

Development Dilemma and Governance Strategy of County General High Schools in Guangxi

Bixiao Nong¹

¹ School of Education, Guangxi Normal University

Correspondence: Bixiao Nong, School of Education, Guangxi Normal University.

doi:10.56397/JARE.2023.09.09

Abstract

In recent years, the construction of a high-quality, balanced, universal and inclusive senior high school education system has been placed in a more important position, especially for the development of county general high schools, which has been emphasized more and more strongly. This paper analyzes the reality of social conflict in the development process of county general high schools in Guangxi from the perspective of social conflict theory, and finds that there are multiple problems such as resource allocation conflict, internal structural conflict and value conflict. Therefore, this paper proposes three paths to resolve and avoid the real conflicts in the development of Guangxi county general high schools by establishing a reasonable resource allocation mechanism, constructing a county education community, and improving the quality of county general high school education, which not only faces the real conflicts in the development of county general high schools, but also tries to solve the diversified problems of the resource allocation mechanism, the construction of teachers' talent team, and the education and teaching community in the county education system.

Keywords: County general high schools, educational equity, high school governance

1. Introduction

On December 16, 2021, the Ministry of Education and nine other departments jointly released the "14th Five-Year Plan" Action Plan for the Development and Enhancement of County General High Schools, further confirming the importance of county general high schools in promoting the construction of China's educational power. According to the statistics of the national general high school running bodies released by the Ministry of Education, there are 14,200 general high schools in China, of which nearly 60% (59.38%) are county high schools, with more than half of the students enrolled in 14.684 million. There is a

multi-level, multi-subject, multi-type education development pattern within such a large county education system, and if the internal conflict has not been emphasized or resolved, it will have a negative impact on the maintenance of social fairness and education universality, and even impede the upward channel of vertical mobility of the disadvantaged groups in the county, which will lead to intergenerational mobility of poverty or the problem of class solidification.

2. Governance of County General High Schools in the Perspective of Social Conflict

Social conflict theory analyzes social problems from the aspects of essence, cause, structure and

function, in order to find ways to alleviate social contradictions and solve social conflicts. This paper combines the relevant views of social conflict theory, focuses on the structure, function and resource allocation within the social development of the county, analyzes the causes of real-life conflicts, and combines relevant data to consider: what kind of real-life problems are mapped out behind the conflicts? What interests of which group are touched? Which group's motivation is reflected?

The social conflict theory represented by Lewis A. Coser creatively puts forward that conflict "is a struggle over values, claims to rare status, power and resources". At the same time, conflict does not always produce negative effects, it can act as an outlet for the social system, it can also act as a "safety valve", release group pressure and confrontation, thus maintaining social stability, promoting social integration and social innovation. Guangxi's county general high schools often play the role of "elder brother" in the county education system, i.e., high school is the highest level of education in the county. There are many factors affecting the development level of county general high school education, and the hidden social relations and conflicts and disputes behind them also involve many aspects. Because the county compared with the city, China's urbanization process has appeared in this reverse allocation of public education resources — quality education resources to escape from the county, fleeing rural education. "Resources" is the core concept of social conflict theory, and the limited nature of resources is the objective cause of conflict. As far as the quantity and quality of county general high schools in Guangxi are concerned, there is still the number of county general high schools is still insufficient, and the quality of education and teaching is also unsatisfactory. Dahrendorf points out that three conditions are needed to regulate conflicts at the interest level: 1) both parties to the conflict recognize each other's legitimate and opposing interests; 2) there is a special organization or public institution to resolve the conflict; and 3) both parties to the conflict agree on and abide by the formal rules.

This paper tries to analyze the specific and realistic social conflicts faced by county general high schools by applying the relevant viewpoints of social conflict theory. Using sociological theories to study county general high schools has a positive practical significance

for us to better clarify the relationship between internal and internal or internal and external interests in the process of the development of the county education system. Here, we try to put the county general high schools in the context of "conflict", analyze the development logic between educational equity and educational efficiency from three perspectives: resource allocation, internal structure, and values, not only face the reality of conflict in the development process of county general high schools, but also try to solve the problem of resource allocation mechanism, teacher and teaching community. The study also attempts to solve the problems of resource allocation mechanism, teachers, and teaching community in the county education system.

