



Study on the Inequality Between Urban and Rural Education Development in China

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Abstract. This paper mainly focuses on Research: Study on the inequality between urban and rural education development in China. This topic is primarily analyzed from the three aspects of economic investment, teacher strength, and educational opportunities. The article finds and analyses that the Chinese government invests more in urban education than rural areas. Cities with higher GDP include, in addition to government investment. These more affluent people will make charitable investments in education, which means that urban education with high GDP is also better developed. The quality of teaching in the top cities is better than that in rural areas. Teachers' attitudes and teaching advantages vary from town to town. The quality of teachers is higher in the city, better than higher wages, and the geographical differences between urban and rural areas. There are more educational opportunities in the main hubs. Parental thinking and students' family background, this kind of "small family mind" also plays an essential role in the educational opportunities of students growing up in different environments. The main idea is that it is also a way to participate in global education governance to narrow the gap between urban and rural students.

Keywords: Education inequality · Education economy investment · Faculty allocation · Education opportunity

1 Introduction

After the reform and opening up, the Chinese governments always pay attention to education equality between urban and rural and set many policies to eliminate education inequality. Nine-year compulsory education has been popularized all over China, which the Junior high school enrolment rate can prove. Moreover, education in China advanced sharply. The average years of schooling (AYS) sharply increased from 6.794 years in 1996 to 8.28 years in 2008 [1]. The difference between urban and rural areas in education remains. In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to equality issues in education. According to a survey by the China Youth Daily in 2009, only 11.2% of respondents argued that educational gaps were narrowing; school selection policies,

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educational gaps between rural and urban areas, and other irrational policies were recognized as the source of education inequality [1]. The education inequality is contributed by divisive economic structure separating urban and rural areas, income inequality, and other inadequate distribution of educational investment and resources and faculty. The existing literature mainly focuses on this gap by measuring the rural-urban inequality in cognitive ability that lead to the gap between urban education and rural areas. Zhao G, Ye J, Li Z, et al. in 7 claims that education and cognitive ability interact, and the cognitive ability can be affected by the number of siblings and rural-urban differential in parental education [2]. Nowadays, although the urban-rural difference in education has been attended to, many issues need to be solved. Due to a lack of systematic reviews on this topic at all levels, from economic input level to faculty and individual level. This research aims to investigate the nature of the educational disparity between urban and rural areas and the underlying factors that contribute to China's educational inequality.

2 Dynamic Contrast of Educational Economics Input Between Urban and Rural Areas

In the concept of Marxism, the composition of human society is mainly divided into two parts: economic foundation and superstructure. The economic foundation is the material basis for superstructure generation, existence, and development.

China's overall economic development has been rapid with the reform and opening up. The economy's improvement has promoted the advancement of human resources and the development of science and technology, which is also inseparable from improving China's overall educational quality. Especially in coastal cities in the east, where the economy is not so rapid. Therefore, the degree of education development under the Influence of different economic investments in rural cities is also relatively different.

2.1 Differences in Educational Conditions

The differences in economic investment expenditure cause the differences in urban and rural education conditions. This difference is mainly divided into two parts.

2.1.1 School Hardware Facilities

It refers to the great differences in the facilities and equipment required for running the school, mainly reflected in the teaching buildings. In addition to the ordinary buildings for classes and offices, urban schools are also equipped with laboratories and libraries. Advanced urban school campuses will be divided into sections with different campus activities according to location. For example, Shanghai Rongyi Middle School has teaching buildings, laboratories, dormitories, reading rooms, computer rooms, and modern teaching facilities. Another example, No.1 Middle School in Yangjiang City, Guangdong Province, covers 149,000 square meters and a construction area of 101,000 square meters. Besides these basic urban school facilities, it also includes an electronic reading room, art appreciation room, art painting calligraphy room, and an art activity room. In comparison, most rural schools are only provided with basic facilities such as single-family teaching buildings, playgrounds, and student dormitories.

