

# Generation, Consequences and Coping Strategies for the Internalisation of Education

Jiang,Mingran

School of Marxism, Xinjiang Normal University, Urumqi, Xinjiang, 830017, China

**Abstract:** As a pathological phenomenon in the field of education, educational involution has led to the irrationality and worthlessness of the current social competition, and its causes are complex and varied, which are mainly reflected in the uneven distribution of educational resources, the intensification of the pressure of social competition, the orientation of the educational system and policies, as well as the influence of the family and the social culture, and so on. Educational involution not only profoundly affects the balance of the educational ecology, but also further exacerbates the uneven distribution of educational resources, leading to unfairness in the educational process. In order to deal with the many social problems arising from the involution of education, it is necessary to adopt comprehensive measures from a multidimensional perspective, with a view to promoting equity in education, improving the quality of education, and providing a solid foundation for the all-round development of students and the sustained progress of society.

**Keywords:** Educational involution; Home education; Educational resources; Coping strategies

DOI: 10.62639/sspjieess20.20250203

## 1. The Emergence and Development of the Concept of "Involution"

The term "involution" was first used in the book "Critique of Judgement" by the German philosopher Kant. It has since gradually been widely used in a variety of disciplines, including education, sociology, psychology, economics, political science, etc. <sup>[1]</sup> Its basic connotation refers to the process of continuous internal refinement and complexity of a system under the condition that its external expansion is strictly limited. <sup>[2]</sup>

"Involution" has attracted widespread attention in Chinese academia because Huang Zongzhi borrowed the anthropologist's concept of "agricultural involution" in his books *Smallholder Economy and Social Change in Northern China* and *Smallholder Households and Rural Development in the Yangtze River Delta*. He used the concept of "agricultural involution" to illustrate that labour intensification has brought about a diminishing daily remuneration for individual labour, which is manifested as growth without development. "The essence of involution lies in the high intensity of labour inputs per unit of land and the diminishing marginal remuneration per unit of labour, which has also existed in the recent past. 'over-intensive commodification'." <sup>[3]</sup> Since then, the concept of "involution" has evolved through multiple stages of development, and has transcended its initial scope and context of application, and has been elevated to a theoretical analytical framework and perspective, becoming an open concept. <sup>[1]</sup>

Educational involution is the manifestation of the phenomenon of involution in the field of education, which refers to a state of growth without substantial development in the field of education, as evidenced by the fact that the increase in the scale and expansion of education does not lead to a corresponding increase in the quality of education, but may instead lead to stagnation or even a decline in the quality of education. This state of affairs

---

(Manuscript NO.: JIESS-25-3-80004)

### About the Author

Jiang,Mingran (2004-), Master, Xinjiang Normal University,Research direction:Ideological and political education.

is usually accompanied by diminishing marginal returns to investment in human capital in education, i.e., as the educational attainment of workers increases, their marginal returns tend to diminish.

In the context of educational involution, educational competition becomes irrational and worthless, which seriously violates the laws of education and student growth, damages the educational ecology and the physical and mental health of students, and exacerbates the educational anxiety of the public.<sup>[4]</sup> The essence of this phenomenon of involution is a product of extreme utilitarianism and short-sightedness of the concept of education, which leads to excessive investment of educational resources and energy, but fails to achieve substantial improvement in the quality of education.

## **2. Causes of Educational Involution**

### **(1) Unequal distribution of educational resources**

The unequal distribution of educational resources is one of the major causes of the involution of education. Educational resources include a number of aspects such as teachers' strength, teaching facilities and financial inputs. In the current education system, the scarcity of high-quality educational resources has led to fierce competition, making it necessary for parents and students to compete for these resources by increasing their investment.