3. The Realistic Dilemma of the Development of Guangxi County General High Schools Under the Perspective of Social Conflict

In a sense, the county high school carries the expectation of upward mobility for generations of poor people to change their destiny through learning, and in the practice of advocating the construction of high-quality and balanced high-quality education system in the new era, we need to pay more attention to the situation of the county education which occupies half of the general high school, to safeguard the bottom of the development of education and education fairness, and to promote the harmony and stability of the society. Based on social observation and review of relevant literature, the author summarizes that the current development of county general high schools in Guangxi is faced with the reality of the dilemma is mainly reflected in the conflict of resource allocation, internal structural conflict, and the conflict of values in three aspects.

3.1 Conflict of Resource Allocation: Conflict of Forces Causes Serious Internal Depletion

3.1.1 Conflict Between the Dominant Groups Within the County and the Forces Outside the County

All along, our country has respected the work tone and development idea of concentrating strength to do great things, which in the field of education is mainly embodied in the construction of key schools, the limited educational resources gathered together to enhance the efficiency of talent cultivation, which is mainly reflected in the investment of educational funds to a key high school in the

county tilted to the high school, high-quality teachers and students are prioritized to gather in this area, the conditions of running the school and the teaching environment is relatively superior and so on. This is also a common phenomenon in most Guangxi County high school education systems. As far as the county education system is concerned, the county high school has the priority and absolute advantage of the distribution of educational resources in the county, and its rate of advancement, teaching quality and other educational achievements should also produce a “leading effect”, as a benchmark for education in the county also has the corresponding ability to compete with other counties in the same urban area and even with the urban area of the general high school. However, in recent years, some scholars in Guangxi B County, Guangxi P County to carry out county education thematic research, at present part of the county in the phenomenon of obvious collapse and development crisis, mainly manifested in the serious loss of teachers and students, the quality of education declined over the years. And according to the reality of the development situation, in the long-term development of key secondary schools, focusing on improving efficiency at the same time, seriously neglected to maintain social stability of another important factor, namely, the fairness of education. Taking into account both efficiency and fairness, the county education can be stable and far-reaching. The key high schools in the county often have priority in admitting students, absorbing the top students in the county’s academic performance. This for the county in the stable development and steady progress to provide an important role in the bottom.

However, with the continuous rise of some “super high schools” and private schools and “pinch the top”, through the high salary and high benefits to the county in some of the backbone of the teaching staff to form a strong attraction, but also through the high scholarships and high rate of advancement of students and parents in the county, especially the higher academic performance and parents of students in the county. In addition, through high scholarships and high promotion rates, they form a strong temptation to students and parents in the county, especially those families with high academic performance and relatively good family conditions, which leads to a large number of high-quality teachers and students

leaving the county. In the long run, these groups with relative advantages within the county realize cross-class mobility by virtue of their own advantages in ability, wealth and power, and obtain preferential rights to material wealth or educational resources. Therefore, the general high schools in the county have the binary division of “urban-rural” and the two-dimensional division of “key-non-key”. The easiest to fall apart, yet the hardest to revitalize, at the bottom of the divisive landscape of high school education.

3.1.2 Conflict Between Disadvantaged Groups Within the County and Forces Outside the County

If a county education system as an ecosystem to look at, then in the county in this soil environment, the quality of students as seedlings, the quality of teachers as professional gardener, when the seedlings were rooted up and transplanted to another piece of land, along with the professional gardener with the “digging away”, the original soil (county in) will be left. This is what I understand by the phenomenon of “collapse” in the county center. When this phenomenon occurs more and more, this piece of land will be full of holes, left behind the weak seedlings and insufficiently professional gardeners gradually lose growth vitality, and then slowly evolve into a barren land, this vicious circle is the result that we do not want to see. It is worth noting that the “weak seedlings” here does not only refer to students with low academic performance and insufficient learning ability, but also includes a part of the disadvantaged groups with general family conditions and insufficient mobility, but with a good foundation for learning, and the lack of a professional gardener, this part of the disadvantaged groups to receive education fairness is not guaranteed, and may even become a part of the county’s secondary schools. Become the county high school from boom to bust, the collapse of the “backstabber”. They are neglected by society, which itself is a “victim”.