Student dormitories have the greatest impact. Because many students in rural areas are affected by China's large-scale population movement, left-behind children will increase to a certain extent. The development of boarding schools must be enhanced in rural areas to improve the future of left-behind children. As of 2011, there were 32.761 million boarding students in compulsory education schools nationwide, accounting for 21.85% of the total students in compulsory education. Among them, the number of primary school boarders is 1,087,800, accounting for 10.89% of the total number of primary school students. The number of junior high school boarders is 2,957, accounting for 43.34% of the total number of junior high school students. According to a 2012 survey conducted by the 21st Century Education Research Institute in ten provinces, boarders among rural primary school students was 39.8%. The proportion of boarding students in junior high school students reached 61.6%. According to a questionnaire survey of county and municipal education directors by the 21st Century Education Research Institute in 2012, 62.5% of city and county boarding students in the western region are more than half, significantly higher than the eastern (48.0%) and central regions (31.4%) [3]. In 2021, there were more than 60 million left-behind children in China, of which 140,000 are left-behind children in Suining, Sichuan. Secondly, the accommodation conditions for boarding students in rural middle schools are inadequate, which has been a dilemma since the 1980s. Historically, rural students in the last century were poorly skilled, with no beds in their dormitories. Therefore, students slept on the ground and were dating. Although the current situation has improved, it has not been fully dealt with and is a residing problem. Compared with urban school facilities, rural school facilities are still in a state of improving basic campus facilities such as dormitories, canteens, lavatories and sports fields.

2.1.2 School Basic Equipment

There are differences in campus infrastructure. Students have daily school uniforms, sports uniforms, and formal school uniforms in cities. Meaning they have different uniforms corresponding to different occasions. In rural areas, especially primary schools, students only have one uniform, and some schools do not provide uniforms because of insufficient funding. Also, most urban students have single tables in terms of students' tables, chairs, and benches. Desks and chairs used in some schools in Shanghai are more user-friendly, and the heights of tables and chairs can be adjusted according to students' physical needs.

In comparison, some schools in rural areas use double single-table benches. This also relatively restricts the physical comfort of students. The urban management on campus is better than those of rural schools. The province with the most significant investment plan in 2022 is Henan's planned investment of 201.7 billion yuan. Secondly, Anhui plans to invest 165472 billion yuan. However, in comparison, Ningxia Ting intends to invest more than 300 billion yuan, while the investment in Tibet will not exceed 150 billion yuan in 2022. In addition, there are some exceptions. For example, Xinjiang is also expected to invest nearly 2 trillion yuan, and this part of the investment funds is mainly used for production and construction. Xinjiang's total territory accounts for almost one-sixth of all the country's territory, and the cost of development in Xinjiang is far greater than the cost of investment in education.

2.1.3 Differences in Education Expenditure

This refers to the difference in Expenditure on education invested by rural and urban governments. Overall, because most cities belong to areas of national critical development, investment in education, business and science, and technology will be much higher than that in rural areas. Regarding education funding, the education funding indicators of primary education in the east are one to three times that in the central and western regions. Among the indicators, the gap between public funds for education is the largest [4]. However, the government must implement more investment in rural areas. Because compulsory education has strong characteristics of public goods, especially in rural China, it has a wide range of external effects on improving farmers' overall quality, increasing farmers' income, and stabilizing rural society. Therefore, the government's public investment in rural compulsory education is very necessary and should be the main investment subject [5].

2.2 The Difference in GDP of Chinese Provinces Results in a Distinct Contrast of Educational Input Feedback Between Rural and Urban Areas

This theme can take the aspects of government investment into account. In fact, the Chinese government will choose to invest heavily in more promising regions. In terms of investment, rural areas are less competitive than urban areas. Even if the government invests in rural areas, the amount of investment is relatively low than that in urban areas. The rural site is large, but the capital investment is low, and there are not enough funds for development. The utilization rate of computer equipment is low, and there is no teacher to teach. According to the GDP situation, compared with Zhejiang, where GDP is high, and Jiangxi, where GDP is relatively low, without controlling special subsidies, the own financial resources of the two provinces have a positive impact on investment in education. The higher the county with their own financial resources, the greater the investment in education; but when controlling under the circumstance of special subsidies without controlling financial grants, Zhejiang Province's own financial resources still significantly positively affect the education expenditure of county-level finance, but not in Jiangxi Province [6].

The GDP of different provinces in China 2021 and the number of college entrance examination candidates. These have multiple effects. Places with high GDP, such as Henan (GDP926.97) and Shandong 1308.04), are places where more people choose to receive higher education. But for Tibet, Qinghai, Ningxia, and other places. Among them, 1.25 million people chose the college entrance examination in Henan in 2021, ranking first in China. However, only 26,000 people chose the college entrance examination in Tibet. Only 44,000 people chose the college entrance examination in Qinghai, and only 71,000 people chose the college entrance examination in Ningxia. To sum up, we know that people who choose to take higher education, such as college entrance examinations, are far less economically weak than those with strong economic strength.

