

# The Present Situation, Problems, Countermeasures of Compulsory Education in the Rural Area of Western Region in China

Hui Xu\* *Southwest China Normal University*

**Abstract:** The present condition of rural education in the western region of China is not optimistic. Existing problems include lacking education investment, poor school-running conditions, simplified running pattern and laggard concept of education. The countermeasures are: firstly, governments at all level especially the center one should increase input to accomplish the *support the poor* project authentically and integrate all sort of social forces; secondly, the government should strengthen the building of teaching team, attach importance to ameliorate the rural teacher's wage, their living conditions and improve their professional abilities; thirdly, we should develop the minority education greatly; fourthly, solving the problem of education of girls should be regarded as a strategic case.

**Key words:** compulsory education rural area of western region

## 1. The Present Situation of Rural Education in The Western Region of China

The Western Region includes twelve provinces and autonomous regions including Shanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, Xingjiang, Sichuan, Chongqing, Yunnan, Guizhou, Tibet, Guangxi and Inner Mongolia. It's about 6.85 million square kilometers, which covers 71.4 percent of the nation, and with a population of nearly 3.64 billion, which makes up 28.6 percent of the whole population.

The Western Region has vast stretches of land, small population and abundant natural resources, while the natural environment is atrocious, the civil infrastructure lags behind and the economy level is low. Most people in these areas even haven't had adequate food and clothing yet.

Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, the industrial system, transportation, communication, education, science and technology have been greatly improved in the western region, and laid a fairly solid basis for its further development. But due to various reasons, such as natural conditions, history, culture, and policy systems, the western region relatively lag behind.

At present, the GDP per capita is only \$500 in the western region, which forms a sharp contrast with \$1200 in coastal areas. Accordingly, compulsory education is still tardily carried through in the western areas, and there is a considerable gap between the western areas and the middle and the east areas of China. In 2000, China almost achieved the goal of popularization of nine-year compulsory education, and the coverage of "two basics"(basic popularization of compulsory education and basic eliminating illiteracy) of the population reaches 91 percent at the end of 2002, but the ratio of popularization in western region was only 77 percent of the coverage, and it is 14 percentile lower than the nation's. Though great efforts have been made to popularize the nine-year compulsory education, it was still under the average level. The average educated year of the population was inferior to the

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\* Hui Xu (1963-), male, professor, Ph.D., Ph.D. supervisor, director of Social Science Research Department of Southwest China Normal University, academic leader of Comparative Education, Chongqing Municipal People's Government, standing council member of Conference of the China Comparative Education Society (CCES) and director of the National Young & Middle Age Educational Researcher Seminar; Research Fields: comparative education, basic education in rural areas, foreign educational history, comparative higher education, curriculum and teaching theory of basic education; Address: Southwest China Normal University, Chongqing, China, Postcode: 400715; Tel:+86-23-68254475(O), +86-23-68252328(H); E-mail: jwexh@swnu.edu.cn

country's average level in all provinces in the western areas except Shanxi province. In 2000 the western region is only 7.03 rate, which has been largely improved than that in 1990 and reaches the junior high school level. By the end of 2002, 410 county level administrative units (372 counties and 38 Corps in Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps.) have fulfilled "two basics", which involved nearly 8.3 million people. These areas are comparatively backward in economy, and with less investment, it is almost impossible for them to obtain the "two basics" goal without the assistance of others. Therefore the central government should invest more. Since middle of 1990's, the government has paid more attention to the western region, and has invested 89 billion to two sessions of compulsory education project, and it has obtained many achievements. However, it still cannot meet the requirement fulfillment of "two basics" of all categories and on all levels in the whole western region.

In recent years, with the adjustment of the rural school's rearrangement, the condition that students would not go to rural school in the western region may be more severe. There are approximately 90,000 one-teacher-one-school units in the western areas, covering over 80 percent of national school stations. More than 80 percent of middle school students, and 50 percent of primary school students have to study in the boarding schools that locate in highlands, plateau and cold area, pasturing area, half farming and half pasturing area and dessert area. The special school-running pattern scattered school arrangement, and increases the construction cost of school buildings, therefore it is difficult for the original pressed school's outlay to meet the basic education requirement. Children of the right age, who cannot go to school and cannot be reserved by school, become the weakness in compulsory education.

