
2025 International Conference on Economics, Management and Education Technology (ICEMET 2025)

Article

Research on the Dilemmas and Breakthrough Paths of Elite Education and Education Equity in Policy from the Perspective of Role-Based Policy Debate

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Abstract: With the rapid development of society and the economy, elite education has increasingly become a focal point in discussions of educational equity and social justice. Elite education, while aiming to cultivate high-level talent, often relies on highly selective admission mechanisms and concentrated high-quality resources, which may exacerbate existing inequalities in access and outcomes. From the perspective of role-based policy debate, this study examines how different stakeholders—such as policymakers, educators, parents, and students—frame and contest the relationship between elite education and education equity in policy processes. The analysis identifies key dilemmas, including uneven allocation of educational resources, class stratification reinforced by schooling pathways, and the strong influence of family economic background on educational opportunities and trajectories. These factors hinder the realization of substantive educational equity and contribute to the concentration of advantages among specific social groups. On this basis, the paper explores potential breakthrough paths through more inclusive enrollment policies, diversified support systems, and mechanisms for sharing social and educational resources. It further discusses how digital technologies can help reduce geographical and economic barriers, thereby expanding equal learning opportunities. By employing role-based policy debate and role play, participants can articulate interests, reveal policy trade-offs, and co-construct more sustainable policy designs that balance the development of elite education with the pursuit of education equity.

Keywords: elite education; educational equity; policy debate; social inequality; digital education

Received: 04 February 2026

Revised: 24 March 2026

Accepted: 08 April 2026

Published: 11 April 2026



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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

With the acceleration of globalization and the rise of the knowledge economy, education has become a driving force for personal development and social progress, and its fairness has garnered significant attention. As a critical component of the education system, elite education carries the important mission of cultivating high-quality talents and promoting social advancement. However, with the ongoing development of elite education, the uneven distribution of educational resources and the stratification of social classes have become increasingly evident, posing substantial challenges to educational equity [1]. Due to disparities in economic conditions as well as geographical and cultural backgrounds, many families face difficulties in accessing high-quality educational resources, resulting in structural inequality in educational opportunities and exacerbating social tensions. In this context, by analyzing relevant policies and their specific implementation outcomes, researchers actively explore effective strategies to enhance elite education, aiming to provide a practical foundation for policy optimization and to contribute to the development of a fair and inclusive education system.

1.2. Research Significance

This paper examines the dilemmas and breakthrough paths of elite education and education equity policy from the perspective of role-based policy debate, highlighting its significant theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical perspective, existing research on educational equity primarily emphasizes the distribution of educational resources and their influence on social equity. However, there is a lack of systematic analysis of the diverse perspectives of participants. Role-based policy debate contributes to the field by simulating decision-making processes and analyzing stakeholders' views and demands, thereby enhancing the theoretical framework of education equity policy. From a practical perspective, the implementation of elite education policies often faces pressure and challenges from various stakeholders. Analyzing the interests of all parties is crucial for developing effective policies. Role-based policy debate enables policymakers to better understand the complexity of real-world issues, identify potential obstacles, and propose solutions, thereby facilitating the effective execution of policies. This research offers insights and specific recommendations for advancing educational equity, proposing a more inclusive and sustainable model of educational development through critical reflection on elite education and educational equity policies [1, 2].

2. An Analysis of the Dilemma of Elite Education and Education Equity Policy from the Perspective of Role-based Policy Debate

2.1. The Theoretical Basis and Practical Imperatives of Elite Education and Education Equity Policy

The theoretical foundation of elite education and educational equity policies is primarily rooted in concepts of educational equity and social justice. These principles advocate for equal opportunities for individuals to access education, irrespective of their socioeconomic background, and emphasize the right to high-quality education. Educational equity serves not only as a safeguard for individual rights but also as a critical mechanism for promoting broader social fairness.

Social justice theory underscores the importance of rational allocation and utilization of educational resources, highlighting the necessity of ensuring equal treatment for students through institutional frameworks to support sustainable social development. Practically, as economic growth accelerates and societal needs diversify, public expectations for educational equity have risen significantly. Factors such as family background, gender, and regional disparities in educational opportunities have garnered widespread attention. In a competitive society, the demand for effective policies to address these inequalities has become increasingly urgent [3, 4]. Parents and students aspire to policies that eliminate disparities, foster a fair environment, and enable students to achieve success through their own efforts. Furthermore, governments and educational institutions acknowledge that establishing a fair education system is essential for enhancing national competitiveness and mitigating social tensions. By innovating policies and allocating resources judiciously, the objective of educational equity can be realized, providing a solid foundation for harmonious societal development.

