this region acquiring fair and high quality education.

Applying Total Quality Management in educational field Since the 1990s, measuring and monitoring the quality of education become the world trend. Many countries, districts and international organizations have developed large-scale educational assessments. For example, OECD is in charge of Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and IEA is in charge of Trends in international Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), both of which provide a scale with which each participant country can find its own position. Simultaneously, many countries in the world have constructed mature education quality assessment institution, such as the National Assessment Governing Board in United State, the Office for Standards in Education in the United Kingdom, the Education Review Office in New Zealand, the Australian Council for Educational Research, the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation, the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research in Brazil, the Council for Educational Evaluation in Finland, the National Institute for Educational Policy Research in Japan etc.. By comparison, education quality monitoring in China is only in a preliminary stage. National Assessment of Education Quality, the national surveillance site of education quality, has been continuously testing student academic achievement on mathematics, Chinese, English and science, student mental health, student physical health and other relative influencing factors in Compulsory education stage from 2007. Twenty-eight provinces, autonomous regions, municipality directly under the Central Government and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps in China take part in the test, which is beneficial to the perfection of supervision evaluation index system, the well consultation system for educational policy-making department and the development of education quality monitoring network in China. However, national surveillance site mainly work at the relevant polity guarantee and the technical director including the development of tool, the standard formulation and the professional practice; each province should establish their own supervision system in the light of their own situations; and each county surveillance site should be responsible for the specific implementation of education quality monitoring. Consequently, study on regional education quality monitoring pattern has theoretical and practical importance for the elementary education quality monitoring.

2. AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION QUALITY MONITORING PATTERN

2.1 Constructing Independent Special Organization

Constructing special organization which isn't under the administrative department of education is one kind of the usual pattern of international education quality

monitoring. The National Assessment Governing Board in the U.S., independent of ministry of education and directly under the US Congress, sets policy for National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and is responsible for developing the framework and test specifications that serve as the blueprint for the assessment. The Office for Standards in Education in the United Kingdom, set up in 1992, which is previous British Royal Inspection departed from the Department for Education and Employment is directly under the Secretary of Education and the Congress. It's responsible by law for carrying out education quality monitoring and also independent of the Ministry of Education. By the way, the Education Review Office in New Zealand is directly belonged to the Congress and in charge of education quality assessment too. To sum up, many developed countries in the world whose evaluation system is perfect development often use this pattern, because constructing independent special organization without administrative intervention can safeguard the authenticity of appraisal result. But this pattern needs high financial allocation and adds administrative staff, which would increases financial burden for government.

2.2 Project Commission Management

The second pattern is project commission management that the government entrusts the university or research institute to monitor the quality of education. The Australian Council for Educational Research, the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation and the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research in Brazil are all committed by their governments to monitor and evaluate educational quality. Especially, many universities in New Zealand participate in elementary education quality assessment through the pattern of project commission management. For example, Educational Assessment Research Unit in University of Otago is entrusted by the Ministry of Education to manage National Education Monitor Project. At present, many countries apply such pattern to guarantee fairness and profession of education quality monitoring. On the one hand, the project commission management is flexible and inexpensive. One the other hand, as the third party intervention system, the university or research institute which own professional staff can explore monitoring tools, normalize monitoring program and ensure monitoring result fairness. But this pattern usually can't ensure long-term and continuous because of the program abortion.

2.3 Educational Administrative Departments in Charge of Education Quality Monitoring

The third pattern is educational administrative departments in charge of education quality monitoring. The National Institute for Educational Policy Research, under the ministry department of education in Japan, takes National Academic Test for elementary education to strengthen education quality monitoring. The Council

for Educational Evaluation in Finland, appointed by the ministry department of education in 2003, is responsible for implementing national education assessment. Owing to the internal operation of educational administrative system, this pattern is in favor of top-down management and quick response to the monitoring result. However, such power-based administrative evaluation would pay more attention on control and lead equalitarianism of the result. In other words, this pattern pays more attention on the external evaluation but neglects internal evaluation, which makes against to the self-development of school. Moreover, the evaluation result of the pattern would be unfair caused by the bureaucratic organization and the related people's benefit game. So the evaluation result of the pattern only has limited rationality in educational administrative system.

3. THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO CONSTRUCTING REGIONAL EDUCATION MONITORING PATTERN IN CHINA

3.1 The Unification of State's Uniform Standards and Regional Practices, Constructing Diversified Monitoring Subjects and Forming Multiple Monitoring Ways