3.1.3 Conflict of Interests of All Parties Within the County

In addition to the impact of external shocks and temptations on quality teachers and student sources, we also need to see the problem of retaining talent within the county education system. Compared with urban high school teachers, the total performance of county middle

school teachers is on the low side; compared with rural teachers, county middle school teachers cannot enjoy the rural teachers' allowance. As the level of economic development and cultural level fails to meet the needs of the "talents" to pursue a better quality of life, some teachers and students will gradually develop a negative group mentality, which will lead to the idea of leaving on their own initiative. The appointment of teachers has not formed the development of policies to match the situation, which is likely to cause the internal development of the county education system is not enough power mechanism, and the inability to fight against external shocks.

In addition, some data show that the teaching force of the county education system is mainly characterized by locality and continuity, especially the part of the teachers who have been teaching for a long time are mainly assigned to teach in the county through the Talent Allocation Program according to the priority of household registration. In addition, a large part of the newly-introduced outstanding young teachers who choose to work in county schools are born there. To a large extent, the replenishment of talents in the county education system is distinctly endogenous, and most of the talents who choose to take up employment in county schools were originally local, and this teacher structure formed over a long period of time has made it possible to continue and safeguard the introduction of teacher talents in county schools to a certain extent. However, when formulating a series of policies, no special attention has been paid to the endogenous nature of the county education system, for example, in the attraction of talent policy, teacher incentives, teachers' rights and interests, etc., may be uniformly oriented to the community, without paying attention to the distinction between "locals" and "outsiders". Failure to effectively or efficiently bring into play the endogenous driving force within the county education system, the implementation of the talent consolidation program of the county education system.

3.2 Internal Structural Conflict: Poor Articulation Within the County Education System

The county education system generally has a relatively fixed direction of mobility, i.e., "elementary school in the village, junior high school in the town, senior high school in the county", and each education stage has its own

clear regional orientation, which promotes the formation of benign and interactive development of the county society. High school education, as the glue that connects compulsory education and higher education, greatly ensures the harmonious and orderly operation within the education system to a certain extent. In recent years, some scholars' surveys on the opportunities for rural students to go to university have shown that there is currently a trend of "it is difficult for the humble family to produce a noble son". The County High School cannot stand alone from the basic development of compulsory education in the county. This is a direct nod to the close correlation between the mutual accomplishments of the various stages of education in the education system. In order to develop education in the county, the efforts of the upper secondary education stage alone cannot effectively form a competitive advantage for the students in the county, nor can it meet the high expectations of the rural students for upward mobility. If the quality of education in the county is not improved, quality teachers and students will continue to be lost, and the problem of the development of general high schools in the county will remain unresolved.

3.3 Conflict of Values: Irrational Educational Choice Behavior of the County Population

In most counties in Guangxi, limited by economic development and knowledge, lax parental supervision and children's lack of family education are generally prevalent. Parents lack authentic and unimpeded access to information and the ability to identify information effectively and rationally, and some parents deify "urban" as "quality", thus generating the behavior of "urbanization". Tendency, that the city's educational resources and education level must be higher than the level of education in the county, some parents in the county through the purchase of school district housing, active entrepreneurship, etc., in the compulsory education stage began to take advantage of the city or outside of the high-quality schools, can not get into the public school, then spend a lot of money to send into the level of general private schools. This blind view of school choice has a negative impact on the rational educational choices made by people in the county.

In addition, some parents, due to the insufficiency of their own knowledge and cognitive level, or due to the economic level of

the family is not enough to pay the full cost of education, the children go to school and further education with a passive attitude, do not care about their children's education, and even more will be the children's aspirations for further education strangled in the cradle, the phenomenon of passive drop-outs, so that their children enter the community as soon as possible to work in order to subsidize the family. This negative and narrow view of education is very likely to cause the intergenerational transmission of poverty and the solidification of social classes, which largely affects the orderly and healthy development of education in the county. As mentioned above, due to insufficient attention to education or insufficient cognitive level and ability to obtain information, people in the county may have irrational educational choice behavior.

