

# Equity in China's Compulsory Education: A Comparative Analysis of Rural and Urban Differences in Educational Development

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**Abstract.** In the history of humanity, China's educational progress has seen some of the greatest successes, particularly in the area of compulsory education. It has undergone the largest and most prolonged period of development, marking a significant milestone in the country's educational history. However, at the present stage, Between cities and villages, China's progress of compulsory schooling has been incredibly uneven. Cities have better resources and facilities than villages. The emphasis of China's educational growth has shifted to the distinction. This paper mainly concentrates on the issue of discrepancy between urban and rural compulsory education and analyzes it from two major aspects. The first one is three factors affecting the existence of differences in urban and rural areas. The second is to talk about from the practice and analyze how to reduce the disparity of education in urban and rural areas. This paper will use the CAS method of discussion to discuss, the research found that the disparity between urban and rural education is caused by multiple factors and related to China's own structure, which makes the development of compulsory education very difficult. This paper analyzes the present status of equity in urban and rural compulsory education, summarizes the various factors that exist in the development process of urban and rural education and gives reasonable suggestions through the final problem.

**Keywords:** Urban-rural education; urban-rural dichotomy; promoting investment; building teacher systems; developing rural economies.

## 1. Introduction

Compulsory education has undergone a lengthy process of development in the field of education. During the development of compulsory education, the focus of attention has been on the issue of equity between urban and rural education. First of all, what is the definition of urban and rural areas? The Provisions on Statistical Classification of Urban and Rural Areas, which came into effect on August 1, 2008, jointly formulated by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and various ministries, divides China's territory into two levels, i.e., towns and villages [1]. So what is equity in education, and why is there such a wide gap between cities and towns in education? Here I would like to point out the inequity of the development of compulsory education through three questions. First of all, let's explain the concept of fairness in education: educational fairness is not a single concept, different levels and different research perspectives of educational fairness, its intrinsic meaning is not the same. According to Tan Songhua, there is a difference in the meaning of equity when universal education has not yet been realized and when it has been realized. The former means that everyone should have access to education and the latter means that everyone should enjoy a higher level of education [2]. Zheng Xiaohong suggests that educational equity can be classified into three distinct types: conceptual equity, market equity, and social equity. Conceptual equity in education involves a subjective evaluation of other forms of equity. Market equity in education pursues the maximization of educational benefits and the optimal allocation of educational resources. The social equity of education is the equality of assets and distribution [3]. Li Hui mentioned that the relationship between educational equity and educational efficiency is an educational issue worth studying. There are two opposing views on the relationship between the two: One thinks that educational efficiency and equity are incompatible with one another.; the other believes that they are mutually coherent and dependent on each other. Li Hui supports the second point of view, believing that educational equity itself contains the meaning of educational efficiency, and at the same time,



educational efficiency can reflect the connotation of educational equity, and they are complementary to each other [4]. I'll next respond to three questions to shed more light on the causes of the educational disparity between urban and rural locations.: first why is it difficult for the poor to get out of the mountains, second, how can the disparity of the reduction in the distance separating cities from rural areas in the implementation of compulsory education, and lastly, what are the factors affecting the inequity in the expansion of mandatory education?

