



# Analyze on the Development of China's Educational Inequality

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**Abstract.** Education is the core foundation for a country to become strong and prosperous. Chinese education needs to continue to enhance its international influence. Every educator aspires to enhance the quality of education and expand the pool of skilled individuals in various domains, as their ultimate goal. Chinese education is different from other countries and regions, which development is unique and full of challenges. At present, China's educational development is unequal in many aspects, among policymaking, economic differences, and capital investment are the most significant. This paper will focus on the inequality in Chinese education through literature analysis. The study of the hukou restriction of the policy found some problems brought by the policy to rural and migrant families and proposed that the government and relevant departments should change the current policy. Through the research on the development inequality between urban and rural areas, it is found that the gap between city and countryside places is getting bigger and bigger, and it is proposed that China should reduce the difference between the two sides in terms of economy, quality of teaching staff, and resource development. Finally, by studying the investment of funding for schooling, it depicts an unjust situation and improper use of funds and provides solutions to strengthen management and process approval and end-use supervision, and places high hopes on China's future educational development.

**Keywords:** Inequality, Education, Policy, Development, Problems.

## 1 Introduction

China's government has always been committed to the realization of the effort of education for everyone. In 1986, China's mainland began to implement nine-year compulsory education which is all children aged from 6 to 15 must receive compulsory education, and parents have the right to let their children obtain compulsory education obligation. This movement has presented a significant role in promoting the quality of the people and the national economy. With the great improvement in living standards, the education rate and quality of education in China have shown an upward trend. Emphasis on education is very important. It is related to whether China's economic and political level is advanced and in a leading position in the world. Education is not only an important pillar of national development and growth but also an important source of

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economic growth. From the perspective of China's development after the period of reform and opening up, technological changes and innovations have obviously facilitated the jumping growth of the country's economy. The key factor to improve technical production lies in the cultivation of talents. Therefore, the importance of education is clearly highlighted. It can not only scientific knowledge, but also create a variety of new academic result. In addition, education is also the embodiment of national quality. The higher the level of national education, the higher the knowledge and labor skills mastered, and the higher the labor productivity shows.

Although education is significant, it cannot be ignored that some serious educational inequality still exists in many fields and regions in China. Educational policies and institutional inequities are human factors that affect educational equity, and they are also the part that should be reformed first. For example, the hukou registration is inconsistent with the children's place of enrollment, which has resulted in tens of thousands of children having to return to their original place the household to receive an education. Besides, much Chinese literature regards regional economic underdevelopment and family poverty as the main source of ethnic minority disadvantage <sup>[1]</sup>. At the moment, China's disparity in education is most pronounced in the gap between city and rural schooling. The overall development with the countryside is lower than that of the cities, which leads to a shortage of teacher resources, generally simple facilities, and few types of courses. Because this problem has persisted for a while, the gap between urban and rural areas has become wider, and even now many children have not received an education in some rural areas. Furthermore, the difference in educational resource capital also lead to obvious unfairness in the development of education. Since the objective imbalance of economic development between regions in China, this phenomenon has led to different directions of capital investment by local governments. Almost government funds are concentrated in cities and developed areas. As for rural, more funds are invested to ensure basic survival, and very little funds can be injected into education, so that the development of education in rural areas is seriously lagging.

This paper uses the method of document analysis to conduct related research on address the existing educational inequality in China and strive towards improving various domains of education to bring about positive changes. The second part summarizes the research focus of different kinds of literature. The third part first analyzes the relevant issues of hukou registration in the policy, then analyzes the development difference between China's city and rural areas, and finally analyzes the government capital investment issue. In the fourth part of the article, the corresponding solutions are given, and at last mention the development expectations for future Chinese education.

## 2 Literature Review

The "Palgrave Handbook" contains the first systematic review of how sociologists have examined the relationship between race and ethnicity and education disparities over the past thirty years in eighteen different cultural settings, a thorough cutting-edge reference work <sup>[1]</sup>. The book's eighth chapter deals with China's sociological views on education. The authors and participants research into how country contexts of racial and

ethnic tensions affect the nature and content of educational inequality while seamlessly integrating data from national reviews. This comprehensive volume will serve as an important resource for a range of scholars because of its global viewpoint and definitive material.

