<u>**NEWSLETTER**</u>

Can Online Learning Promote Educational Equity? An Empirical Study on the "Digital Divide" in Online Learning of Primary and Secondary Students during the Epidemic

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THE whole world including China has experienced a large-scale practice of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, "digital divide" induced by online learning has aroused wide concerns of the public. Recently, a study published in *Journal of Schooling Studies* sampled 508 students from 15 primary and secondary schools in Henan Province to analyze the influence of urban vs rural, school, and social class differences on online learning of primary and secondary students, using binary logistic regression model.

The research findings:

- In terms of online learning infrastructure, there are significant differences in access to network, network connectivity, and quality of digital facilities between rural and urban students and among students with distinct social status. Students from underprivileged families are remarkably disadvantaged in basic resources and equipment for online learning.
- Regarding online learning implementation, there are significant gaps in the teaching methods among different schools and considerable disparities in home learning environment and network use preference in the spare time among students from different family backgrounds
- The school background significantly affects students' satisfaction of online learning outcomes, but urban vs rural and social class backgrounds do not have a direct and substantial impact on students' satisfaction of online learning outcomes.
- The differences in access to network and the use of physical devices as well as online learning implementation have significant influences on online learning outcomes.

According to the above findings, this study made the following suggestions.

- The government should undertake macro-regulation on the unbalanced distribution of information technology resources between urban and rural areas, offer specialized support to rural schools, and increase the investment in educational technology in rural areas.
- Schools should vigorously strengthen teachers' training in online instruction, enhancing their online teaching ability and improving their information technology literacy.
- Families play a key role in promoting online learning equality. Parents should keep the pace of learning with the needs of the information era, provide children with stable and high-quality broadband network connection and reliable learning devices like computers, and create a favorable home learning environment.

Source: Journal of Schooling Studies, 2022; 2022(2):58-68.