There are significant differences in the distribution of educational resources between regions. In urban and developed areas, schools have more excellent teachers, advanced teaching facilities and sufficient capital investment, making the quality of education in these areas relatively high. In rural and underdeveloped areas, on the other hand, schools face problems such as weak teachers, backward teaching facilities and insufficient capital investment, making it difficult to ensure the quality of education.<sup>[5]</sup> This difference in educational resources between regions leads to inequality of educational opportunities and exacerbates the phenomenon of educational involution. On the other hand, there is also an imbalance in the distribution of educational resources among schools. Some prestigious and key schools have more quality educational resources, such as excellent teaching staff, perfect teaching facilities, and rich extracurricular activities, due to historical reasons and favourable policies. Students of these schools often occupy an advantageous position in competition and can more easily obtain better education opportunities and broader room for development. On the other hand, some ordinary and weak schools are faced with the problem of a lack of educational resources, and their students are in a disadvantaged position in competition, making it difficult for them to obtain quality educational resources.

### **(2) Increased pressure of social competition**

In today's society, competition has become the norm in people's lives. Whether it is employment, promotion or social status enhancement, all need to be achieved through competition. This competitive pressure not only exists in the adult world, but is also gradually transmitted to the field of education.

In the field of education, the pressure of competition is mainly reflected in two aspects: academic competition and competition for promotion. In academic competition, parents and students have to constantly increase their learning inputs, including participation in extracurricular tutoring and various competitions, in order to pursue better academic results and rankings. This increase in investment not only adds to the academic burden of students, but also leads to a waste of educational resources and disorderly competition. In the competition for further studies, the limited number of places in some prestigious and key schools and the large number of students applying for them make the competition extremely fierce. In order to have a better chance of further studies, students and parents have to enhance their competitiveness by taking various training and examinations. This competition for further education not only exacerbates the phenomenon of the internalisation of education, but also leads to the emergence of the problem of equity in education.

### **(3) Homogenisation of the social evaluation system**

In the current society, single indicators such as grades, positions and income are often used to measure the value and success of individuals. This evaluation system has led parents and students to over-pursuing short-term benefits and neglecting the importance of long-term development and personal growth. In the field of education, the impact of this single evaluation system is particularly pronounced. Parents and students tend to take examination results and promotion rates as the main criteria for evaluating the quality of school education. This evaluation criterion not only leads to a serious tendency of teaching to the test, but also neglects the cultivation and development of other comprehensive qualities of students.<sup>[6]</sup> In order to pursue high scores and prestigious schools, students and parents have to devote a lot of time and energy to exam-oriented education, while neglecting other aspects of learning and growth. Such a single evaluation system not only exacerbates the phenomenon of the internalisation of education, but also limits the diversity and comprehensiveness of students' personal development.

### **(4) Education system and policies**

The current education system and policies have, to a certain extent, exacerbated the fierce competition and uneven distribution of educational resources, and promoted the phenomenon of the involution of education. On the one hand, the exam-oriented education system has led to overburdening of students and suppression of their creativity. Under the examination-based education system, students' learning content and learning methods are often strictly regulated and restricted, lacking autonomy and innovation. This system not only restricts the development of students' personality and creativity, but also aggravates their academic burden and psychological pressure. In order to cope with the pressure of competition under the examination-based education system, students and parents are forced to increase their investment in learning to improve their performance and rankings, thus exacerbating the phenomenon of the internalisation of education. On the other hand, imperfections in education policies have also led to uneven distribution of education resources and disorderly competition. Some policies, such as the key school policy and the school choice policy, have intensified competition and uneven distribution of educational resources. These policies often result in some schools having more quality education resources while others face a lack of resources. In order to gain access to better educational opportunities and resources, students and parents are forced to enhance their competitiveness by taking various training and examinations, thus exacerbating the phenomenon of the involution of education.

### **(5) Family and social culture**

The phenomenon of the internalisation of education is exacerbated by excessive family expectations of education and traditional socio-cultural attitudes. On the one hand, excessive family expectations of education have led to excessive parental attention and intervention in students' studies. In the current society, many families regard their children's education as an important way to change their fate and realise their personal values. Such expectations not only lead to excessive parental concern and intervention in students' studies, but also aggravate students' academic burden and psychological pressure. In order to meet the expectations and demands of families, students and parents have to improve their grades and rankings by increasing their investment in studies, thus exacerbating the phenomenon of the involution of education. On the other hand, in modern society, academic qualifications and grades are the main criteria for measuring a person's ability and value.<sup>[7]</sup> This notion has led to the excessive pursuit and worship of high academic qualifications and high grades in society, thus exacerbating the competition and uneven distribution of educational resources. In this cultural context, students are forced to enhance their academic qualifications and achievements by taking various trainings and examinations in the hope of gaining an advantageous position in future employment and competition. This quest not only exacerbates the phenomenon of the internalisation of education, but also leads to the emergence of the problem of equity in education.

