

# Gender Inequality of Education in Rural and Urban Areas of China

Rui Deng<sup>1, \*, †</sup>, Ruiyan Ma<sup>2, †</sup>, Xingwei Zhou<sup>3, †</sup>

<sup>1</sup> International Department, The Affiliated High School of SCNU Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

<sup>2</sup> Rabun Gap Nacoochee School, Nanjing, China

<sup>3</sup> SHUDE foreign language school (international department), Chengdu, Sichuan, China

\*Corresponding author. Email: dengr.doris2019@gdhfi.com

†Those authors contributed equally.

## ABSTRACT

There is a tremendous disparity in children's education in rural and urban China, and the biggest contributor to this phenomenon is gender inequality - a major issue that needs to be addressed in Chinese society. In this thesis statement, we found that the causes of gender inequality are incredibly complicated, and in some cases, deeply rooted in perceptions. We have assembled a collection of articles on this topic from various academic websites and made an overview. The paper is composed of three parts: Firstly, analysis of the causes of the current situation. Secondly, analysis of the present state of education in China from the perspective of gender inequality: rural-urban situation and data analysis. Last, three possible solutions and role analysis. We aim to help the public appreciate the importance of access to education, to raise awareness of the extent to which people value their children's education, and to improve, to some degree, the regional educational inequalities caused by gender inequality.

**Keywords:** educational equality, gender equality, distribution of social resources, regional resource difference.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Educational inequalities catalyzed by gender inequalities have existed throughout history and today. There is a stark contrast between how children are educated in rural areas and urban areas in China. Due to their different genders, rural girls are discriminated against in education. In China, the most important formative factor for the imbalance of educational resources is gender inequality. In urban and rural education, gender inequality is reflected in three main aspects: unequal access to education, unequal educational content, and different educational outcomes due to factors such as the living environment. 1) Unequal access to education. The unequal access to education for men and women has a long history of discrimination. Since the founding of New China, equal access to education has been guaranteed by the Constitution, the Compulsory Education Law, the Law on the Protection of Minors, the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, the Education Law, and other laws. The regulations such as parents or other guardians must fulfill the obligation to ensure that female children and adolescents of school age

receive compulsory education, and: parents or other guardians shall respect the right of minors to receive education and must ensure that minors receive compulsory education under regulations and shall not cause minors to drop out of school. However, the reality has not changed drastically because of these regulations [1]. 2) Inequality in the content of education received by children. During the compulsory education period, children receive information from school, which is an important place of socialization and influences children's gender awareness. In this process, educational materials become an important vehicle for conveying gender culture to children and are a tool for shaping children's gender consciousness and patterns. Therefore, teaching materials in compulsory education need to reflect the country's gender consciousness and gender ideology in some sense. However, there are many existing problems. For example, there are too few positive images of women in textbooks, and they are even distorted to convey misconceptions to children [1]. 3) In addition to school education, family education and the influence of the family environment also play an essential role in forming children's gender awareness [1].

The different education of rural men and women has a great impact on the future development of the urban economy and the education level of our country. In the short term, the lack of equal access to education in rural areas will lead to a very different understanding of education between men and women. Men will be more educated, and women will have more intellectual blind spots. This is also the cause of unequal social status between men and women [2]. The stereotype that boys are more useful to study encourages society to ignore the severe lack of education for rural women. In the long run, gender inequality in rural education will not only be difficult to ensure a well-off country in an all-round way but also will gradually widen the gap between rural and urban areas and the gap between the rich and the poor, which will make social fairness unable to be guaranteed and easy to cause social unrest. More importantly, it is difficult for society to achieve equality between men and women, and it is difficult for the government to implement corresponding policies.

Most importantly, inequality in education makes it difficult to maintain a permanent economic balance in a society, making it difficult to gain women's perspective on some decisions and secure women's rights and interests. In general, the inequality of rural education between men and women is a major obstacle to China's economic and cultural development and has an indelible impact on the national economic structure and educational development [2]. There is an indissoluble link between education and the economy. Under certain conditions, education can promote the economy, and conversely, the economy has the same influence on the development of education. The development of education and the economy influence each other. That is why we need to reduce educational inequalities to promote social development.

In the 1950s, the gender inequality that the Chinese received showed a decline, but the gap between urban and rural, or between men and women, is still huge. CGSS2008 is research that shows data of 6000 people born in 1950-1989 [2]. This research divides urban and rural. The number of years that rural people take education is less for about 3 years than urban people. Rural women also take fewer years than rural men. Gender, age, nationality, the economic position of each family, and the parents' educational level are all important variables in the research. In rural areas, people prefer to let their boys go to school when the family does not have enough money for all their children to take education since rural families always have more children than urban families. Elder people in rural areas have traditional thoughts. By contrast, younger people will have less traditional thoughts about gender. In rural areas, the environment and the conditions for education are also not as advanced as in urban areas. Even rural children go to school. These children cannot get the same education that urban children have. This situation also leads women or

rural people to earn less money. People cannot change their children's life because of this. This is a circulation. Gender inequality will also be shown in different ways and areas. Our government carries out many policies for gender equality, this is a good, positive sign, and we still have a long way to go.