3 The Difference in Faculty Between Urban and Rural Areas

3.1 The Lack of Teachers and Unreasonable Structure of Teachers in Rural Places

The lack of teachers is the primary factor in low rural education quality. Nowadays, the teachers at the provincial level are surplus, but the rural area still lacks teachers, especially in extremely poverty regions. Crucially, teacher scarcity may result in poor education quality in the outskirts, where certified teachers are hard to recruit and retain. As a result, rural students have poor academic performance than urban students. Researchers in 2019 investigated the stability of rural teachers' mechanisms, including 43,262 rural teachers and 3,547 rural schools from 18 provinces (35 cities). Then the study indicated that the loss rate of rural teachers is 6.01% and there are 75% of teachers want to quit [7]. Local officials tend to hire candidates from non-education majors or secondary vocational schools or temporary instructors. These teachers typically have lower education and little or no professional teaching training. Teachers of high quality are essential in promoting high-quality education. Because China is an agricultural country, the growth of rural education is critical. Because there are so many Chinese people in the country, qualified teachers are essential. Many of the newly hired rural instructors had previously studied non-educational degrees, and some even held a teacher certification certificate. After completing a written exam and an interview, candidates can be assigned to the role of rural instructors. Now rural teacher groups are aging. Especially in extreme poverty districts, rural teachers often utilize outdated teaching methods and principles. The capability of educators is related to students' academic success, so improving the ability of rural educators contributes to the development of rural education. Eric Hanushek asserts that higher school quality is associated with lower dropout rates and that teacher quality is the most critical component of overall school quality [8]. Veteran teachers with high education and good teaching ideas are often in the first-tier cities in China, such as Shanghai, Beijing, Guangdong, etc. Compared to Shanghai, a leading metropolis in China, in some remote rural areas in Northwest China, such as Xinjiang, Xizang teachers have low years of education and struggle to meet the elementary requirement of educational reform, which was a general phenomenon.

3.2 The Job Satisfaction of Rural Teachers

The job satisfaction of teachers depends on the salary and welfare support. The teachers have high performance (teaching quality) when they increase their job satisfaction. Three factors affect rural teachers' job satisfaction: social, economic, and personal factors. There is widespread agreement among the general public that economic considerations such as low salaries and difficult living conditions significantly impact teachers' job satisfaction. In the North West of China, local governments remain impoverished; local governments' budgets cannot afford Personnel expenses, the main cost of education. Many rural teachers are not getting paid on time. Poor salary is one of the most important reasons for leaving teaching due to dissatisfaction difference between urban and rural schools, including overall school conditions, compensation, and welfare. For social factors, many studies detect that teachers think they are located in a low social

status, which rural residents cause to pay more attention to agriculture than education, lacking awareness of education. The personal factors include vocational stress or personal stress. As the teachers are scarce resources in rural schools, teachers have to teach all grades or all subjects. Most rural juveniles are left-behind children; therefore, rural teachers have to look after them and play the role of their parents. In that situation, teachers tend to live under stress. As the working location is remote thus, many teachers are confronted with stress from family. A study pointed out that a research found that in China, male primary school teachers or unmarried teachers tend to be dissatisfied in rural schools [9], and other researchers found that male primary school teachers in rural schools find it challenging to get married and lack career development opportunities [10]. Rural educators also face many challenges during the teaching processes because they lack parent and education resources support. A study presented those rural teachers in China usually work under stress which may induce teachers' mental disease and dissatisfaction with jobs [11]. These factors negatively impact teachers' job satisfaction and make teachers' professionalism that directly affects the outcome of learners. In contrast, urban teachers have a more excellent working environment and higher salaries than rural instructors. Urban students have high academic performance caused by teachers' high job satisfaction.

3.3 The Difference in Teachers' Career Paths between Urban and Rural Areas

Compared with urban educators, rural educators run out of career development opportunities. Inequality of education resources allocation results in that urban teachers having more chances to train themselves than rural teachers. Most rural small-scale schools are remote, isolated, and limited budget, restricting teachers from acquiring new teaching concepts, methods, and knowledge. Many factors limit the rural teachers' professional development, including location, culture, and finance. Nowadays, there are wide a variety of channels provide teachers with learning opportunities provided by independent teachers' continuing education institutions, educational colleges and institutes, China T.V. teachers' colleges, regular higher education institutions, specialized secondary schools, and other channels such as correspondence courses and self-study programs [12], but as the rural area is remote and lacks internet or satellite T.V., so the rural teacher was hard to reach it. The lack of financial support is also one reason; rural teachers cannot afford this expense. Rural teachers' teaching methods tend to be outdated, affecting their development and students' performance. As the promotion aspect, the urban school allows teacher has a large possibility of promotion, such as headteacher, direct of teaching affair, dean of the department, etc. However, rural schools are small-scale and tend to lack teachers, thus without the opportunity for promotion for rural teachers. The distribution of educational resources in China is grossly asymmetrical, and as a result, opportunities for the promotion of rural teachers are severely limited in the country. A motivation method can make teachers work harder and improve their enthusiasm. As the rural teachers lack motivation conduces, they produce slack at work. The study showed that teachers that are repeatedly passed over for promotions tend to slack off, as do teachers that have been doing well in the past [13]. In comparison with urban teachers, they can afford the expense of training and have more possibility of promotion thus. They are an enthusiastic attitude toward work that directly boosts the outcome of students.