### 3. Consequences of Educational Involution

#### (1) Excessive pressure on students to learn leads to frequent mental health problems

One of the most direct effects of the internalisation of education is a significant increase in the pressure on students to learn. In an endowed education environment, students are faced with unprecedented pressure to compete academically. Due to the limited availability of educational resources and the scarcity of quality educational resources, students are forced to study harder in order to achieve better grades and rankings, with a view to gaining a competitive edge in their future studies and employment. However, this intense learning pressure often exceeds students' mental capacity, leading to a series of frequent mental health problems.

On the one hand, prolonged and intense study makes students physically and mentally exhausted and prone to negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. These emotions not only affect students' learning efficiency and quality of life, but may also have a long-term negative impact on their future mental health development. On the other hand, the overly competitive and high-pressure environment brought about by the internalisation of education has also strained the relationship between students, and competition among peers often turns into hostility and alienation, further exacerbating the emergence of mental health problems.

In addition, the internalisation of education may also lead to excessive parental expectations and interventions. Parents often place their own expectations on their children, hoping that their unfulfilled aspirations can be realised through their children's outstanding performance. Such excessive expectations and interventions not only increase students' learning pressure, but may also lead to tensions in parent-child relationships and family conflicts, further affecting students' mental health.

To cope with this problem, all sectors of the community should work together to reduce students' learning pressure and pay attention to their mental health. Schools should establish a perfect mental health education system, start from different levels to provide students with correct education and guidance, and cultivate their stress resistance and self-adjustment ability.<sup>[8]</sup> At the same time, parents should also change the concept of education, rationally look at children's growth and learning, give more love and support to children, and avoid the psychological pressure on children caused by excessive expectations and interventions.

#### (2) Exacerbating imbalances in the distribution of educational resources

Against the backdrop of the implosion of education, quality educational resources have become scarce and students have to compete fiercely for these resources. However, this competition is often limited to some students, while the majority of students do not have access to these quality educational resources for various reasons.

At present, due to historical, geographical, economic and other reasons, schools and educational resources in some areas are relatively superior, attracting the attention and admiration of a large number of outstanding students and parents. These schools and resources have often become the "hardest hit" areas of educational involution, and students have to make great efforts and pay a huge price in order to enter these schools or obtain these resources. In contrast, educational resources in some poor areas and weak schools are relatively scarce, making it difficult for students to have access to good educational opportunities and space for development.

At the same time, the internalisation of education has also exacerbated inequities in the education process. Owing to the limited nature of educational resources and fierce competition, some students may not be able to obtain fair educational opportunities because of factors such as family background, economic conditions and social relations. Such inequity not only runs counter to the original intent and principles of education, but also further exacerbates social inequality and polarisation.

### **(3) Inhibiting the development of students' creative abilities**

In an internalised educational environment, students are often required to learn and think in accordance with a fixed mode of learning and way of thinking in order to cope with various examinations and assessments. Such fixed learning patterns and ways of thinking not only limit the development of students' mindspace and imagination, but also seriously inhibit the cultivation of their creative abilities.

On the one hand, the internalisation of education has led to the homogenisation and standardisation of students' learning content. In order to cope with the requirements of various examinations and assessments, students tend to focus only on the learning of textbook knowledge and test-taking skills, while neglecting the accumulation and expansion of knowledge in other fields and areas. Such homogenised and standardised learning content not only restricts the development of students' knowledge horizons and ways of thinking, but also makes it difficult for them to develop independent thinking and problem-solving skills.

In addition, the internalisation of education limits students' practical opportunities and the development of practical skills. In an internalised educational environment, students are often bound to the classroom for theoretical knowledge and lack sufficient opportunities for practice and the development of practical skills. This lack of practical experience and practical ability not only limits the development of students' innovative thinking and practical ability, but also makes it difficult for them to adapt to the needs and changes of society in their future studies and work.