2.2. Development Dilemmas

2.2.1. The Conflict Between Policy Objectives and the Interest Claims of Multiple Subjects

During the formulation and implementation of policies, conflicts between policy objectives and the interests of various stakeholders have become increasingly evident. The primary goal of these policies is to achieve educational equity, ensuring that all students have equal access to high-quality educational resources while fostering societal awareness and prioritization of educational equity. Families with stronger economic conditions often aspire for their children to gain more resources and opportunities through elite education, which creates a noticeable contradiction with the aim of educational equity. Policymakers frequently face the challenge of balancing and making trade-offs when addressing these

conflicting interests, which can complicate comprehensive policy implementation [2]. These complexities may intensify contradictions, reduce policy effectiveness, and result in social dissatisfaction or resistance.

2.2.2. The Disconnect Between Policy Tools and Complex Reality

The implementation of elite education and educational equity policies faces significant challenges due to the design of policy tools, which often fail to account for specific contexts and needs, thereby hindering their effectiveness. Educational equity typically depends on standardized evaluation systems and admission procedures, while the allocation and utilization of educational resources are influenced by factors such as region, culture, and economy. Variations in actual conditions across regions and groups make it difficult for a single policy tool to address all types of needs comprehensively. Furthermore, the rigid nature of these tools limits their adaptability in dynamic environments. As needs evolve, certain policy tools are not updated or adjusted promptly to tackle emerging challenges. In some regions, traditional examination-based evaluation systems remain prevalent for student selection, which inadequately reflects students' diverse potential. Instead, this approach can exacerbate disparities among social groups, leading to a loss of educational opportunities for some students due to exam failure [5]. The complex contexts surrounding policy implementation necessitate that policy designers thoroughly consider the diverse demands of stakeholders and the intricacies of the social environment when formulating plans. Incorporating flexibility and adaptability into policy design is essential to address these challenges effectively.

2.2.3. The Imbalance Between Policy Process and Public Participation Mechanism

During policy implementation, a growing imbalance has become evident between the policy process and mechanisms for public participation. This imbalance is primarily characterized by insufficient incorporation of public input during formulation and execution. The policy-making process is often influenced by a limited number of interest groups, which restricts the authentic representation of the broader public's actual needs and expectations [6]. Additionally, an overreliance on government or expert perspectives effectively marginalizes public voices, creating a significant disconnect between the design and implementation of education equity policies and the realities faced by stakeholders. The lack of public engagement also reduces policy transparency and diminishes public trust. Education equity policies affect a diverse range of stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and social organizations. When feedback from these groups is inadequately considered, policies often encounter skepticism during implementation, undermining their effectiveness. As a result, policies that may appear theoretically sound frequently fail to achieve their intended outcomes in practice.

2.3. *The Causes of Predicament from the Perspective of Role-based Policy Debate*

2.3.1. Analysis of Internal Structural Contradictions

The elite attribute of education emphasizes the pursuit of high-quality educational resources. It is often associated with high academic achievement, superior educational outcomes, and specific selection criteria, which cultivate a group of talented individuals with exceptional ability and potential for the country [7]. Although this approach enhances educational quality in the short term, it undermines the fundamental principles of educational equity over time.

Furthermore, the centralized allocation of resources exacerbates social inequalities, making it challenging for students from low- and middle-income families to access educational opportunities on an equal footing with their peers [8]. In this context, achieving distributive justice becomes particularly critical. It underscores the importance of ensuring that every student has equal learning opportunities, irrespective of their family background. The differing societal interests in educational resources lead to a

complex interplay of competing priorities, resulting in instability in educational policies and the emergence of contradictions and conflicts among various stakeholders.