The authors of "Education Development in China" emphasize the value, quality, and equity of education [2]. More crucial to investigate in greater detail the status quo of education quality in city and countryside locations, as well as whether and how education quality varies in different places, as the sustainability of education quality is a critical element determining education return. Prospective research can make use of more current statistics to figure out issues since many previous studies make use of outdated datasets. Besides outlining the problems using global research and datasets, it also offers recommendations for future educational policy.

Wu & KC (2022) discovered that China has not yet achieved upper secondary education for everybody because of space inequality in the education area [3]. This study tries to measure and comprehend educational disparity at the subnational level. It comes to the conclusion that the central government might boost investment and implement policies such as removing hukou restrictions, raising enrollment and lowering dropout rates in less developed areas, and lessening the unequal conditions.

According to Rao & Ye (2016), there has always been a serious issue with equity in education [4]. The link between urban and rural schooling in China must be as equitable as feasible. Specifically, discuss the many contexts for educational growth in both urban and rural development. The city should be first considered as the aim and goal of the rural basic education system as well as school surveying and mapping adjustments. Every child has the right to an equitable education, despite the differences between rural and urban surroundings, demographics, resources, etc. The Chinese government should work to create a rural-focused system of basic education. The wealth and poverty gaps must be closed in order to close the education gap.

Fu and Zhou's (2022) research examines whether transfer payments might help close the achievement gap in underprivileged areas [5]. The impact of transference money on the results of mandatory schooling in regions that are underdeveloped is estimated using propensity score matching. It is based on data collected from eighteen important regions of six provinces in China's official poverty cessation and support projects. The results show that transfer payment finances markedly decrease student learning outcomes for some courses and worsen educational inequality. It could be due to the "crowding out effect" of payoff-reducing local education funds.

## 3 Discussion

### 3.1 Policy Restriction of Hukou

In China, the hukou policy restricts many students from receiving equal educational resources. When the child reaches school age, the school enrolls new students according to the scope of the nearest school district and relevant requirements determined by the education administrative department of the location of the permanent home as listed on the registration. According to the regulations of the "Compulsory Education Law of

the People's Republic of China", during the compulsory education stage, school-age children are subject to the place where their household registration is located, and the principal is to enroll in the nearest school.

When enrolling students every year, the relevant departments of the school will collect the student hukou document according to the requirements and classify them as "agricultural household" and "non-agricultural household". The staff checks the contents one by one for errors. After passing the registration, the unqualified ones will be returned in time and changed within a time limit. The household registration system is still the main reason that prevents migrant children from entering cities, and there are still many obstacles and policy restrictions in receiving public education, mainly high schools [3]. Many schools do not enroll students with "agricultural" hukou, although those students are ambitious and have high grades. Even if students with different registered permanent residences enter elementary or middle schools, all students must go back to their registered permanent residences to go to school in high school.

Compared with other countries, the location of household registration in China is a structural factor, and this policy has a great impact on children [6]. China is different from the United States and other Western countries in that the Chinese government exerts a dominant influence on regional development and individual social outcomes, which can lead to huge regional differences. Therefore, hukou and region are structural factors, sometimes more important than personal ability and family background in determining an individual's social achievement. Even if students have won many awards and have high academic quality, or their parents have bought a house near the school position and lived or worked in the city for many years, these are useless in the face of the hukou policy.

The problem of the hukou registration policy will lead to a series of problems for migrant families, for example, the problem of educational resources for floating children [2]. Three decades before, China's economic growth has been rapid, and many people with rural hukou settled and worked in cities. However, since hukou largely determines access to local public welfare, migrant children who do not have local hukou in their current place of residence cannot enjoy free compulsory education funded by the local government provided by the local public school district. Migrant students need to pay additional educational expenses, such as medical insurance, expenses for going out practical activities, school uniforms, textbooks, etc. Some migrant children are directly sent to private schools by their parents, which will also cost an expensive tuition fee.