## **2. EDUCATION IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS**

### ***2.1. Education situation in the urban area***

Our country is currently undergoing profound and widespread social and economic changes, and education in cities has been significantly impacted. Continued rapid economic development has led to the development of urbanization. In the last decade, the number of cities in China has increased significantly, and the size of all types of cities is gradually becoming larger. As a result, there is a growing public outcry for urban education planning and a continuation of high-quality schools and educational talent. In general, children living in cities are receiving a normal compulsory education or nine-year education. Several aspects allow urban children to receive a normal education [3].

#### ***2.1.1. Reasons why urban parents crave higher education for their children***

According to the survey analysis, it was concluded that 1) parents' overall level of education in families is high, with a great part at the bachelor's level, followed by a master's degree. Parents' educational level can directly influence the investment in the education of preschool children at the educational stage. Parents with higher education levels have a more diversified approach to investing in their children's education. More emphasis is placed on personally related activities in the early childhood play and hobby development stage, and investment is relatively rationalized. This shows that the vast majority of families' educational investment expectations are positively correlated with their education level in terms of annual economic income: the higher the annual income, the higher the expectations for their children. In today's world of increasingly higher household incomes, the family's priority expenditure is an educational investment, and when income levels reach a certain threshold, parents seek another type of educational investment [4].

2) The work of the family's parents also determines their attitudes toward their children's access to education. Those who work as civil servants and in institutions are overrepresented [4].

3) Parents are very consistent in their perception of the importance of education for preschool-aged children. Parents pay great attention to their children's early education [4].

4) Changes in the economic environment and the improvement of conditions. In order not to let their children lose at the starting line, parents provide their children with necessary school supplies and enroll in various remedial classes. It reflects the high expectation of parents for their children [4].

## **2.2. Education situation in the rural area**

Although inequality between men and women in education is gradually diminishing in China, men and women are also getting equal access to education. But the country still faces many problems in education. The first is the current situation of rural education. There are three problems that the government must solve immediately [4].

### **2.2.1. The problem of the quality of education difference between city and countryside**

Compared with urban schools, the reading level of rural schools is significantly lower than that of urban schools. Compared with other subjects, the quality of English teaching in rural education does not have systematic teaching and professional education. Therefore, the overall score of Rural English is low. On the other hand, to adapt to urban education, rural areas gradually changed to exam-oriented education. This is unfair to most rural schools and students. This is also reflected in more than 40 percent of students in rural schools who have lost their primary and secondary education [4].

### **2.2.2. The problem of the gap between urban and rural schools**

Rural schools are trying to get closer to urban education, resulting in "full city, weak village, empty village". The consequence of this phenomenon is that there are larger than expected class sizes. In many places, elementary schools with 5,000 or 6,000 students and middle schools with more than 10,000 students have emerged [5]. There are few primary schools with five or six thousand students in many places and middle schools with twenty or ten thousand students. The emergence of these super-large classes and mega-schools makes the gap between urban and rural school education quality widening day by day, becoming a stumbling block to promote the progress of rural education [2].

### **2.2.3. The problem of the lack of resources around rural**

Compared with the teaching facilities in cities, the multimedia facilities in rural schools are older, and the Internet is not standard. Rural school supplies tend to use chalk and blackboard. In cities, teachers use electronic devices more. Many teachers in rural areas are not skilled in using we-media equipment and have no facilities to use

it. This is a great obstacle for schools to use distance education resources to improve the quality of education. It is also unfavorable to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas and promote balanced education development. At the same time, students' extracurricular activities are very limited, and they can receive little education except for knowledge. Extracurricular diverse courses are also lacking [5].

## **2.3. Data contrast between education situation in the rural area and urban area**

The inequality for education is caused by traditional Chinese concepts, different areas people live in, and gender, which is our topic. The gap between urban and rural areas, men and women, is narrowed, through 1990 to 2000, the illiteracy rate of rural women was significantly decreasing, which is a good sign. Typical phenomena are still prevalent in rural areas. The situation of dropping out of middle school in the western part of rural areas in China is extremely bad. Zhang claims that the possibility is over 50% [6]. For the graduation rate, urban areas have three times more than the countryside. The graduation rate is increasing 15.4% from 1985 to 1999 [6]. However, the rate of rural areas is decreasing while urban places got a higher rate. The rate of rural areas decreases 3.7%.

We are facing a serious gap between urban and rural areas. Since urban areas earn more education, the difference between gender will be smaller. In another way, people in urban areas can get more gender equalities. Li proposes that for all levels of education, men have a higher possibility to get educated than women [7]. The proportion gap between men and women was 4.8% in lower school, 7.66% in middle school, and 18.04% in high school [7]. From 1996 to 2001, the proportion of female students applying for the college examination increased by 3.44%. The data for rural students' proportion of gender in education, male students, have a higher proportion. Rural female students' chance to get educated is decreasing. Rural female students prefer a high school that is not top [6]. Age of people is another key factor. Age under 40 will have more possibility to get educated and get more gender equality. Traditional concepts will not constrain younger people; they are free, so gender inequality is not an extraordinary severe problem.

