

## Original Research Article

**The impact of government attention to education on educational equity***Shanshan Kong, Yaxin Liu**Anhui University of Finance and Economics, Bengbu, Anhui, 233030, China*

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**Abstract:** Educational equity serves as a crucial foundation for social equity, and government attention, as a key policy orientation, exerts a significant influence on educational equity. This study constructs an econometric model incorporating factors such as government attention, administrative efficiency, and urbanization level, based on panel data from 31 provinces in China from 2015 to 2022, to analyze their impact on educational equity. Based on the research findings, this paper proposes countermeasures and suggestions, such as strengthening the government's emphasis on educational equity, enhancing administrative efficiency, optimizing the allocation of educational resources during urbanization, and increasing support for central regions and areas with weak infrastructure. These recommendations aim to provide empirical evidence and policy references for the development of educational equity in China.

**Keywords:** Government attention; Educational equity; Administrative efficiency; Urbanization level

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## 1. Introduction

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee in July 2024 emphasized that education, science, technology, and talent are fundamental to Chinese modernization. Education, a quasi-public good, is crucial for improving livelihoods and achieving social equity, with educational equity being a key concern.<sup>[1-3]</sup>

Government support is essential in educational development. As the authority in public policy, the government's attention to educational equity determines resource allocation and policy implementation.<sup>[4]</sup>

This study, grounded in educational equity theory, aims to clarify how government attention promotes educational equity, analyze its impact, and explore the moderating role of administrative efficiency. The goal is to identify effective ways for government attention to enhance educational equity, providing theoretical support and policy suggestions for local governments, thus contributing to a fairer society.

## 2. Literature review

Government attention refers to the level of importance a government assigns to a specific field or issue, typically manifested through policy formulation, resource allocation, and financial support. As the representative of public interest, the government bears the critical mission of promoting educational equity and serves as the "primary responsible entity" for achieving equitable education<sup>[5]</sup>. The existing literature on government attention can be primarily divided into two aspects: On one hand, the government exerts a direct impact on the realization of educational equity through measures such as policy formulation and the promotion of institutional reforms. As explicitly stated in the 《National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan(2010-2020)》, promoting equity has been established as a fundamental national education policy, with emphasis placed on the government's primary responsibility in achieving educational equity<sup>[6]</sup>. On the other hand, educational resources, particularly financial investment, serve as a critical indicator of governmental commitment to education. Promoting educational equity necessitates robust support from public finances<sup>[7]</sup>.

Educational equity ensures equal access to educational resources and opportunities for all, regardless of gender, family background, or economic status. It consists of three key dimensions: equity of opportunity, process,

and outcome. Two main methods are used to measure educational equity. Composite indicator measurement constructs a system of quantitative indicators to assess equity across access, process, and outcomes. Single indicator measurement employs specific metrics, such as the education Gini coefficient, Theil index, and average years of schooling, to gauge the degree of equity.<sup>[8]</sup>

While existing studies on government attention's impact on educational equity have made progress, they mainly focus on policy text and fiscal investment analysis, lacking exploration of specific mechanisms and relying more on qualitative methods.

This study uses 2015-2022 panel data from 31 Chinese provincial regions to:

Investigate the effect of government attention on educational equity based on scientific measurements;

Examine the moderating role of government administrative efficiency and the mechanism of urbanization levels.

### 3. Theoretical analysis and research hypotheses

#### 3.1. Government attention and educational equity

The theory of educational equity emphasizes fairness in educational opportunities, processes, and outcomes, with its core value lying in the realization of individuals' free and comprehensive development.

At every stage of educational equity, the allocation of educational resources remains a core issue. The equity of educational resource allocation is the cornerstone for achieving educational equity<sup>[9]</sup>. The government, as the primary provider and distributor of educational resources, largely determines the scale and direction of educational investment based on its level of attention. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed in this paper:

H1: The increased government attention can promote educational equity.

#### 3.2. Government attention, urbanization level, and educational equity

Urbanization, as a crucial process in socio-economic development, has garnered significant attention from governments, while its advancement exerts profound impacts on educational equity. The government's promotion of urbanization is often accompanied by the reallocation of educational resources. During the urbanization process, the government increases fiscal expenditures on urban and rural affairs to promote a more balanced distribution of educational resources between urban and rural areas. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed in this paper:

H2: The government's attention promotes educational equity by enhancing the level of urbanization.

#### 3.3. Government attention, administrative efficiency, and educational equity

The government's high-level attention to educational equity serves as a crucial driving force for promoting its realization, while administrative efficiency directly determines whether such attention can be translated into tangible achievements in educational equity<sup>[10]</sup>. Under the government's strong emphasis on educational equity, efficient administrative management can ensure the rational allocation of educational resources, preventing waste and disparities. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed in this paper:

H3: Government administrative efficiency positively moderates the relationship between government attention and educational equity.

## 4. Research design

### 4.1. Data source

This study utilizes panel data from 31 provincial-level administrative regions in China spanning 2015 to

2022 as the research sample. The data are sourced from authoritative publications including the China Statistical Yearbook and the National Statistical Bulletin on Education Expenditure.