2.3.2. Analysis of the Constraints of the External Environment

Institutional inertia refers to the entrenched thinking and behavioral patterns formed within the historical educational system and practices, which make it challenging to break away from existing frameworks when formulating policies. For an extended period, China's education policies have prioritized elite education and achievement-oriented objectives, often overlooking the importance of educational equity [9]. Reliance on past successful experiences has entrenched standardized examinations and intense competition as norms, leading to the concentration of educational resources on a select group of high-achieving students while diminishing the potential for achieving broader educational equity. Institutional barriers arise from the rigid structures and provisions within the education system, which frequently constrain policy flexibility. The hierarchical nature of the system, regional disparities, and administrative interventions often hinder the effective implementation of policies. In certain regions, local education departments focus on enrollment rates and academic performance, directing resources toward academically gifted students while neglecting the needs of others. This self-preservation mechanism within the system makes it difficult for educational policies to adapt to the evolving demands for equity and diversity in education.

Class stratification is reflected in the disparities in socio-economic backgrounds, resulting in significant differences in access to educational resources and development opportunities for children. Families with favorable economic conditions are often able to provide superior educational opportunities for their children, such as private tutoring, specialized training programs, and access to abundant educational resources. This accumulation of advantages enhances their learning and personal development prospects. Conversely, children from low-income families face greater challenges in achieving progress due to a lack of essential support and resources, thereby exacerbating the entrenchment of social class divisions. Furthermore, the intensification of educational competition amplifies social differentiation. Under the influence of exam-oriented education, the concentration of educational resources and the limited availability of high-quality schools have fueled intense competition. Parents' heightened focus and anxiety regarding their children's education have led to the disproportionate allocation of resources to a few top-performing schools. Consequently, this competition has increased pressure on students and rendered the education system more elitist, neglecting the needs of average students and widening the educational gap between different social groups [10, 11].

2.3.3. Analysis of the Interactive Mechanism of Causes

Establishing a Four-Dimensional Framework of "Concept, Resource, System, and Society"

First of all, in the model, the concept involves the basic values and objectives of educational equity, including the cognition, pursuit, and basic principles of its implementation, which directly affect policy design and strategy selection. The educational concept plays a central role in the entire educational system, guiding the direction and trajectory of educational equity policy. Secondly, resources are the material basis for realizing educational equity, including educational funds, faculty teams, and educational facilities. Adequate educational resources and fair distribution are the prerequisites for realizing the concept. Scarcity and the unequal distribution of resources often create significant gaps in access to educational opportunities and aggravate educational inequality. Thirdly, the system is an important bridge connecting concepts and resources. A good system ensures the implementation of the concept of educational equity. The existing educational systems and policies are often inadequate, making it difficult to meet needs and restricting the allocation and use of resources. Fourthly, society

represents the external environment, including the public's cognition, expectation, and participation in implementing educational equity. The degree of social support and attention to educational equity directly affects the policy's implementation. When all sectors of society reach consensus and actively participate in it, the implementation and impact of educational equity policy are more evident.

Analyzing the Relationship Between the Factors

When educational resources are prioritized for a few outstanding students, it gradually reduces the sense of participation and belonging among other students, thereby forming a negative cycle. It consistently widens the policy gap, making the pursuit of educational equity more difficult. Under the current education system, the interests of reputable schools are usually given priority, widening the gap between groups. It creates a clear gap between the social expectation of educational equity and the actual situation. Increased public focus on education equity and improved participation mechanisms can enhance the effectiveness of policy implementation. On the contrary, the public's neglect or negative attitude towards educational equity will directly affect the strength and effectiveness of policy implementation and create negative feedback [12]. Analyzing the relationship among the factors will help us better understand the complexity of elite education and education equity in policy, and provide theoretical support for finding a breakthrough to resolve the dilemma.

3. Breakthrough Paths of Elite Education and Education Equity in Policy from the Perspective of Role-based Policy Debate

3.1. Reconstructing Value Consensus

3.1.1. Bridging the Differences Between Elite Education and Education Equity

It is essential to enhance awareness across all sectors of society regarding the relationship between educational equity and elite education. Educational equity does not imply lowering academic standards; rather, it emphasizes providing equal opportunities for all students during the selection of exceptional talent. Policy guidance is recommended to help stakeholders understand that elite education can be achieved through the principle of fairness, thereby raising overall educational standards. Additionally, incentive policies should be developed to encourage schools to offer greater support to students and create diverse educational programs that enable them to fully develop their strengths and potential. During the admissions process, a comprehensive evaluation of students' qualities can be conducted, focusing on various aspects of performance, such as creativity and practical skills. Comprehensive selection criteria ensure fairness in identifying high-quality talent.