### **3.2 Development Disparity Between City and Rural**

At present, the gap between China's city and rural development problems is too large to be corrected for a long time, and the cycle of the existence of problems is also very long. The dual structure of society, which includes city and rural regions, is a fundamental aspect. This establishing expansion is inspired by economic development and has a huge differential effect on education. With the advancement of urbanization, the difference between rural and city profits is getting wider, and the gap in education is also further widening. Since the disparities in economic growth between the city and rural locations and between various regions, there are large differences in school

conditions, teacher allocation, and teaching quality, which lead to unbalance distribution of superior teaching materials [7].

The regional and institutional differences between metropolitan and rural schooling are visible, which will directly lead to gaps in income levels and knowledge structures between city and countryside residents in the future. Therefore, children in cities have better access to education and infrastructure, while children in rural areas have dilapidated learning environments. At this stage, some city schools spend a variety of money to improve education quality, even the fact that many rural institutions are unable to provide such fundamental infrastructure, dormitories, teaching devices, textbooks, office supplies, computers, etc. Now, rural schools are small in scale, lack facilities, and the teaching equipment is outdated and dilapidated, while urban schools are large in scale, with complete facilities and modern teaching equipment. The environment of a big city provides students with a broader platform and opportunities. Through high-quality resources, students can obtain more information and take up more knowledge and skills. In recent decades, there have been very few students from rural areas enrolled in significant schools.

The number and the ability of teachers in cities and rural areas are vastly different. The quantity of rural educators is comparatively small when compared to city instructors. From the view of quality, cities are far superior to rural. For example, there is a dearth of teachers who are bilingual in several countryside places, so the local educators who can teach bilingually but lack teaching credentials are the only ones the rural schools can locate. In some areas, one teacher teaches five different subjects, and all of these have led to the situation that the teaching staff is low in academic qualifications, and the team is uncertain or floating.

Besides, there is a serious loss of young teachers and excellent teachers in countryside places. Since the low wages of village teachers, the greater gap in welfare, and the unfavorable environment, the serious shortage of village educators in terms of quantity and structure makes the quality and strength of village teachers far lower than those in cities. The younger generation of teachers has its educational advantages. About 245 million school-age children in rural China profited from the widespread arrival of Send-Down Young Talent during the Cultural Revolution. A rare chance for this unprecedented large-scale talent placement is offered by sending new teachers to the countryside, which could help millions of kids in the countryside attain higher academic standards [8]. They are young and enthusiastic about lecturing, and they are all highly educated talents, which will definitely have a positive impact on rural schools and children. Attracting high-quality talents to teach in rural schools through effective incentive policies has developed into a key strategy to enhance countryside compulsory education.

In addition, in order to solve the differences between city and village areas, people should not be quick in speed, find a suitable method and make changes step by step according to the current social situation. If the separation has gotten more severe and obvious as a result of the government's education reform, which distances schools in the countryside from towns and villages. In this process, impoverished farmers are more likely to be left behind and abandoned, creating a cycle of poverty [4]. Differences in urban and rural education policies have brought about educational inequality because Inequality in the distribution of public assets is what is at the core of China's disparity

between urban and countryside regions. For instance, unjust social protection systems and unreasonable educational policies and regulations. In the research of Stevens, Dworkin, and other authors with a global perspective, it can be found that foreign scholars' discussions and empirical literature on the unbalanced development of China's education system, facilities, and teachers are prominent <sup>[1]</sup>. In general, it will take time to change the development of urban and countryside places, and it will be a long process to change these gaps. How to effectively solve the current numerous city and village educational inequities is an issue that the government must face.

### 3.3 Investment in Educational Funds

Government funding now makes up the majority of education spending in China, and it is typically allocated to major towns and educational institutions. Rural schools have experienced a severe loss of students and teachers as a result of the disparity in educational funding, which has also increased the gap in school conditions and teaching staff. Several studies have also discovered educational spatial inequalities induced by policies such as educational resource finance and allocation. Basic education funding is heavily tied to the amount of economic growth in the region due to the local financing structure, and educational funds are not evenly distributed between provinces and cities <sup>[2]</sup>. For a long time, urban and rural education has had double standards in terms of status, goals, and institutional guarantees. All kinds of experimental, demonstration and key schools are almost all concentrated in the city. Some children from better families have priority in occupying the high-quality resources formed by the government's investment over the years. Those children born in ordinary families can not have any other choices. While urban parents find better schools for their children, rural children have no behavior and only can take low-level education, and some families spend huge costs on their children's education. Many kids in China's underprivileged regions never even get the chance to go to school. The freedom of every child to education, but children in poor areas have lost this basic right due to the lack of educational resources. If this continues for a long time, it will cause internal conflicts, which will undermine social stability and national cohesion.