The consequences of the internalisation of education are far-reaching and complex. It not only affects the learning status and psychological health development of students, but also further exacerbates the imbalance in the distribution of educational resources and seriously inhibits the cultivation of students' innovative abilities. All sectors of society should work together to optimise the allocation of educational resources, establish a diversified educational evaluation system and curriculum system, strengthen the cultivation and training of students' practical and innovative abilities, and pay attention to the development of students' mental health. Only in this way can we build a fairer, more efficient and more dynamic education system that provides a solid foundation for the all-round development of students and the sustainable progress of society.

## **4. Coping Strategies for Educational Involution**

### **(1) Optimising the allocation of educational resources**

The unequal distribution of educational resources is one of the major causes of the phenomenon of the internalisation of education. On the one hand, the State should increase its investment in education, especially for rural and remote areas. By increasing education funding, it can improve the infrastructure of schools and enhance the treatment and quality of teachers, thus attracting more excellent teachers to teach in these areas.[9] At the same time, modern information technology means, such as distance education and online education, can also be used to extend high-quality educational resources to rural and remote areas and achieve the sharing of educational resources.

On the other hand, it is necessary to promote the optimal allocation of educational resources. In the allocation of resources, full consideration should be given to the actual situation between different regions and schools, so as to avoid excessive concentration and waste of resources. Through the establishment of a mechanism for sharing educational resources, the sharing of quality educational resources across regions and schools can be realised.

In addition, support for weak schools can also be strengthened to help these schools improve the quality of education and narrow the gap with quality schools by means of favourable policies and financial inputs.

At the same time, the regulatory mechanism for the allocation of educational resources should be improved. A

sound evaluation system for the allocation of educational resources should be established, and the allocation and use of educational resources should be evaluated and supervised on a regular basis, so as to ensure the rational allocation and effective use of educational resources.<sup>[10]</sup> Regions and schools with problems such as wasted resources and uneven allocation should be rectified and adjusted in a timely manner in order to optimise the distribution pattern of educational resources.

## **(2) Establishment of a diversified social evaluation system**

Currently, there is a single evaluation system in education that focuses too much on students' examination results and promotion rates, resulting in students and parents being caught up in an involutional competition in pursuit of high scores and prestigious schools. To break this deadlock, a diversified social assessment system needs to be established to promote the all-round development of students.

Society should recognise that the value of talents is not only reflected in examination results and academic qualifications, but also in the overall quality and ability of individuals. Therefore, students should be encouraged to actively develop their hobbies and specialities, and to cultivate a spirit of innovation and practical ability, so as to lay a solid foundation for their future career development.

In terms of evaluation content, emphasis should be placed on the comprehensive evaluation of students' moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labour aspects, rather than being confined to academic performance. In terms of evaluation methods, a combination of various evaluation methods should be used, such as a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluation, and a combination of process and outcome evaluation, in order to more fully reflect the actual situation and development potential of students.

At the same time, regulation and guidance of educational evaluation should be strengthened. Governments and educational administrations should formulate relevant policies and regulations to standardise the conduct of educational evaluation and prevent one-sidedness and subjectivity in the evaluation process. In addition, the use of and feedback on the results of educational evaluation should be strengthened, and the results should be used as an important basis for improving educational teaching and optimising the allocation of educational resources.

## **(3) Strengthening policy guidance**

Policy guidance plays a crucial role in coping with the process of educational involution. Governments and education administrations should guide the direction of education through the formulation and implementation of relevant policies to provide strong support to alleviate educational involution.

On the one hand, research and analyses in the field of education should be strengthened in order to keep abreast of and understand the current situation and development trend of the internalisation of education, and to formulate targeted policies and measures. For example, policies can be formulated on the allocation of educational resources, educational evaluation, admission examinations and so on, in order to optimise the educational environment and reduce the burden on students and parents.

Policy formulation is only the first step, and it is more important to ensure the effective implementation of the policy. The Government and the education administration should establish a sound mechanism for the implementation of the policy, with a clear division of responsibilities and timeframes to ensure that the policy can be put into practice. At the same time, they should also strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the policy, so that problems and deficiencies can be identified and corrected in a timely manner.