4. Governance Strategies for the Development Dilemma of County General High Schools

4.1 Establishment of a Mechanism for the Rational Allocation of Resources and the Realization of Relative Equality of Rights

As far as the government policy level is concerned, the government, as the main body of central control and education resource distribution in the reform of county education system, should reform the county education management system through system reform and innovation, introduce the management thinking and school-running mode that can keep pace with the times, and reform the county education management system, especially innovate the irrational system arrangement that is contrary to the fairness of education, and focus on the development and innovation of the county education itself through the direct intervention of the government policy and precise governance, and fully mobilize all forces in the county to develop education in a concerted manner. Insisting on educational equity does not mean equal treatment, but rather policy regulation, so that the excellent can give full play to their strengths and thus become more excellent, and the weak can obtain better development through policy favoritism. This requires that in the process of policy design, every senior secondary school should be given a lead in direction and guidance on standards, so that they can move forward in the right direction and follow the rules and regulations. At the same time, but also leave policy space to encourage each school based on their own

strengths, characteristics, independent, conscious exploration, innovative school development model. For county ordinary high schools, especially non-key high schools, to increase the policy tilt on resource allocation and condition guarantee, carry out substantial county middle school operating conditions improvement actions, rationalize the distribution of county educational resources tendency, so as to obtain more policy support, so as to enhance the county middle school capacity as a whole, improve the quality of the county middle school, and enhance the attractiveness of the county middle school.

As far as teacher incentives and protection mechanisms are concerned, the government should actively escort the retention and introduction of talents, and reasonably consider the economic benefits of teachers. On the one hand, from the top design level for the relatively weak level of economic development of regions such as the county to protect the fairness of education. Relevant education management departments can improve the relevant allowance system or incentive mechanism, directional training of free teacher training students and other ways to promote the county talent solid foundation program, so that outstanding teachers in the county general high school have good treatment, have good benefits, stay, teach well, have development, dignified work and life. The most basic is to ensure that teachers have a reasonable economic income, to ensure that the individual teacher's pay and benefits are equal, to solve the teachers in the life of the worries, and for the teaching conditions in the more difficult remote and poor areas, should establish and improve the corresponding economic compensation mechanism for teachers, to help teachers to overcome the negative mentality brought about by the difficult environment. On the other hand, according to the characteristics of the county education system's teacher team showing local and continuous, accordingly introduced programs to stabilize and recruit local account county teachers, such as for local account teacher recruitment priority policy, or give the corresponding talent introduction subsidies, for teachers to build a platform for display and development platforms, to give them rooted in the county in the system of education support.

4.2 Building County Education Communities to Form Effective Synergies

If county education is to be taken to the next level, it will inevitably require the concerted efforts of the education system at all stages, at many levels and in many directions. The revitalization of poverty reduction in the counties should not only be strategically inclined in terms of policy and finance, but should also be supported by diversified and precise modes of knowledge support to promote independent development. The education administration, as the decision-maker, and the high quality universities, colleges and universities, as the supporters, as well as the social forces, work in concert with the county secondary schools, which are the actors in the revitalization of poverty reduction, to form an effective synergy. The County Middle School Enhancement Program proposes to “carry out various forms of county middle school hosting and support work through national guidance, local support and two-way selection.” To implement a good county hosting help project, hosting help both sides must be in the education sector support, improve the working mechanism, strengthen the accountability and supervision mechanism, the establishment of a sound help performance evaluation mechanism, the formation of a community of interest. County high school development to enhance the need to obtain resources from other organizations in the environment, and related research shows that relying solely on the increase in investment in education in the region does not significantly reduce the quality gap between urban and rural education. From the perspective of balanced development of urban and rural educational resources, a more effective way is to break through regional restrictions and actively obtain resources from centralized regions where advantages are concentrated. Therefore, it is important to promote the integration of the resources of strong schools in the central cities of the region with those of weak schools in the counties, to run schools jointly, to provide counterpart support, and to form a “strong-weak linkage” education and teaching mechanism, so as to promote the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning of the main bodies of the region, and to work together for the implementation of the integration of urban and rural development.

In the future, in the process of promoting the balanced allocation of educational resources in the county, the following aspects can be used to

promote the high-quality development of education in the county: First, through the launch of a series of revitalization plans and projects aimed at reversing the development predicament in the county, the quality of education and teaching in the pre-school stage, the compulsory education stage, and the senior high school stage can be upgraded in an integrated manner, so as to enhance the attractiveness of the county’s general high schools, and to attract outstanding students to study in the local area, work in the local area, and benefit from and contribute to the local area. Benefit from and contribute to the local community. To focus on the balanced allocation of educational resources in the county, optimize the mode of schooling and the governance system, and work together to build a three-dimensional education system for all stages of education within the county system. Secondly, all counties should reach a consensus on integrated development, promote the construction of a flexible support mechanism for dynamic development, resource sharing, and complementary advantages, and promote structural resource adjustment with the promotion of educational equity as the basic value, and with the continuous narrowing of inter-school and inter-regional educational gaps as the orientation. Third, led by the key secondary schools in the county, the establishment of school development communities, the construction of a mechanism to help teachers within the county, the creation of a platform for sharing and cooperation in teaching resources in the county, the face of the schools, teachers, students and parents of students have established the corresponding sharing resources exchange circle, the integration of the strength of all parties to stimulate the vitality of education in the county.