## **2. Existing Problems of Rural Compulsory Education in The Western Region of China**

The conditions, such as education investment, poor school-running conditions, simplified running pattern, and laggard concept of education, are generally existed in the western rural area. According to the related research, there is almost 200 billions fund loophole in the present education investment. As the result of fund shortage, many schools in rural area confront with difficulties in running: broken classrooms, teaching facilities' shortage, poor students' boarding condition, unable to offer sewing, crafting and other informal way of education. People's education draggles a lot. They only concentrate on the present profit ignoring their children's education, especially girl's education.

Status of the whole teaching staff is not optimistic. Teacher is generally insufficient in the western region, and its structure is not reasonable enough. Teaching staffs of partial subjects can't meet the demands. At present, the teachers' educational level reaches 94.40 percent in primary school, and 86.02 percent in middle school in the western areas, which is not up to the national standard. The ratio of teachers taking over a class reaches 20 percent in some provinces even up to 30 percent in some primary schools. Some region's finance cannot afford teacher's salary, and the payment is no more than 100RMB for teachers who are taking over a class for an absent teacher. All the above-mentioned conditions affect the stability of teaching staff. In addition, there are many problems in the teacher's training and further education, which is an obstacle of the teacher's quality promotion in all aspects.

Education for Ethnic Minority (EFEM) lags behind. The western region ethnic minority groups inhabit in compact communities, so it is a difficult for the popularization of EFEM and compulsory education. These regions are remote, and the urban and the rural are developed imbalanced. There are 40 minority groups. In spite of natural resources and human resources belongs to under developed regions, most of the 141 national most poverty counties centralized there. The economy is less developed, the masses live in poverty, and the transportation is inconvenient in mountainous regions. By 2002, there are 372 counties that have not achieved "two basics", while ethnic minority groups account for 83 percent. To some extent, the customs and religious belief in western rural areas influence parents' enthusiasm about sending their children to school. Because of the shortage of the adaptive teaching materials and teaching aid for the special needs of minority groups, such as bilingual teaching staffs, it

seems that it is more difficult to increase enrollment rate and to control the drop out rate in western region. Speeding up the popularization of compulsory education for ethnic minority groups has become an instant demand for the development of all nationality.

There is a phenomenon of “Three Low and One High” in the education of girls: low ratios of enrollment, consolidation and graduation while high ratio of dropout. In 2,610,000 school-age children who are unable to go to school in China, there are 1,734,000 girls, which takes 66.4%, and half of whom covers ten provinces in the west of China. Tibet, Guizhou, Qinghai, Gansu and Ningxia are the five provinces where the problems of education of girls are the most serious. The reasons mainly are poverty; parents’ lack of cognition to education, religious custom, marrying and having children too early, impractical course, girls’ difficulties to study, lack of female minority teachers and boarding security, etc.

### **3. Research of Countermeasures**

To solve the problem of compulsory education in the west rural area, there should be four hereinafter aspects:

Firstly, governments at all level especially the center one should increase input to accomplish the *support the poor* project authentically and integrate all sorts of social forces to support the development of compulsory education in the west rural area.

Input is the key to solve the problem of compulsory education in the west rural area. To solve the problem completely, the government should firstly ensure the payoff of teachers punctually and entirely. Secondly, the government should ensure the educational appropriations for primary and middle schools. Thirdly, the government should ensure the necessary input for rebuilding the dilapidated buildings and school constructions. Fourthly, the government should carry out the principle of compulsory education authentically, and aid the school-age children who are in especially pool families. The center government should become the main input undertaker for compulsory education in the west of China where the local governments have financial problems.