In addition, all sectors of society should be encouraged to participate in the process of formulating and implementing education policies. The Government and the education administration should consult widely with all sectors of the community for their views and suggestions, and fully incorporate the wisdom of all sectors of the community in order to jointly promote the improvement and implementation of education policies. By



strengthening policy guidance, strong safeguards can be provided for the development of the education sector and the phenomenon of the internalisation of education can be effectively mitigated.

#### **(4) Guiding families to establish correct educational concepts**

Family is an important position of education, and the concept of family education has a profound impact on students' learning and development.<sup>[11]</sup> In order to cope with the phenomenon of the internalisation of education, families need to be guided to set up the correct concept of education, so as to promote the all-round development of students.

The Government and education administrative departments should popularise scientific education concepts and methods among parents through various forms, such as organising talks on family education and distributing publicity materials on family education, so as to help parents to establish a correct concept of education and encourage them to pay attention to the all-round development of students. Parents should realise that a student's academic performance is only one aspect of his or her development, and that it is more important to cultivate the student's comprehensive qualities and abilities. Therefore, parents should pay attention to students' interests and specialities and encourage them to take an active part in extracurricular activities and social practices, so as to broaden their horizons and knowledge.

At the same time, a home-school co-operation mechanism should be established. Schools and families should work closely together and pay joint attention to the growth and development of students.<sup>[12]</sup> Schools may hold regular parent-teacher conferences to inform parents of students' learning and performance, and listen to their views and suggestions. Parents can also actively participate in the educational and teaching activities of the school, learn about the school's educational philosophy and teaching methods, and work with the school to promote the all-round development of students.

In addition, research and support for family education should be strengthened. The Government and the education sector should increase investment in family education research and support relevant institutions and scholars in conducting research and exploration in family education. At the same time, more educational resources and support should be provided to families, such as the establishment of family education guidance centres and the introduction of family education courses, to help parents better fulfil their educational responsibilities.

## **5. Conclusion**

Tackling the involution of education requires the concerted efforts and support of society as a whole. By optimising the allocation of educational resources, establishing a diversified social assessment system, strengthening policy guidance and guiding families to establish a correct concept of education, and other measures, a more relaxed, diversified and favourable environment and conditions can be provided for students' learning and development. This will not only help to alleviate the phenomenon of the internalisation of education, but also promote the all-round development of education and the progress and development of society.

## **References**

- [1] Li Fan,Wang Lian. Excessive Competition:The Generation, Consequences, and Responses to the Internalisation of Education[J]. Research on Teaching and Learning,2025,48(01):37-44.
- [2] LIU Shiding, QIU Zeqi. Discussion on the concept of "involution"[J]. Sociological Research,2004,(05):96-110.
- [3] Huang Zongzhi. Small Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China [M]. Beijing:Zhonghua shuju, 2000:75.
- [4] Editorial Board. Against "involution", let the child's life stretch freely[J]. Educator,2024,(46):4-5.
- [5] FAN Guorui. Openness of high-level education and the construction of a strong educational country[J]. University Education Science,2025,(01):22-29.

- [6] Li Mu Xi. Research on the path of education evaluation reform in the new era empowered by big data[J]. Journal of Jiangsu Normal University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition),2024,50(05):111-122.
- [7] Zhang Junz. Influence path and equilibrium countermeasures of urban-rural differences on college students' employment satisfaction[D]. Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics,2024.
- [8] Lin Chang. Building an innovative and high-quality mental health education system for primary and secondary schools[J]. China Quality,2024,(10):37-40.
- [9] Song Yunlian. Advocating diversified development to push the balance of quality education[N]. Shangqiu Daily,2025-02-11(004).
- [10] Li Jian,Zhang Junjiao. Serving the construction of a strong talent country with the construction of high-quality education system[J]. China Ethnic Education,2024,(12):18-20.
- [11] Li Hongdong. Research on the model of moral education in primary and secondary school family education[J]. The road to success,2021,(06):32-33.
- [12] Lu Chaoying. Exploration of student work methods in higher vocational colleges and universities under the perspective of social work profession[J]. Talent,2025,(08):105-108.