The teachers' career path is one of the reasons for the difference between rural and urban education.

4 The Inequality of Educational Opportunities Between Urban and Rural Areas

4.1 Inequality of Allocation of Educational Resources

Due to the development of history, the uneven distribution of educational resources between urban and rural areas in China has become a practical problem. There are obvious differences in the allocation of educational resources among different areas in China, mainly reflected in the developed and remote backward areas. China is a country with a vast territory and a large population. Because of the unbalanced economic development and the unbalanced allocation of infrastructure and cultural resources among provinces, cities, and regions, the gap in the allocation of educational resources between urban and rural areas is widening. A study found that after the reform and opening up. However, some rural areas and cities have joined the ranks of the wealthy, and some farmers are also the first to join the ranks of the wealthy, its share of investment in education remains low and has fallen recently. Ding Yuanyuan studied the educational Expenditure and proportion of schools at all levels of basic education in China from 1997 to 2000 [14] (Table 1).

The study of the data by Ding Yuanyuan found that the proportion of rural education funds in the national budget has been decreasing year by year, and the proportion of secondary schools has dropped by one percentage point in three years, three years of primary school down by half a percentage point [14]. Since 2000, the budget for education at all levels of basic education has picked up again, but the increase was not fast.

Table 1. Education Expenditure and Proportion in the Budget of finance Department of Elementary Education schools at all levels during 1997–2000 (Unit: ten thousand yuan %) [15].

School type	The proportion type	In 1997	In 1998	In 1999	In 2000
Ordinary high school Primary school	The proportion of the national economy in the budget	3778879 27.8	4268491 27.3	4863612 26.8	4644446.4 27.1
	The proportion of the rural economy in the budget	1472913 10.8	1520640 9.7	1710254.3 9.4	1660008.1 9.71
	The proportion of the national economy in the budget	4467973 32.9	5109552 32.6	5875623 32.4	5568340.4 32.57
	The proportion of the rural economy in the budget	2827150 20.8	3162895 20.2	3620974.2 19.94	3453008.9 20.2

Table 2. Material Resources input in urban and rural primary schools, 2003–2004 [16].

		Building area per student (sq. m.)	Area of the dangerous house per student	Number of computers per student	Book collection per student	Gross fixed assets per student
The whole country	In 2003	4.94	0.33	0.02	12.07	2736.02
	In 2004	5.15	0.29	0.03	12.64	2805.08
City	In 2003	4.92	0.15	0.04	14.30	3685.30
	In 2004	4.97	0.11	0.05	14.54	3698.49
Rural area	In 2003	4.95	0.42	0.01	10.90	2242.12
	In 2004	5.24	0.38	0.02	11.64	2336.78

If measures are not taken to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas, she added that it would harm China's Comprehensive National Power in a few years. This gap is also reflected in variations in the budget per student and the school premises in the districts (Table 2).

From the input of material resources in urban and rural primary schools, the area of dangerous housing for all students shows a decreasing trend, and the other indicators show an increasing trend [17]. It shows that the increase of investment and investment in education has improved the conditions of running primary schools in urban and rural areas. However, by comparison, except the area of school buildings per student in a rural area is larger than that in an urban area, other indicators are lower than that in the urban area.

This shows that there is also a big gap in material resources between urban and rural areas, and the gap between them is widening. To a certain extent, this kind of distribution of material resources has also resulted in a great imbalance in the distribution of educational resources.