4.3 Revitalizing the Quality of General High School Education in the County and Transforming Traditional Perceptions

Guangxi county education in the future the basic development of ideas should be to enhance the quality of county general high school education as the focus, if the county education development can not get out of this predicament, “soil erosion” situation can not be fundamentally improved, but also just treating the symptoms rather than the root cause. This is bound to gradually erode the county people’s confidence and trust in the national education

equity system, is not conducive to social harmony and tranquility. To this end, to revitalize the quality of general high school education in the county, the first thing that needs to be made clear is that the emergence of the conflict of values is not formed in a day or two, it is the inner demands of the various interest groups within the county can not be effectively satisfied and venting and produced. The problem of irrational educational choice behavior of the county people should attract the attention of educational organizations or educators. At present, Guangxi County general high schools not only need to solve the problem of “having a high school”, but also need to consider how to “go to a good high school”. Therefore, it is necessary to open up the road of success for county general high school students. Students in rural areas who receive general high school education but do not enter higher education, enter various types of vocational colleges and universities, adult schools of higher education, open universities, and skills training institutions to learn professional knowledge and skills, so that they can become outstanding talents who can revitalize the countryside and lead the construction of the new countryside. Secondly, a series of plans and projects to revitalize county middle school education have been launched, such as the “Five-Year Action Plan for Revitalization of County Middle School Education” and the “Plan for Improving the Quality of County Middle School Education”, the formulation of standards for the conditions of county middle schools, and the implementation of the standardization project for county middle schools, etc., so as to comprehensively improve the county’s high school modernization of education in the county.

References

- Chen Ruping. (2018). Building a new ecology of education requires concerted efforts from all parties. *China Ethnic Education*, (11), 10.
- Fan Weichen. (2021). How to accelerate the construction of a high-quality education system. *China Youth Daily*, 2021-04-01.
- L. Kosse. (1989). *The function of social conflict*. Translated by Sun Liping, et al. Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, Preface.
- Lei Wanghong. (2021). The operation logic and revitalization road of the development of China’s county middle school. *Journal of Educational Science of Hunan Normal University*, 20(06), 14-21.
- LIN Xiaoying, YANG Ruichen, FAN Jie. (2019). The pumped-up county secondary schools – dilemmas and breakthroughs in county education ecology. *Culture vertical and horizontal*, (06), 100-108+143.
- LIU Liqun, ZHANG Wenting. (2021). Revitalizing county middle schools: why it is necessary and how it is possible. *Journal of Educational Science of Hunan Normal University*, 20(06), 8-13+21.
- Liu Yali, Li Ting. (2015). Exploration of teacher exchange system within the county under the perspective of resource allocation theory. *Contemporary Education Science*, (12), 12-14.
- Pang Shengmin. (2016). Market Transformation, Educational Diversion and Unequal Opportunities for Higher Education in Urban and Rural China (1977-2008) Partly on Whether the Key High School System Should Pay for Unequal Opportunities for Higher Education in Urban and Rural China. *Society*, 36(05), 155-174.
- Wang Kun. (2022). Breaking out from knowledge poverty: on the collapse and revitalization of county general high schools. *Chinese Journal of Education*, (02), 1-7.
- Xiong Wanxi, Gao Wenxin, Chen Zhiwen. (2022). How can excellent talents be “recruited, taught and retained” in ordinary high schools in the county – Taking the example of national publicly-funded teacher educators. *Teacher Education Research*, 34(02), 61-68.
- Yang Haiyan. (2022). Strategic Logic and Governance Strategies of High-Quality Development of County General High Schools. *Chinese Journal of Education*, (04), 35-40.
- Yu Xiaoqin. (2022). Dilemma of development and governance of county (district) general high schools. *Education Research and Experiment*, (01), 97-102.
- Zhang Shudeng, Guo Congbin. (2021). College entrance examination proposition: national unification or provincial autonomy? – Perspectives from the differences in elite college entrance opportunities for high school students in counties and cities. *Journal of East China Normal University (Education Science Edition)*, 39(06), 99-111.