## **2. Factors Affecting Compulsory Education Differences in Urban-rural China**

### **2.1. Economic Factor**

Since the establishment of New China, the persistent dual economic structure between urban and rural areas has posed challenges for rural residents in accessing equal rights in crucial areas such as education, healthcare, and security. As the reform process gains momentum, the adverse effects of this dual economic structure on society as a whole, and higher education in particular, have become increasingly evident. This has directly resulted in inequitable access to higher education. Reducing this inequity has a great role in promoting the urbanization trend in China and the general rise in national standards in China and the overall improvement of China's national quality [5]. With the development in recent years, the lives of urban and rural residents have improved greatly, and the people's lives are gradually approaching the national goal, from the problem of subsistence to a well-off life of gradual affluence. Along with this have come some problems, such as the accelerated process of urbanization and it has caused a progressive flow of money from rural to cities and the development of a dual economic and social structure that eventually separates the two.. Under the influence of this dualistic structure, the development of rural and urban areas is uneven in terms of politics, economy, culture, education and security. In the economic aspect: Through reading the literature, I learned that according to statistics, "in 2014, the total investment of national education expenditure was 30 billion. Among them, the national financial education expenditure [4] 26 billion, accounting for 4.15% of the GDP. The national public financial expenditure on education was 2 billion yuan, or 14.87% of the 151785.56 billion yuan in governmental financial expenditures [5]."China has always made little total investment in education, and insufficient funding has been a prominent problem restricting the development of compulsory education in rural areas [6]. Over the last few decades, Chinese educational expenditure has started to increase rapidly, and the increasing amount of educational resources is mostly directed at the countryside. But there is a big gap in the income of each person in the educational budget and in terms of the average amount of public money. Meanwhile, the educational capital investment also has a big question. There are two main points in this question: Firstly, the sum of educational resources in city and countryside is not enough, secondly, the allocation of educational funds is not balanced. First, it is shown by the fact that educational resources are not invested in all kinds of schools for a long period of time. Inadequate investment in basic facilities, routine expenditure and staff costs have prevented improvement in education. The latter lies in the difference in per student's spending per student among cities and villages. In 2002, the government provided over 510 billion RMB for compulsory education across the nation, while the countryside, which makes up about 70 percent of the nation's population, only gets about 23 percent of its total budget. This shows that Chinese educational input is seriously unbalanced, which will inevitably result in unequal distribution of educational resources in both cities and towns. Salary and benefits are the main sources of livelihood for educators in mandatory education. From the perspective of justice, their ranking among the various professions in society and their fairness and reasonableness, which are important signs of the social development process, have also risen to become important guarantees for individuals to persevere in the profession of compulsory education teacher [6].

## **2.2. Institutional Factors**

There are numerous strategies to address the discrepancy between obligatory schooling both in urban as well as rural settings at the institutional level. 1. Establishing fair and just educational values. 2. Rationally allocating educational resources. 3. Appropriately lowering the fees and charges of colleges and universities. If we aim to equalize access to educational possibilities between urbanized and rural regions, the state must fundamentally establish fair and just education values, minimize the impact of the dual economic structure on higher education access opportunities, so that more students can go to school, and achieve the existence of education as a service for all people [5]. To improve access to higher education for rural students, the first place to start is to achieve equality in basic education [5]. The government needs to change the original "heavy towns, light rural" concept of resource allocation, education funding and resources for integrated planning, maximize the distribution of resources for education. Our government needs to rationalize the distribution of financial aid for education, to provide rural schools with extra funding for education so they can upgrade their instructional resources, expand the excellent teaching staff, the operation of schools should be improved, and the disparity between urban and rural education should be reduced. While promoting the industrialization of higher education, it is crucial for the government to consider the humanistic value and significance of this sector. In order to achieve this balance, implementing measures such as reducing college fees could be beneficial. Some educational institutions have already taken steps to lower tuition fees and implement other initiatives in this regard.

## **2.3. Culture And Value Factors**

For the perception of education, the level of education of the parents also has a great impact on the family's investment in education, which can influence the level of education received. Whereas people in the mountains are chronically short of educational resources, most of them are likely to be uneducated for generation after generation and do not consider education important, thus creating an impact. At the same time, the proportion of rural families with incomplete families is higher than that of urban families, and rural children get parents who worked outside the home when they were young and could not provide timely guidance and help for left-behind children in their studies, and if the number of left-behind children in a family increases, then academic performance is affected even more. Therefore, the values and cultural level of the parents in the family structure have a certain degree of influence on the children's academic performance [7].

## **3. How to Reduce Urban-rural Disparities in Compulsory Education**

### **3.1. Promote Social Investment in Rural Education**

Since the introduction of plans for reform as well as opening up, China's financial system for compulsory education has undergone several phases. From 1980 to 1993, it followed a "local responsibility, with the township as the mainstay" approach. This was followed by a period from 1994 to 2000 characterized by "decentralization and tax-sharing, primarily in the townships." Subsequently, from 2001 to 2005, a "graded management, mainly in the counties" model was adopted. Finally, since 2006, the focus has shifted to "free education, integrated at the provincial level." Over the past three decades, changes to the compulsory education financing system have mostly taken place within a framework of institutions that distinguishes between cities and rural places. This reflects the decentralization of the financial system in this sector. In the 19th CPC National Congress Report, emphasis is placed on the revitalization of rural areas, underlining the significance of agricultural in nature rural, and farmer-related issues for the economy and way of life of the nation. Implementing the rural revitalization strategy is seen as a necessary step towards achieving agricultural and rural modernization, as well as addressing the growing demands of the people for an improved quality of life and the existing imbalances and inadequacies in development.