3.1.2. Building an Inclusive Policy Discourse System

The policy discourse system focuses on the concept of educational equity, emphasizing that every student should have equal opportunities for development. In specific policy design, it is essential to address the needs of various groups, particularly vulnerable populations. Policymakers gather input from educational stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and community representatives, through investigations and discussions, forming the foundation for the policy discussion framework [13, 14]. This approach ensures that the policy's language and measures are both scientifically sound and practically relevant. Additionally, it is recommended to diversify methods of communication and exchange, utilizing various media platforms such as social media and community forums to broaden the reach of policy discussions and enhance public engagement and identification. Overall, building an inclusive policy discourse system requires integrating diverse cultural backgrounds and values, encouraging multidimensional discussions, and fostering consensus through dialogue.

3.2. Promoting the Matching of Supply and Demand

On the supply side, the government and educational institutions have increased investment in basic education and upgraded school infrastructure, particularly in economically underdeveloped areas [15]. By establishing more high-quality schools, recruiting skilled teachers, and introducing advanced teaching equipment, efforts are made to ensure that every student has access to quality education. Taking into account the specific conditions of various regions and student groups, resources are allocated strategically to achieve a fair and reasonable distribution of educational opportunities.

On the demand side, policymakers must understand the actual needs of students and their families, including financial assistance, psychological support, and academic guidance. Through thorough research, they can accurately assess family economic conditions and student requirements, enabling the design of targeted policy measures [5]. Additionally, special grants are provided to students from rural and low-income families, while career planning and psychological counseling services are offered to help students overcome challenges in their studies and daily lives.

3.3. Improving the Policy Participation Mechanism

3.3.1. Broaden the Channels for Interest Expression of Multiple Stakeholders

First, the application of information technology in policy participation should be strengthened to provide convenient channels for diverse stakeholders. This can be achieved by establishing online platforms and social media, as well as dedicated websites or apps for submitting feedback, participating in discussions, and accessing policy information promptly. Digital communication eliminates geographical barriers and allows participants from various backgrounds to express their opinions with ease. Second, forums, public hearings, and questionnaires should be organized regularly to ensure inclusive discussions. During these activities, the government and educational institutions should genuinely consider participants' voices and value their suggestions. Special attention should be given to vulnerable groups, such as students from economically underdeveloped areas or those with special needs, by encouraging their representatives to actively participate in policy discussions to safeguard their interests. Third, a feedback mechanism should be established to ensure that participants' suggestions are incorporated into policy formulation and adjustments. Transparent feedback pathways have been shown to enhance trust in the policy process, foster the perception that opinions are taken seriously, and thereby improve enthusiasm for participation.

3.3.2. Improve Consultative Democracy and Policy Feedback Mechanisms

Regular consultation meetings are essential for fostering dialogue among stakeholders. During these meetings, representatives from the education department, schools, teachers, parents, and students can discuss education equity in policies. Introducing independent third parties ensures fairness and transparency in the process, while also encouraging active participation from all parties. Experts should be invited to provide professional suggestions to enhance the depth and breadth of policy discussions. Additionally, establishing a robust policy feedback mechanism is crucial to allow stakeholders to promptly express their views and suggestions after policy implementation. This can be achieved through anonymous feedback channels, regular reports on policy implementation, and satisfaction surveys [2, 12]. By collecting and analyzing feedback, policymakers can identify and address issues during implementation, reducing deviations and improving efficiency. The feedback mechanism should integrate consultative democracy principles and translate them into actionable improvements. Regular public updates on results and policy adjustments will enhance transparency and demonstrate that stakeholders' opinions are valued.

4. Conclusion

This paper examines elite education and education equity policy from the perspective of role-based policy debate, exploring the challenges encountered in implementing these policies and their multifaceted causes. These challenges include the uneven distribution of resources, the rigidity of system design, deviations in social perceptions, and, most critically, conflicts in demands and values among stakeholders. Addressing these issues necessitates effective measures to reform and enhance education policies, resolve pressing problems, and achieve a harmonious integration of elite education and education equity. This requires a renewal of policy frameworks and the establishment of a multi-level coordination mechanism. While prioritizing the cultivation of high-quality talent, it is equally essential to promote the accessibility and equalization of educational opportunities, ensuring that every student can thrive in a fair environment. Implementing these measures can significantly advance education equity within policy frameworks and provide robust support for fostering social harmony and sustainable development.

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