## 4.2. Variable selection and description

### 4.2.1. Explained variable

Educational Equity(Score). Drawing on the approach of Cai He et al.<sup>[11]</sup>, this paper categorizes educational resources into three dimensions: human resources, financial resources, and material resources. Based on this framework, an indicator system for measuring educational equity is constructed, and the entropy method is further employed to calculate the weighted scores of each indicator. Details are presented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Evaluation index system for educational equity.

Primary Indicator	Secondary Indicator	Attribute
Human Resources	Student-Teacher Ratio	+
	Percentage of Full-Time Teachers with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	+
Financial Resources	Per-Student Educational Expenditure	+
	Per-Student Public Funding	+
Material Resources	Per-Student Total Fixed Assets	+
	Per-Student Book Volume	+

### 4.2.2. Core explanatory variable

Government Attention(Gov). China has long attached great importance to educational funding and continuously increased the level of fiscal investment in education. Therefore, this paper uses the proportion of national fiscal education funds in GDP of each province as a measurement indicator.

### 4.2.3. Moderating variable

Government Administrative Efficiency(Adm). Drawing on the research of Zhao Heyun et al.<sup>[12]</sup>, this paper uses “1-(administrative expenses of each province/total fiscal revenue of each province)” as its measurement indicator.

### 4.2.4. Mediating variable

Urbanization Level(Urban). This paper uses the proportion of urban population to the total regional population as a measurement indicator.

### 4.2.5. Control variable

To avoid the problem of omitted variables, this study draws on the research of Zhou Yuanxiang et al.<sup>[13]</sup> and selects the following control variables: (1) Education Scale(Inschool). The natural logarithm of the number of schools is used as the measurement. (2) Population Size(lnsize). This is measured using the natural logarithm of the resident population. (3) Level of Economic Development. We measure economic development using the logarithm of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (lnpgdp) and the logarithm of local general public budget revenue (lnfinin). (4) Educational Development Level(lnedu). It is measured by the logarithm of the average number of students enrolled at all levels of schools per 100,000 population.

## 4.3. Econometric model specification

To examine the impact of government attention on educational equity, this paper establishes the following baseline model:

$$Score_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Gov_{it} + \beta_2 X_{it} + \mu_i + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

## 5. Empirical results and analysis

### 5.1. Baseline regression results

**Table 2** reports the stepwise regression results of the impact of government attention on educational equity. Column(1) includes the core explanatory variable, year fixed effects, and region fixed effects to control for variations that do not change over time or across regions. Column(2) adds control variables based on Column(1). It can be found that regardless of whether control variables are included, government attention has a significantly positive impact on educational equity. This indicates that enhancing government attention can promote educational equity, and Hypothesis H1 is verified.

**Table 2.** Baseline regression.

	(1)	(2)
Gov	1.293* (1.691)	2.504*** (2.882)
lnpgdp		0.118 (1.380)
lnschool		-0.147*** (-3.418)
lnedu		-0.057 (-0.883)
lnfinin		-0.012 (-0.361)
lnsize		-0.179 (-1.093)
Constant	0.162*** (5.305)	1.786 (1.181)
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes
N	248	248
R <sup>2</sup>	0.904	0.912

Note: \*, \*\*, and \*\*\* indicate that the regression results are statistically significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% confidence levels, respectively. The t-values are reported in parentheses. The same convention applies hereafter.

### 5.2. Mechanism test

**Table 3** presents the regression results of the impact of government attention on urbanization levels. After incorporating control variables and controlling for year and region fixed effects, the regression coefficient of government attention is significantly positive at the 5% level. This indicates that while urbanization levels increase, government attention effectively promotes the realization of educational equity during the urbanization process by enhancing urbanization levels, balancing the allocation of educational resources, and improving education quality. Hypothesis H2 is verified.

**Table 3.** Mechanism analysis.

	(1) Urban	(2) Urban
Gov	0.073 (0.356)	0.427** (2.031)
lnpgdp		0.075***

	(1) Urban	(2) Urban
lnschool		(3.633) -0.055***
lnedu		(-5.344) 0.034**
lnfinin		(2.190) 0.004
lnsize		(0.472) 0.151***
Constant	0.826*** (100.936)	-1.146*** (-3.135)
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Region FE	Yes	Yes
N	248	248
R <sup>2</sup>	0.994	0.996

Table 3. (continued)

Note: \*, \*\*, and \*\*\* indicate that the regression results are statistically significant at the 10%, 5%, and 1% confidence levels, respectively. The t-values are reported in parentheses. The same convention applies hereafter.

## 6. Research conclusions and policy recommendations

This paper selects balanced panel data from 31 provinces (municipalities and autonomous regions) in China from 2015 to 2022 as the research sample, conducting an in-depth investigation into the mechanisms and effects of government attention on educational equity. The study yields the following conclusions:

First, government attention has a significant positive impact on educational equity. Second, government attention can promote regional educational equity by advancing urbanization. During the urbanization process, the government optimizes the allocation of educational resources and enhances education quality through policy guidance and financial investment, thereby contributing to the realization of educational equity to a certain extent.

Based on the above research conclusions, this paper puts forward the following policy recommendations:

First, the government should further elevate the importance of educational equity, making it one of the core objectives of educational policies.

Second, the government should optimize the allocation of educational resources during urbanization through policy guidance and financial investment.

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