There are many reasons for the scarcity of funding for schooling and the unfair distribution. Many provinces and regions allocate funds scattered, not only the distribution of local funding is unfair, but also the approved funds are not enough. Moreover, most of the funds are concentrated in developed cities, and the funds to reach the countryside are even less. In addition, differences in social and economic development have brought about the inequitable distribution of social income, and financial assistance is essential to the growth of schooling. Governments located in places with a high degree of investment in the economy have enough money to support the growth of education. Investment in education, however, is severely deficient in some regions with comparatively slow growth in the economy. The decline in educational intake, based on the educational production model, results in a decrease in educational output. When the government allocates part of aid funds to poor areas, it is difficult for these villages to fund choices to consider an education at first. As their main objective, they frequently spend capital on more urgent issues, such as structures and growth in the economy <sup>[5]</sup>. So this

is a common phenomenon that the government provides funds, but it has not been put into educational resources. To some extent, policy options involve offering equal schooling chances for every child and increasing funding for institutions that take in migrant students<sup>[9]</sup>. Chinese government spending on education is still rising, but developing-capita general expenditures during the compulsory education stage in rural regions are considerably below the national average. Many businesses place their money in wealthy areas because of the uneven regional prosperity and the combination of investments in education and local development, whereas impoverished countryside regions receive little in the way of financial advantages, so no companies are willing to invest funds in poor places with education. The result not merely widens the educational disparity between city and rural regions but additionally makes the industrialization of education a more complicated and challenging issue.

Furthermore, during compulsory education time, most of the funds are provided by local governments. It indicates that the number and standard of instructors and amenities are significantly influenced by the socioeconomic condition of the community<sup>[6]</sup>. From an international comparison, our government's investment in education is obviously insufficient, even lagging behind the world average and many developing countries. The overarching goal is to ensure equal access to schooling for low-income children, ensuring that they have equal access to quality learning<sup>[7]</sup>. Since insufficient government investment in education, the family education burden of my country's educated population is much higher than the international average. In many governments, education has not been placed in a strategic position of priority development and has not continued to increase investment in education. In terms of the use and allocation of education funds, the government should not always put funds on infrastructure but should focus on phenomenal problems. For example, schools should focus on solving the problems of primary school care classes and interest classes or school clubs. Moreover, relevant school departments should also gradually increase the standard quality for lunch subsidies for urban and rural students, expand the food types for students, and improve the nutritional substances of students from financially struggling families. Besides the academic level, physical health and hobbies are also part of the school's responsibility to cultivate students.

## 4 Solution

### 4.1 Change the Hukou Policy

Children all over China should enjoy the same equal educational resources, and should not be trapped in one place because of hukou registration issues. The government and other relevant departments need to investigate public opinion and collect data about how many children face the same problem. After that, they should formulate and revise the first draft of the education household registration policy, and report it to the Ministry of Education after completion. As a result of this, people do not distinguish between immigrants and locals when the hukou boundaries are irrelevant<sup>[9]</sup>. The government should promote the total amount of long-term residents who are able to live and work in towns and cities, consistently advance the overall well-being of permanent citizens

by providing them with essential public services, and rationally guide the selection of agricultural transfer population to settle in cities and towns. At the same time, basic city public services such as education, insurance, and housing will continue to expand.

For families, parents can first apply for a work and residence permit, which can solve the problem of children's schooling during the duration of obligatory schooling. For instance, the Beijing work residence permit can solve the period of compulsory schooling for children. However, during the National College Entrance Examination, the students can only go back to the place for undertaking the examination in the city or town of their authorized permanent residence, and other benefits are the same.