To constructing multiple monitoring ways is the common trend in the world. Except the Office for Standards in Education directly belonged to the Congress in the United Kingdom, the Qualification and Curriculum Authority, set up in 1997, is in charge of educational policy for formulating syllabus, organizing test and issuing teacher certification. As the agency independent of government and school, the Qualification and Curriculum Authority and the Office for Standards in Education compose the rounded official and national monitoring system in the United Kingdom. Moreover, there are also many unofficial ways. For example, as the monitoring terminal, Oxford or Cambridge International Examinations is entrusted by government to control and measure the curriculum and teaching quality. And the Curriculum Evaluation and Manage Center in University of Durham develops standard tool of teaching quality monitoring for tracing measurement so as to promote school improvement. Consequently, the integrated education quality monitoring system has been established including government, quasi-government and non-government in Britain. Besides, Finland has also established this diversity of monitoring pattern. The national monitoring site, managed by the Council for Educational Evaluation, has organized varies university, higher educational institution and foreign experts to monitor educational quality and mainly care about the result of education; the regional education assessment, the provincial monitoring

site, analyses the official statistics and reports the result of evaluation; the local monitoring site, under the local municipal government, which is no fixed standards and flexible pays more attention on exploring quality controlling system and the tool of self-assessment. By comparing, according to political tradition, strengthen and the developmental level of assessment profession, China must adopt tailored organization pattern to monitor the quality of regional education. That is to say, China must insist on the unification of state's uniform standards and the practice in region, which means the decision-making level distribute the administrative functions and powers to local authorities. So diversified monitoring subjects and multiple monitoring ways are the core to constructing rational regional education quality monitoring pattern in China.

3.2 Adopting Professional Agency of Evaluation to Keep Fairness

To improving the efficiency and the fairness of education quality monitoring, adopting professional agency of evaluation and applying project commission management are the international tendency. For example, the fair and reasonable education quality monitoring system in New Zealand not only has professional assessment organization independent of educational administration system, but also has the varied assessment institutions in that and many projects of education quality assessment managed by university, research institute and non-governmental organization. In order to guarantee fairness of NAEP in U.S, the National Assessment Governing Board is in charge of policy-making and the National Center Education Statistics is in charge of implement, but formulating framework, specifications and other skill work are appointed to the professional agency of evaluation through competitive bidding. By international comparing, there are two common patterns to guarantee fair. The one is the establishment of professional organization independent of educational administration system and the other one is the adoption of professional agency. The former is administrative evaluation and the latter is the contract mode of evaluation. New Zealand adopts the former because of its educational inspection system independent of the administrative department of education but America adopts the latter. However, educational inspection system in China, which is belonged to the ministry of education, is significantly different from New Zealand. At present, constructing independent special organization to monitor regional educational quality, especially to county, doesn't suit Chinese national situation, due to the heavily burdened financial investment of local government. So the pattern of project commission management should be adopted, because the university, research institute and other non-governmental organization which have professional team for educational quality assessment can give objective and fair evaluation.

3.3 Emphasizing on both Accountability and Improvement, Integrating External and Internal Evaluation

The educational quality assessment in New Zealand integrates external and internal evaluation. Specifically, as the third-part evaluation, the Education Review Office in New Zealand, which is responsible by the Congress, mainly carries out the summative assessment; the educational supervisory department, which is responsible by the ministry of education or the local educational administrative department, mainly carries out the formative assessment; moreover, aiming at improving school effectiveness, the university and non-governmental organization monitor the quality of teaching through the pattern of project commission management; and the schoolmasters, teachers and parents carry out school self-evaluation for school improvement. Another example is education quality assessment in the United Kingdom. On account of paying more attention to external evaluation at the initial stages, school autonomy and innovation were limited in UK. Recently, Every Child Matters: Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005 emphasizes school self-evaluation so as to integrate external and internal evaluation. Before external evaluation, all schools in the U.K. are asked to take self-evaluation and finish the self-evaluation programs by the Office for Standards in Education. Besides, Every Child Matters: Framework for the inspection of schools in England and No Child Left Behind: Blue Ribbon School Program in the U.S also emphasize on both accountability and improvement. By comparing, external evaluation by educational administrative departments is more emphasized in China, while internal evaluation by the schools, teachers, parents and students is ignored. However, considering that the school is the learning organization of self-innovation, the indirect management of government and the bottom-up participation could promote school self-development. Consequently, regional education quality monitoring pattern in China must emphasize both on the accountability and the improvement, and integrate external evaluation and internal evaluation as well.

3.4 Establishing and Strengthening Educational Inspection System in China

Reform of education system in China since the 1980s, the management system of compulsory education has been characteristic of local responsibility, classification management and county-oriented. Contradictorily, the county-oriented system can't adjust the financial investment in compulsory education in China. Due to various kinds of financial dilemmas in counties, and imbalanced development of regional economy and county economy, compulsory education funded by the "county-based financial system", especially in countries, can't solves the problems of financial inadequacy, which requires central government to finance the rural compulsory education. Consequently, constructing

independent special organization does not suit regional education quality monitoring because of burdening government finance in China. On national conditions, the pattern that educational inspection department at varies levels monitor regional education quality would be the basic pattern in china at present. Of course, in order to guarantee fairness of the assessment, adopting professional agency of evaluation and applying project commission management must be necessary supplement for that pattern, owing to educational inspection department under Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. After achieving the goal of "Two bases", the work center of educational inspection department in China has been changed from the administrative supervision to the educational inspection. In order to improve personnel quality of educational inspection which is the core of implementing regional education quality monitoring, on the one hand, strengthening personnel training and formulating the certified qualifications are necessary; on the other hand, talent resources of education inspection should be abundance, just like Hongkong, in which any person with professional qualification can apply for the external evaluation of school.

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