The government should integrate the various projects of compulsory education to solve the problem. At present, the national projects for supporting the backward area are The Second-Period Project of Compulsory Education, Project of Rebuilding the Dilapidated Buildings in Primary and Middle Schools, Project of Interschool Exchange, Project of Building the After-school Activities Lieu, and so on. Each province, municipality or city directly under the jurisdiction of authority has its own projects like Project of Assault Fortified Positions, Project of Frontier, Project of Board, etc. The east and the large or middle cities have Project for Supporting the West Schools. And the mass organizations such as the labor union, the communist youth league and the Women’s Federation have Hope Project and Burgeon plan, etc. These projects show concerns and supports to the west of the Party, government and all the people. Organizing and realizing these projects seriously are the responsibility of the west government especially the department of education.

Secondly, the government should strengthen the building of teaching body, attach importance to ameliorate the rural teachers’ wage, their living condition and improve their professional abilities. The building of teaching body is the key to solve the problem of compulsory education in the west rural area. To strengthen it, firstly we should delimit organizational structure in the primary and middle schools well. The standard for delimiting should not only ensure the need of teaching but also show the principle of simplify. Secondly, we should pay more attention to the teachers’ continuing education, renew their senses of education and improve their qualification. Thirdly, we should care about the teachers’ lives. Besides ensuring the teachers’ payoff punctually and entirely, the government should try to improve their treatments of housing, medicine, pension, etc. And make overall arrangements for project of housing to make them devote in the west satisfactorily.

Thirdly, we should develop the minority education greatly. The governments at all levels and departments of

education should take various measures to strengthen the organization of enrollment, control the dropout rate, and improve the degree of popularization to develop the minority education. The distribution adjustment about the primary and middle schools should obey the principle of the school-age children going to school nearby. The scale of the newly building, rebuilding primary and middle schools should meet the needs for children to receive the compulsory education in the servicing area. In the under populated mountainous and pasturing area, the government should plan to build the boarding schools and offer the related facilities. Try to make the teaching materials and aids fitted to the special needs of minority and ensure to meet the demand of bilingual teachers. Attach importance to the use of modern information technology in the minority schools in the west rural area. It is very meaningful for these schools to gain the high quality educational resources and improve educational qualities.

Fourthly, solving the problem of education of girls should be regarded as a strategic case. Girls are the future mothers whose qualities relate to the younger generation's fates, so we should solve the problem strategically. Firstly, it is very important to carry out compulsory education freely for them. At the same time, implement the right and obligation of the government, school, family and learner to support or receive education according to the statutes. Secondly, the west area should strive for the attention and guidance from the government and department of education forwardly, and strive for the notice and support from all sides including internal and external organizations and elites, and also intensify the propaganda. Thirdly, to reform the course content to show the regional, national and girls' features and connect with the actual needs of the remote rural and minority children. Fourthly, to pay attention to the girls' parents' training and the social participation, optimize the surroundings of family, school and society. Fifthly, to strengthen the training of teaching body and equip to school with female headmasters and teachers. At last, to evaluate and monitor in time, enlarge the communication and cooperation.

**References:** (omitted)

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It is noteworthy at present that the mobility of Chinese talents to other countries is huge. From the beginning of the reform and opening up policy to 1996, among 1.35 million students who have studied in America, 20,000 returned to China, accounting for 14.8%; among 50,000 students who have studied in Japan, 25,000 returned, accounting for 50%; among 20,000 students in Canada and Germany respectively, 10,000 returned, accounting for 50%.<sup>1</sup> Things have changed for better in recent years. Due to competition for talents by developed countries with their advantages in research facilities and material awards, many students remain in developed countries temporarily or permanently. Recently, the central government has put forward the strategy of rejuvenating the country by talents and one of the measures is building Chinese universities to be top worldwide to attract elite in the country as well as international masters. We have to build a number of top universities worldwide and what is more, we have to establish social mechanisms that will promote the active accommodation of higher education institutions to social progress, develop high quality talents with Chinese characteristics, and make originative achievements leading the world.

**References:** (omitted)

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