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# *Research on Role Model Education in Government Education Assistance for Adolescents in Distress*

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***Abstract:*** The Chinese Government has done a great deal of work in providing educational assistance to young people in difficulty aged 13 to 18, including policy provision, financial support, organizational management, supervision and control, etc. At present, assistance for children in difficulty has shifted from life-support to developmental assistance. At this critical stage, in order to further explore how to better carry out role model education in the government's educational assistance work, this paper deeply analyses the characteristics and current situation of children in difficult circumstances, as well as the current implementation of role model education and assistance and its shortcomings, and puts forward the proposals of setting up diversified role models from youth groups in difficult circumstances, . Through literature analysis and other research methods and based on social learning theory and social identity theory, it puts forward five research recommendations, namely, to set up diversified role models from groups of young people in difficulty, to establish a library of role models for young people in difficulty and a home for community platforms, to strengthen interactive and experiential education, to strengthen personalized guidance, and to enhance social awareness and participation, with a view to providing reference to the work of providing educational assistance for young people in difficulty.

***Keywords:*** Adolescents in distress, government education assistance, role model education.

## 1. Introduction

As a special group in society, young people in difficult circumstances often face multiple problems, such as economic poverty, family breakup and academic challenges, which leads to a lack of self-confidence and motivation and makes it difficult for them to integrate into mainstream society. Educational assistance for children in difficult circumstances is an important part of China's social welfare policy system for children in difficult circumstances, especially at the critical stage when the welfare for children in difficult circumstances is shifting from a life-supporting welfare to a developmental welfare, educational assistance for children in difficult circumstances has become a crucial part of the assistance for children in difficult circumstances. Educational assistance for children in difficult circumstances between the ages of 13-18, that is, in junior and senior high school, is a weak link, which is the key to whether children in difficult circumstances can integrate into society and achieve self-sufficiency. Therefore, how to effectively carry out role model education in the context of government education and assistance for young people in difficulty has become a topic that needs to be studied in depth.

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## 2. Current Situation of Adolescents in Distress

### 2.1. Overview of Adolescents in Distress

Children in difficult circumstances refer to those who are in need of help or protection due to their own, family and external reasons, including those who have difficulties in living, medical treatment and schooling due to family poverty, those who have difficulties in rehabilitation, care, nursing and social integration due to their own disabilities, and those whose personal safety is threatened or infringed due to maltreatment, abandonment, accidental injury or unlawful infringement of their personal safety as a result of lack of family guardianship or improper guardianship [1].

This study refers to adolescents aged 13-18 who are experiencing similar difficulties to those mentioned above. According to Erikson, 13-18-year-olds are trying to discover their unique strengths and weaknesses and the best roles they can play in their future lives. During this stage, adolescents attempt to understand who they are by narrowing their choices in terms of personality, career, sexuality, and political commitments. Erikson refers to this as the 'sameness versus sameness confusion stage'. According to Erikson, in the 'sameness vs. sameness confusion stage,' adolescents may disengage from the process of sameness formation in certain ways if they encounter obstacles in their search for appropriate sameness. They may take on socially unacceptable roles as a way of expressing who they don't want to be, or they may have difficulty forming and maintaining long-term intimate relationships. At this stage, young people become increasingly dependent on their friends and peers. Peer relationships provide role models for behavior. They construct their own reference groups, cliques and crowds. Particularly in late adolescence, adolescents seek help from those they consider most likely to be experts in a particular field [2].

### 2.2. Government Educational Assistance

The inherent assumption of the government is that it is a government of good governance and that it has all the information, resources and power to solve the social assistance problem. It has become a consensus in current research on the development of child welfare in China that the government needs to take the lead in providing educational assistance to older orphans. Government-led educational assistance programs for older orphans are mainly implemented through financial subsidies, the identification of target groups, and direct intervention by the government. Since the government's child welfare is fundamental and holistic, no social force can replace the government's leading role in education assistance for older orphans. However, in practice, the over-centralization of power and the rigidity of policy regulations have increased the government's own burden of governance, and at the same time have had an inhibiting effect on those who are actually carrying out educational assistance for older orphans [3].