## **3. SOLUTIONS**

### **3.1 Effective countermeasures to promote the development of family education for rural preschool children**

Family education for preschool children plays an irreplaceable role in the normal growth and development of children's bodies, intellectual potential, socialization,

aesthetic talents, and future development. Given the development status and problems of family education for rural preschool children, countermeasures and suggestions are proposed to promote the development of family education business for rural preschool children in order to improve parents' education quality and ability and promote the harmonious development of rural preschool education.

Opening parent schools and instilling correct family education concepts for preschool children Parents' uneven family education concepts are the fatal bottleneck that hinders the delayed development of preschool education [8]. In order to change the current situation of backward development of preschool education in rural areas, it is necessary to change people's thoughts and attitudes first so that people can realize the important value of preschool education and pay attention to the development of family education for preschool children from the ideological point of view. Therefore, the government and society must open parent schools to promote the importance of preschool education and family education to parents and update their educational concepts; to train and guide parents and teach them scientific-educational methods. The teachers at parent schools can be kindergarten teachers who have rich experience in early childhood education, and they can select the contents and methods of teaching in a purposeful and planned way according to the local reality and the needs of parents' awareness and concepts. Through learning, parents can understand their roles and responsibilities in family education, the tasks of kindergartens, and the main goals of childcare and education [8]. Given the development status and problems of family education for rural preschool children, countermeasures and suggestions are proposed to promote the development of family education business for rural preschool children in order to improve parents' education quality and ability and promote the harmonious development of rural preschool education [8].

### ***3.2 Address education inequality in rural areas***

To solve the problem of rural education inequality, the government needs to do the following. First, try to keep up with urban education. Urbanization has two influences on the development of rural education. For one, the evolution of urbanization and reducing the rural population will reduce the burden of rural education. When urbanization reaches a certain level, the difference between urban and rural areas will be greatly reduced. Second, speed up the progress of financial reform to create institutional conditions for increasing investment in education [9]. Third, an education system adapted to the needs of rural development should be established. Even if they have enough resources and environment to go to college in cities, some rural high school students will still choose to stay in the countryside, which means

that the proportion of rural students going to college is not high. If there is a corresponding link between the rural and urban education systems, more rural students will choose to go to university for the sake of rural development and construction [10].

### ***3.3 Financial and material abundance from government***

The government needs to put more resources and attention into education in rural areas. An important reason that the education level is low is that there is less noticed in rural areas. Especially that many people in rural areas do not care about their children's education and do not have extra money for children going to school. More resources like devices and teachers should be channeled to rural areas to help raise the education levels and literacy. The government had pulled out some policies, and people organized some activities to help rural children, which we can continuously do. Some examples are donating books and teaching activities. Activities will help rural students and let more people know the situation of rural areas' education. Gender equality can only be considered if the problem of poor education is solved. The improvement of education level will also help solve gender inequality, and rural development will also improve.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This article mainly discusses the urban-rural differences in gender inequality in education in China. There are still fundamental problems, but the education gap and gender inequality in access to education are narrowing. Moreover, this paper mainly discusses the urban and rural differences of gender inequality in the education of Chinese residents. Until recently, inequality was striking. From the perspective of the factors leading to gender inequality in the education of urban and rural residents, there are also very large differences between urban and rural areas. Urban and rural education needs to be integrated, and we remain hopeful and confident of an early future of unified urban and rural education and equal access to education for women and men.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1] Yu, W., Hu, J. (2005). A Research on Gender Disparity in Obligation Education in China and Its Main Cause. *Journal of Northeast Normal University: Philosophy and Social Sciences*, 000(005), 30-35.
- [2] Lin, J., Hu, P., & Li, B. (2019). Future-Oriented University Education; Current Situation and Suggestions of Rural Education Quality in China; Technological Innovation and Poverty Reduction - Impact on Education.

- [3] Zhao, M., Zhong, S.(1995). The status and development of urban planning education in China. *Proceedings of city planning*, 000(005), 1-8.
- [4] Zhang, G., Ding, X., & Qiu, X. (2019). Investigation and analysis of parents' motives for investment in preschool children's education. *Journal of Chengde petroleum college*, 21(01), 7679.
- [5] Teng, M., Hong, L. (2012). A Survey on the Size of Large Classes in Primary and secondary schools in Dengzhou City, Henan Province. *Social Sciences Academic Press*. 2011: 145.
- [6] Wang, X. (2011). Investigation on the Phenomenon of Oversized Class size in Primary and secondary schools in China. *Social Sciences Academic Press*. 2011: 168-176.
- [7] Zhang, T. (2004). Institutional Attribution of urban and rural education differences and policy suggestions on reducing the differences. *Journal of Nanjing Normal University: Social Sciences edition* (03), 71-75.
- [8] Li, M. (2015). Study on the present situation and countermeasures of rural preschool children's family education. *Journal of Ezhou University*, 022(008), 83-84.
- [9] Zhang L. The greatest Educational inequality in China: The Gap between Urban and rural education and its solution,2005.11.11
- [10] Wang, G., Chen, X. (2005). *Psychology course*. Guangdong Higher Education Press.