4.2 Difference in Education Expectations of Family Between Urban and Rural Areas

Educational expectations directly or indirectly affect children's educational level. It is closely related to parents' occupation and education level. Scholar Yu Xiulan (2020) concluded that among all the factors that parents may influence their children, educational background is the key factor that affects their educational expectations [18]. The higher the parents' educational background and education level, the better their occupation, the higher their social and occupational status, and the greater their attention to their children's education and expectations. In addition, differences in social environment and living conditions will have different impacts on people's career choices. The urban population, which needs a steady source of income, is most exposed to education early and unwilling to engage in heavy, purely manual labor. Farmers own land and are generally less educated, preferring to sell their labor for profit. This leads directly to

the differences in urban and rural occupation types and the differences in educational outlook and expectations between urban and rural areas. Cai Weiping (2016) and other scholars found that family function is a deep variable that affects the psychological development of family members, such as socialization and the parent-child relationship [19]. Liu Shouyi (2008) conducted a sample survey of peasant households in Shangyi County, Hebei Province [20]. The results show that with the development and progress of culture, parents in rural families have high expectations for their children's education. Still, due to the influence of ideas such as "reading is useless," there is a certain degree of ideological deviation.

The findings of these scholars are the same: both family background and parents' educational expectations have the same tendency to influence children's educational attainment.

4.3 Education Investment of Family between Urban and Rural Areas

Family education expenditure originated from human resource theory as the primary way of family human capital accumulation and cultivation (Schultz 1961). According to Lin Ronggri's questionnaire on family education investment of urban and rural residents in Shanghai, China, various indicators illustrate the gap between urban and rural education paying ability.

According to the Table 3. Survey results, the central urban area is twice as much as the rural area in terms of total family income, total family expenditure, and family education expenditure. Moreover, the gap between family education expenditure in central urban and rural areas is also vast. There are also great differences in education savings and education insurance. After comparison, it is found that the economic investment in education in rural areas is significantly lower than that in cities due to the slow economic development, the lack of an after-school tutoring market, and the backward educational concept. A further survey of "family affordable education costs" found that families in central urban areas were 1.44 times and 1.82 times as much as those in urban and rural areas. This further proves the gap between urban and rural education investment capacity. In addition, another study by Liu Shouyi also found that most families in rural areas are rational in their investment in education. Still, a few families put more emphasis on boys and children [22].

Table 3. Sample household income and Expenditure on education in 2007 in urban and rural areas [21].

Project type	Education stage	Central urban area (Luwan District mainly)	Cities and towns (Pujiang town mainly)	Rural area (Baoshan, Qingpu rural areas)
Family income	Primary school	81333.33	59200.00	41166.67
	Junior high school	81764.71	54510.87	41379.31
	Senior high school	78578.95	50851.06	45851.06

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Project type	Education stage	Central urban area (Luwan District mainly)	Cities and towns (Pujiang town mainly)	Rural area (Baoshan, Qingpu rural areas)
Total household expenditure	Primary school	55777.79	38300.00	32416.67
	Junior high school	53235.29	37228.26	30517.24
	Senior high school	47842.11	35000.00	32872.34
Family education expenditure	Primary school	7950.00	5087.50	4075.00
	Junior high school	5867.65	6127.72	4379.31
	Senior high school	10968.42	7824.47	7212.77
Basic education expenditure	Primary school	2436.32	2151.53	1909.72
	Junior high school	1884.64	2293.96	2089.32
	Senior high school	6864.63	4647.49	–
Expand education expenditure	Primary school	6554.73	3377.35	2026.89
	Junior high school	6554.73	4268.54	2611.36
	Senior high school	4790.51	3363.29	–
Selective education expenditure	Senior high school	10444.44	4692.86	–
Education savings and education insurance	Primary school	2632.12	1778.77	755.71
	Junior high school	1149.60	1303.48	685.18
	Senior high school	1492.24	770.91	–

5 Conclusion

The article mainly analyses China's development in education faces inequality from three aspects: first, the difference in economic investment between urban and rural areas, and the overall urban campus hardware facilities are bigger than that in rural areas. The government invests more funds in cities. And cities with high GDP, the feedback on the college entrance examination is also higher. The second difference in teacher strength is due to the loss of qualified teachers and teachers, which leads to the low quality of rural education. Teachers' satisfaction with work is low due to social, economic, and personal factors. Rural teachers lack career discovery. Because of the uneven distribution of resources, they can't train themselves, and rural teachers on the market can't afford it. Third, urban and rural education opportunities are unequal. Urban economic investment and material resources are better than those in rural areas. Higher differences in urban family education expectations. Educational expectations directly or indirectly affect the education level of urban and rural children. Urban family education investment is more increased. Overall, the economy, teachers, and educational opportunities have led

to urban students' more comprehensive and deeper development than rural students. The results of this study can warn people's attention to rural education and reduce shortcomings in education.

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