

# Finding the Way to Improve the Compulsory Education in Rural China

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to explore the development of compulsory education in rural areas of China. The author first discusses the explanations for the improvement of compulsory education in rural areas of China that lag behind the development of compulsory education in urban cities. These factors include poverty, family characteristics and concepts, as well as the uneven allocation of educational resources. Following these points, this paper further analyzes the problems associated with uneven allocations of human resources in addition to the uneven allocation of educational resources from the perspective of teachers. Finally, proposed suggestions are delivered based on the current status of basic education in China, which can be summarized as recommendations for improving the development of rural compulsory education in accordance with the aspects of quantity and quality of teachers.

**Keywords:** Compulsory education; Rural China; Educational resources; Teachers

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## 1. Introduction

In China, according to the Law of Compulsory Education (2018), compulsory education is a system that enforces children of school age and adolescence must receive a basic level of education for a certain number of years in accordance with the law. This covers the period of both primary and junior high school. Compulsory education is a predominate type of basic education in China. Throughout the process of the creation of basic education in China, compulsory education is certainly of high importance for the desired educational standards set forth. Furthermore, the basic education in rural areas is an imperative part of basic education throughout the country of China. Promoting the balanced development of compulsory education between different regions will also help to improve the level of local economic development. This will also lead to the improvement of the level of economic development through the entire country (Masino, 2016). Therefore, this law has meaningful value in the forms of an avenue for exploration and research. However, the status quo of compulsory education in rural areas is still problematic. Gaps exist at the level of basic educational development between urban and rural areas. This is predominately due to the concentration of the unbalanced development of compulsory education. Educational resources in rural areas are clearly lagging behind the standards that urban areas receive. Compared to cities that have higher levels of compulsory educational development, the economic level of rural areas is low and the educational resources are insufficient. This theme has led to the existence of a gap sensed between cities and rural areas. Additionally, the development of compulsory education in rural areas is still an important issue of concern to the educational sector in China (Tsang and Ding, 2005).

## 2. Issues occurred in compulsory education in rural China

In many rural areas, numerous problems still exist in regards to compulsory education. First of all, the economic base of these programs determines the superstructure, which elucidates that poverty is the primary cause of retrograde education in rural areas (Zhang and Minxia, 2006). For families in rural areas, the cost of education still places a heavy burden on household from a financial aspect. Even if compulsory education is available without tuition and miscellaneous fees, the cost of purchasing personal school supplies for the students will still inflict a certain burden on the economic structure of the family (Chi and Qian, 2016).

Another major problem occurring in China is due to the evident imbalance in regards to the allocation of educational resources. This phenomenon is concentrated in the disparities between developed regions and underdeveloped regions in the country. Whether it is a government public school or a private school, the teaching environment of urban schools is of higher quality in comparison to

that of schools in rural areas (Chuanyou, 2006). This dwindles the significance of education in rural areas from the standpoint of government attitudes, which further results in deficient educational resources provided to rural areas. Educational resources can simply be divided into physical resources and human resources. The operating funds of most rural primary and secondary schools in China depend only on the government's public education funds. Due to the lack of economic strength in rural areas, problems often exist in the form of insufficient public education funding for both primary and secondary schools (Masino, 2016). It was discovered that certain schools could not even guarantee the supply of basic office supplies. At the same time, schools in rural areas often lack facilities and equipment that support modern education (Liu and Teddlie, 2009).

### **3. Issues from the perspective of teachers**

Conversely, the inequity of human resources apportionment in compulsory education is principally interpreted from the perspective of the teachers (Kanu, 1996). This also provides a main focus for this paper. The faculty of a school is of great significance when determining the overall level of teaching. The students are the recipients of education; teachers are the communicators of the learning materials and the individuals who work directly with the students. Teachers are the basis of the predominated body of educational practice activities and a direct medium between the students and their education (Soder, 1986). They can have an undeviating effect on the development of rudimentary education in rural areas. The quality of teachers' work is related to the level of physical and mental development and the national quality of improvement of the younger generation in China. These are the reasons why this paper will emphasize the role of teachers.

First of all, in China, the disproportion of teacher resource allocation is exceptionally obvious. From the perspective of the teachers' salaries and welfare, the salary of urban teachers' is higher than that of rural school teachers, which make teachers, as industry practitioners, more inclined to transfer to urban employment (Croft, 2012).

At the same time, teachers in remote areas are generally not extremely professional, and there is a common problem in which teachers are expected to teach several different courses at the same time. For instance, a primary school teacher in the Yunnan Province was expected to teach students Chinese, mathematics and sports. These three courses epitomize wholly distinctive disciplines. Furthermore, there are a total of six teachers at this elementary school and each of the teachers was responsible for several courses spanning multiple different grades (Wang and Yang, 2017). Conversely, this phenomenon has also confirmed the idea that rural areas are lacking a quantity of teachers necessary to avoid these issues. There is a close and affirmative relationship between the quality of the teaching provided to students and the quality of teachers available at the schools (Bacchus, 1991). The gap in faculty strength is anticipated to lead to a growing inequality in the overall level of education provided between urban and rural schools. This mode of inequality will hinder the improvement of the overall quality of students in rural areas, which will continually lead to a stronger gap between rural students and pupils in urban areas.

### **4. Measures for school development from the perspective of teachers**

In view of the predicament faced by compulsory education teachers in rural areas, based on the national conditions of the government control on education, the following measures have been proposed as a way of improving the status of compulsory education in rural areas. The state should increase the investment in basic education in backward areas, and improve the attributes of compulsory education in rural areas from the perspective of quantity and quality of the teachers.

First of all, the government should take action to improve upon the issues created by insufficient numbers of teachers in rural areas, because the poor development of rural areas has contributed to the low salary received by rural teachers (Sargent and Hannum, 2005). This is one of the important reasons as to why rural areas have such a hard time attracting more teachers. Therefore, the government should allocate funds to increase the income of teachers in remote areas, improve their welfare and progress the living and working environment of teachers, in an attempt to enhance the enthusiasm and initiative of teachers who have already worked in rural areas to engage in teaching activities. Providing a more competitive salary would also be beneficial when working to attract new teachers.

Due to the influence of the rural economic level on the teaching infrastructure, rural primary and secondary schools are not very attractive to excellent educational talents or young teachers who are not interested in teaching in rural areas. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the government to allocate funds that would equip schools in remote areas with updated and modernized educational facilities (Ribbins et al., 2006). In the context of the rapid development and urbanization in China, the basic facilities required for compulsory education in rural areas should be closer to the teaching facilities of urban schools. This requires greater investment in educational equipment in remote areas from the government.

### **5. Conclusion**

This paper has analyzed the predicament faced by the compulsory education standards in rural areas of China from the perspectives

of economic and family background, as well as the allocation of educational resources. At the same time, it has explored the inevitable and direct influence of the role of the teacher in compulsory education from the perspectives of quality and quantity. Furthermore, this essay has illustrated the educational countermeasures for compulsory education in rural areas. It is anticipated that the reliance on the government's policy change and education funding can provide many improvements to the structure of compulsory education in rural areas. Additionally, it is hoped that a balanced development of compulsory education in both urban and rural areas will be further promoted, and that the children of rural areas will also be provided equitable basic education opportunities. This is part of the focus of school improvement (Dembo and Gibson, 1985).

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