### **3.2. Establish a Teacher Training System That Integrates Urban and Rural Areas**

Shi Banghong and Dai Xia use an economic perspective to illustrate that economic rationality is an important starting point and basis for teachers' decisions and behaviors in the current teacher mobility process, and that they also have a strong desire and motivation to maximize their own interests. Simply put, material treatment, social status, and self-interest are still the main stimuli for teacher mobility [8]. The disparity in necessary schooling between cities and rural places in China can be attributed to two main factors: the insufficient supply of educational resources and the unequal distribution of these resources. Among these factors, the primary reason is the imbalance in the allocation of educational resources. Urban students generally have access to better educational resources and facilities compared to their rural counterparts. Achieving equity in urban and rural compulsory education requires a balanced allocation of resources between the two. These resources include human resources, such as teachers, as well as material and financial resources that contribute to school conditions and educational inputs. To ensure fairness in urban and rural compulsory education, it is crucial for departments and governments at all levels to strive for an equitable distribution of resources. This means aiming for an equal level of resource allocation for rural and urban students to ensure they enjoy the same educational rights. To achieve this, it is necessary to examine the issue from various perspectives and continuously explore ways to enrich educational resources in both urban and rural areas. By optimizing the allocation of educational resources to the greatest extent possible, relative fairness can be achieved in urban and rural compulsory education. At the same time, Yongji County, for example, can improve the professionalism of rural teachers through the "Teach to the Countryside" program, systematically train them, accurately analyze the situation of the corresponding townships, a clear division of labor, set up a corresponding mechanism, and at the same time, establish a tracking system related to the evaluation of teachers, which, to a certain extent, can better improve the quality of teaching.

### **3.3. Develop Rural Economy And Promote Changes in Educational Concepts**

Along with the arrival and development of the digital economy era, e-commerce has become gradually popular, and the development of this career has provided opportunities for many people because of its low threshold and good start. In the context of rural revitalization, the state strongly supports the development of rural e-commerce, so a large number of rural residents use the Internet platform for innovation and entrepreneurship, and sell their special agricultural products and handicrafts to all parts of the country, an initiative that not only boosts the development of the local economy, but also promotes their local specialties and leads to the development of tourism, thus improving their environment and increasing the income of farmers. Rural education can organize skills and technology training activities related to the Internet economy and the operation of e-commerce platforms, which can stimulate the innovation and entrepreneurial vitality of rural residents, help them to master richer business knowledge, improve their business ability and platform maintenance skills, thus enabling them to better grasp the development opportunities in the era of digital economy [9]. Wang Yuanjing believes that the differences China's disparity in both suburban and rural obligatory schooling have profound strategic, institutional, institutional and policy roots. Wang Yuanjing believes that the differences China's disparity in both suburban and rural obligatory schooling have profound strategic, institutional, institutional, and policy roots, and that the long-term implementation of the development strategy of "emphasizing the city over the countryside" has caused the development of rural compulsory education to seriously lag behind. As a result of the long-term implementation of the "urban over rural" development strategy for urban and rural compulsory education, the development of rural compulsory education is seriously lagging behind. The decentralized input division system has resulted in an excessively low level of coordination, the hierarchical distribution system has affected the flow of resources to rural places, and the input decision-making system has impeded the expression of farmers' public opinion. As a result, urban and rural compulsory education have never been brought together on the track of equalization [10].

#### 4. Conclusion

The development of mandatory education is a welfare and long-term project, and it is difficult to generate significant economic benefits from investment in rural compulsory education in the short term. Driven by the concept of performance, government officials are more inclined to invest in urban schools, especially the so-called "key schools", in the process of allocating limited educational resources. Such investment can increase the rate of advancement and build up famous local schools more quickly, which can better reflect the performance and image of government departments. At the same time, due to the relative scarcity of high-quality educational resources and the concentration of most of them in cities, some government and education department officials have the opportunity to take advantage of the distance separating cities from rural areas and the school gap to "seek rent for power". This, coupled with the inadequacy of monitoring mechanisms, has led to many obstacles to the realization of balanced development in mandatory education

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