According to Wang and Liu, the current education assistance policy is mainly concerned with the direct deprivation of education opportunities due to economic poverty, and does not pay enough attention to the deeper problems such as learning disabilities and lack of motivation. On the whole, this policy framework is more of a 'negative' safeguard, a relief-oriented rather than a comprehensive promotion; compared with the remarkable progress in the field of economic assistance, the education support services tailored for children from poor families are relatively scarce and need to be strengthened urgently [4]. According to Li, the current educational assistance for children in difficult circumstances presents three characteristics, namely, low-level deficiency needs and insufficient guidance for high-level growth needs; closed primary indoctrination and a lack of open social experience; and immediate situational interventions and a lack of precise and systematic guidance [5].

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### 2.3. Theoretical Basis of Role Model Education

Role models, as personalized values and value leaders, have lofty beliefs and value pursuits, and the manifestation of their leading function and exemplary significance is an intrinsic attribute of their existence, generation and practice [6].

Li believes that role model education is an educational activity in which educators motivate and guide learners to internalize the spiritual qualities of role models and develop their own values, moral personality and innovative behaviors through the value-carrying personality image of role models [7]. In the 1970s, Bandura proposed the social learning theory, which has achieved great success in explaining human social behavior. According to social learning theory, human learning is achieved through three main mechanisms: first, association, second, reinforcement, and third, imitation. Imitation is the process by which individuals learn social attitudes and behaviors by observing the attitudes and behaviors of others. Imitation does not require external reinforcement, but only the observation of other people's behavior and results. According to Bandura, observational learning is an important way for children to acquire pro-social behaviors, and social role models have the greatest influence on children's pro-social behaviors [8].

## 3. Role Model Education in Educational Assistance

At present, this study has not found any relevant research on role model education in educational assistance for adolescents in difficulty. Reference is made to other related studies as follows. By analyzing and summarizing the relevant literature, Hao believes that there are some problems in role model education for secondary school students. For example, in the selection of role models, there are problems such as monotonous types of role models and more emphasis on moral exemplars; in the form of role model education and propaganda, there are problems such as over-exaltation and inadequate mechanisms; in the practice of role models, there are problems such as different knowledge and behavior and difficulties in implementation. She thinks that there are three main reasons for the problems of role model education: first, the social environment, the new media and other diversified and complex social environments have an impact on the effect of role model education; second, the school education factor, the insufficiency of role model education methods in schools and the lack of attention to the target group; and third, the factor of the educated people, the personality characteristics and lifestyle of the youth in the new era have an impact on the effect of role model education [9].

Jiang believes that in traditional role model education, although the perfect role models set up by teachers of Civics and Political Science can embody noble values, they have lost the most important feature of role models - emulatability [10]. For example, in a high school in Nanshan District, Shenzhen, a forum on ‘Self-improvement’ invites successful candidates from impoverished mountainous areas to share their stories of struggle, with the aim of inspiring other students to pursue their studies. Although the forum received positive feedback, participants commented that the content of the forum was too perfect and lacked concrete and practical advice to help them cope with real-life challenges.

Guo and Li believe that in the era of ‘pan-idol’, young people's values have become more diversified. This has brought some difficulties to the role model education of adolescents, and also exposed the shortcomings and deficiencies of the traditional role model education model [11]. Feng and Tang pointed out that the complex and diversified social environment restricts the exertion of the power of role model education, which is manifested in the fact that the influence of role models has been weakened by the ‘crisis of moral homogeneity’, the information dissemination of ‘mass microphone’ in the all-media pattern has weakened the appeal of role models, and the consumer culture has weakened the influence of role models. The unscientific education of role models in school

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weakens the moral education function of role models, which is manifested in the fact that the perfection of role models is difficult to arouse the recognition and imitation of young people, the education process of role models ignores the subjectivity of young people and is difficult to arouse the enthusiasm of role models, and the mechanical and old-fashioned way of role model education leads to the disconnection between role model education and life [12]. For example, Tsinghua University initiated the 'Youth Dream Team' project in Beijing, which motivates young people in need to pursue their dreams by selecting outstanding youth representatives to present their entrepreneurial and learning experiences in the community. During the program, the project team recruited successful youth role models from various fields to share their stories of growth and struggles, but most of the participants reflected that the role models' stories were idealistic and difficult to resonate with.