## **4.2 Decrease Difference Between Urban and Countryside**

The solution to the unfairness of urban and village education is a practical problem. From a theoretical point of view, educational expansion can narrow the income distribution gap, also the disparities in revenue allocation grow as educational inequality rises<sup>[10]</sup>. Government should build an education system that integrates city and countryside areas and break traditional dual schooling system. At the same time, to guarantee more high-quality regulations, a uniform framework for obligatory schooling must be constructed. China's public education resources should focus on rural areas and vulnerable groups, and gradually improve the rural education environment, such as the school environment, teaching equipment, and other facilities, to reduce the gap and achieve urban-rural education equity.

Relevant departments can also encourage personnel to go to the countryside and improve the welfare and wages of rural teaching work. For the purpose of defending the legal rights and interests of rural teachers, schools should also improve professional development for those educators. Schools in cities can increase the rotation of teachers between city and village areas, so more teachers who have strong professional standards can go to rural areas to support teaching. Schools can also carry out various activities to support rural education. For example, organize poverty alleviation activities, and set up scholarships to help poor students complete the nine-year compulsory education. Develop urban-rural friendship in-school activities, expand the cognitive field of teachers and students, and realize the coordinated and common development of urban and rural education.

## **4.3 Expand Education Funding**

China's education investment needs support from all different perspectives. The main methods to increase education investment are to encourage the growth of schooling, decrease the disparity in education, and ultimately close the wealth disparity in the countryside<sup>[10]</sup>. Educational equity can only be achieved by rationally allocating educational resources among cities, villages, and schools. The government should build more new buildings, update equipment, and improve the formation of faculty in underdeveloped countryside areas. At the same time, the government should emphasize education as an important focus and expand the percentage of educational expenditures for monetary expenditures while also streamlining the arrangement of budget spending.



Besides, social influences can be mobilized to increase investment in rural education resources. The government issued an initiative to mobilize the enthusiasm of multiple businesses that support education, enhance the procedure for collecting money for education through a variety of methods, spend more on rural school supplies, and address the present issue of a lack of countryside educational opportunities. A multi-level complete method is an acceptable and efficient ensure of educational equity. The nation must break the dual structure of city and countryside areas and take effective steps to support the integrated growth of both education in order to reduce the gap and inequality between urban and village education. This requires more than just changes in policies and funding.

Enhancing the development of the countryside economy and narrowing the distance separate city and rural regions is the fundamental factor in completely solving the problem of education inequality. The government should give providing village education's necessities for growth precedence and offer various types of subsidy projects for the development. This will not only work towards reducing the difference in schooling resources between city and rural but also provide a positive impact on income and the economy in rural places. Promoting education fairness needs to start from the legal level, establish a complete guarantee and an urban-rural teacher rotation system, and increase a series of incentive benefits such as allowance and transportation subsidies for rural teachers to reduce the priority of teachers' job selection so that can promote education fairer.

## 5 Conclusion

Education is everyone's first step towards better preparation for life and the future. In some opinions, education determines the future of the country and is also one of the most important undertakings issues of a country. The development of education is inseparable from the support of different fields, for example politics, economy, and society. Education cannot exist without politics, and any change in bills and regulations or rules will affect the fate of countless children. Education cultivates talents for economic development. The degree or range of economic development for a country depends on the education level of the people. The number of talents is the core and key factor to improving the comprehensive strength. Education and society are in a relationship that influences and promotes each other. When society develops vigorously, education will surely gain large prospects for positive enhancement. The purpose of education is to ensure the holistic development of all kids and improve their overall quality. Education provides children to have more choices in their future.

In order to ensure the nation's economic growth is of a high standard, it is necessary for the workforce to implement appropriate measures that encourage the advancement of education and decrease the disparity in educational opportunities and income distribution. Besides, the government should increase the scope of supervision and management in each step, investigate the current social situation and understand the most fundamental condition of the family to better solve the problem. There are many problems in China's current education area, and the government must pay attention to them and

improve the contemporary environment. This is a major and huge project that requires support or assistance from various aspects such as human labor, natural resource, and money invested. Solving the current educational problems requires continuous improvement over a long period so that China's education can directly develop and increase in a better brilliant path. It is not just a change in one field but also a breakthrough and improvement in different aspects of politics, culture, and economy. Shortly, China will usher in the climax of comprehensive reform.

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