By analyzing the abovementioned studies on role model education, this paper concludes that role model education currently faces many challenges. For example, there is a single type of role model, the role model lacks emulatability, the form of education and publicity often fall into over-idealization, and the mechanism is not sound. At the same time, there is a disconnect between knowledge and action in the practice of role models, which is difficult to implement. The root causes of the problem are threefold: the complexity of the social environment and the diversified information in new media have weakened the influence of role models; the lagging behind of education methods in schools, which lacks in-depth attention and scientific guidance for young people; and young people's own diversified values and individuality, which makes it difficult for the traditional education model to meet their needs. In addition, since young people in difficulty are in the midst of difficulties in themselves, their families and the outside world, it is even more necessary to adopt a targeted approach to the education of role models for young people in difficulty.

## 4. Suggestions for Role Models in Government Educational Assistance

### 4.1. Setting up Diversified Role Model from Groups

Social Identity Theory suggests that an individual's identity as a member of a group is the most important factor influencing people's social awareness, attitudes, and behaviors. In other words, people derive identity not only from their own personal achievements, but also from others in the same group. According to the theory of social identity, role models emerging in the group of young people in difficulty are more likely to produce emotional resonance and imitation behavior for young people in difficulty because of their similar fates.

In order to meet the diverse needs of young people in difficult circumstances, it is important to have a variety of role models. In addition to the usual students with excellent academic results or special talents, a wide range of role models can be included. At the same time, emphasis should be placed on the authenticity and accessibility of the role models. It is important to make young people in difficulty feel that role models are close by and that they can be replicated.

### 4.2. Strengthening Interactive and Experiential forms of Education

Through interactive and experiential education, young people in difficulty can understand the growth process and value of role models more intuitively, so as to improve the emulatability of role models. In order to avoid the formalization of role model education, emphasis should be placed on strengthening the interactive and experiential form of education. This can be achieved by organizing in-depth face-to-face exchanges between young people in difficulty and role models, as well as joint participation in various kinds of social practice activities, so as to enable young people in difficulty to have a deeper understanding of the growth process and inner world of role models. It is not difficult to make full use of modern technological means, such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR)

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and other advanced technologies, to simulate the growth environment and work scenes of role models, so that young people in difficulty can feel the power and value of role models in real life. In addition, interactive teaching activities such as role-playing and situation simulation are also effective ways to enable young people in difficulty to experience the behaviors and thoughts of role models in simulated situations, so as to further deepen their understanding and recognition of the spirit of role models.

### 4.3. Enhancing Personalized Guidance

Individualized guidance can take into account the diverse backgrounds and needs of young people in difficulty, so that when they come into contact with role models, they can find the part of their values that matches their own, thus ensuring the effectiveness of the guidance. Firstly, it is necessary to understand individual needs and gain an in-depth understanding of the background, interests and needs of each young person in difficulty, so as to tailor-make a role model education plan for him or her; secondly, by means of one-on-one or small-group counselling, in-depth explanations of the role models' deeds and guidance of the mind can be provided to the young people in difficulty in accordance with their specific conditions; thirdly, young people should be encouraged to interact with their role models, such as through online exchanges, so as to increase their personal experience and feelings; lastly, the learning progress and needs of young people in difficulty should be tracked regularly. Finally, it is essential to track the learning progress and psychological changes of adolescents in difficulty, so as to make timely adjustments to educational strategies and ensure the effectiveness of personalized guidance.

### 4.4. Establishing Community Platforms

The core of establishing a role model pool and a community platform for young people in difficulty lies in the identification of real and credible role models, and the promotion of positive exchanges and interactions among young people in difficulty, so as to enhance their willingness and motivation to learn from role models. Firstly, it is necessary to collect a wide range of inspirational stories about the development of young people in difficulty from different fields, and build a comprehensive database of role models on this basis. At the same time, with the power of the Internet platform, a community platform can be set up specifically for young people in difficulty, so that they can easily exchange ideas and share experiences.

The platform should focus on positive guidance and encourage young people to learn from role models, so as to create a positive atmosphere for growth. In addition, online and offline activities, such as role model sharing sessions and experience exchange sessions, can be organised on a regular basis to further deepen the interaction and understanding among young people in difficult circumstances, and jointly assist their growth and development.

### 4.5. Enhancing Social Awareness and Participation

By raising society's attention to and awareness of young people in difficulty, support and participation in role model learning can be increased, thereby enhancing young people's motivation to learn.

Currently, one of the major challenges facing educational assistance is the low level of social awareness. In this regard, the government should step up its efforts to publicize the work of educational assistance, and to raise social awareness of young people in difficulty. This can be done through a variety of channels, such as media campaigns and public service announcements, to widely disseminate the importance and urgency of educational assistance and to guide all sectors of society to actively participate in and support the cause of educational assistance. At the same time, it is also essential to strengthen public education, so as to enhance the public's understanding of and sympathy

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for young people in difficulty, and to endeavor to create a favorable atmosphere in which society as a whole can work together to care for young people in difficulty.

### 4.6. Suggested Implementation Steps

First, collect information through schools, communities and public welfare organizations to identify youths in difficulty who are facing difficulties in their families, finances and themselves, but have made remarkable progress through unremitting efforts. Through preliminary screening, in-depth interviews and evaluation, final role models will be identified and a pool of role models for youth in difficulty will be established. Second, story mining and collation: Conduct in-depth interviews with selected young people in difficulty to record their growth process, challenges and overcoming of difficulties, personal insights and future outlook. At the same time, relevant video materials, such as photos and videos, will be collected to enrich the stories and the pool of role models for youths in difficulty. Third, Establish a community platform home for youth in difficulty. Use social media, official websites, offline exhibitions and other forms to build a platform to widely disseminate the stories of these young people. Organize online sharing sessions, offline award ceremonies and other activities, and invite them as guest speakers to directly communicate with their peers. Fourth, provide young people in difficulty with follow-up support, such as academic assistance, career planning and psychological counselling, to help them continue to grow. At the same time, a long-term tracking mechanism is set up to record their subsequent achievements, which serves as a resource to continuously motivate other youth in need. Fifth, encourage the participation of all sectors of the community to form a favorable atmosphere of care for young people in difficulty. Through the establishment of scholarships and volunteer service programs, more people can participate in this public welfare action, and jointly promote the comprehensive development of youth in difficulty.

## 5. Conclusion

Role model education is a complex and systematic project in the government's educational assistance for youth in difficulty. It requires the cooperation of the government, society, schools and families. In order to effectively play the role of inspiring and guiding role models to help young people in difficult circumstances to positively cope with the challenges of life and pursue personal growth and social contribution, this paper puts forward five suggestions: to set up diversified role models from young people in difficult circumstances, to set up a library of role models for young people in difficult circumstances and a home for community platforms, to strengthen the interactive and experiential education, to enhance personalized guidance, and to improve social awareness and participation. It is suggested that the steps of research and establishment, story mining and collation, platform building and publicity, continuous support and growth, and community interaction and influence should be followed.

Although this paper attempts to make a breakthrough in the study of role model education in government education assistance for older orphans, due to the limitations of my theoretical and writing skills, this framework needs to be continuously improved. In addition, there is a lack of official, nationwide research data on older orphans, and it is difficult to obtain comprehensive, detailed statistics on older orphans due to time and energy constraints, so the thesis relies more on indirect data, and direct social research still needs to be further deepened. Looking to the future, it is believed that with the joint efforts of the whole society, young people in difficulty will be able to get out of their difficulties, realize their own values and contribute to the society.

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