

# ***Empirical Study on Education for Poverty Alleviation and Mandarin Popularization***

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**Abstract**—since the 19th CPC national congress, building a beautiful China has provided opportunities for the construction of beautiful villages and targeted poverty alleviation in western ethnic regions. The driving force for the construction of the beautiful villages is the new type of farmers in the new era. However, in western impoverished areas, farmers including impoverished households are not well-qualified at all presently. Educational poverty alleviation requires improvement in software such as educational public service level, during which the popularization and application of the common language -- Mandarin has become a pressing issue for every citizen in Tibet to resolve.

**Keywords**—western ethnic regions; construction of beautiful village; Mandarin popularization poverty alleviation

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 19th CPC National Congress, there has been a further explanation on how to build an ecological civilization. Building a prosperous, strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious and beautiful China has been incorporated into the party's basic line, and construction of a beautiful China has been treated as one of the most basic objectives of ecological civilization in revised Party Constitution. Construction of beautiful China covers urban construction, rural construction, urban-rural integration, and so on, providing a good opportunity to speed up the modernization of the Western ethnic areas. In the process of getting rid of poverty and building a well-off countryside, the language problem has become an increasingly urgent issue, which to some extent restricts the orderly development of the beautiful villages. Therefore, "Mandarin popularization poverty alleviation" must be carried out as the top priority in the ethnic areas of western China [1].

How to carry out this work well? During the summer vacation in July 2015 and August 2018, the author went to Rinbung County Middle School twice to conduct a series of activities, such as short-term teaching, home visits and donation. Through a special research on "Mandarin popularization poverty alleviation" in Rinbung County, this paper aims to provide some countermeasures from the perspective of "educational poverty alleviation".

## II. AN OVERVIEW OF "MANDARIN POPULARIZATION POVERTY ALLEVIATION"

In January 2018, the Ministry of Education, Poverty Relief Office of the State Council, State Language Commission,

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jointly issued Mandarin popularization poverty alleviation Action Plan (2018-2020) (Department of Language and Literature Application Management, Ministry of Education [2018] no. 1), which set a goal that "by 2020, all the new workforce in the poor families should have acquired national common language communication and application skills; the existing young and middle-aged labor force in poverty-stricken areas should have basic communication skills in Mandarin, and local Mandarin penetration rate should have been significantly promoted, preliminarily having language environment to communicate with Mandarin, thus laying language foundation for the enhancement of 'blood making' ability". A consensus has been reached across the country that "in poverty alleviation actions, intellectual development comes first; in intellectual development actions, language standardization comes first". Popularizing Mandarin in poverty alleviation project is conducive to targeted poverty alleviation. With the gradual implementation of the "Mandarin popularization" campaign, "about 73 percent of the country's citizens have the ability to use Mandarin; more than 95 percent of the literate population uses standard Chinese characters, and 68 percent of the country has mastered Chinese pinyin" [2]. The minority who do not have the ability to use Mandarin and cannot standardize the use of Chinese characters and Chinese pinyin are mainly concentrated in the western, southwest, northwest and rural areas where ethnic minorities live in compact communities in the north, whose mother tongue or characters are not Mandarin, and the development between the east and the west is uneven, with a difference about 20 percentage points. Therefore, in the process of poverty alleviation, especially for the "three types of people" in the "three regions" and "three states" in the central and western ethnic areas, the popularization rate of Mandarin still restricts the development of poverty alleviation and the construction of beautiful villages to some extent, and as the first of the "three regions", "Tibetan" popularization areas face an arduous task in Mandarin popularization poverty alleviation.

## III. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF MANDARIN POPULARIZATION POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN RINBUNG COUNTY

### A. Mandarin Popularization in Tibet Must "Hold on to Both Ends"

Based on the theoretical construction of Socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new era put forward in the 19th

CPC National Congress and overall characteristics of the practice of poverty alleviation and development as well as the poverty issue, “construction of the beautiful China” has become one of the goals of “precise poverty alleviation”. Qu Tianjun, principal director of the Department of Poverty Alleviation under the State Council regards that “for the moment, the rest of the poor are ‘tough to crack’, whose poverty alleviation cannot be achieved through conventional methods, but through extraordinary methods” [3]. Language barriers in rural areas of three districts and three states continue to restrict the smooth development of targeted poverty alleviation. Two groups of people are the key minority for Mandarin popularization poverty alleviation. The first type is those educators who are dominant force and can be identified with “teachers”, who master both their native language and Chinese, and the former must reach a certain standard. The second type falls on party and government officials and grassroots administrative personnel who have the most contact with farmers and herdsmen. Compared with educators, the requirement of this kind of people is mainly “familiar with local affairs and able to communicate in simple Chinese”. Therefore, in the process of popularizing Mandarin, two types of people should be paid special attention to, which is called “paying attention to both ends”: one end is academic education on the backup force in the construction of beautiful villages, namely school-age adolescents [4]; the other is the young and middle-aged farmers and herdsmen between 30 and 50 years old, which is the main force for the construction of beautiful village.

#### B. Mandarin Popularization Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas Bears Great Responsibility

##### 1) Mandarin popularization poverty alleviation in Rural Areas Is Difficult

For a long time, the language communication problem in the Tibetan minority areas has increasingly become one of the obstacles in precise poverty alleviation. Many people even many grass-roots cadres in township government cannot speak Mandarin, and this situation has greatly restricted the poverty alleviation and development, entrepreneurial guidance, technical training, transmission of information on how to be rich and other activities. Even if young and middle-aged workers in these areas go out to work, they will face difficulties in applying for jobs, renting houses and learning skills because of the language barrier. After a visit to some of the farmers in the town of Dejilin and a sample survey, young people between the ages of 20 and 30 in the whole town are almost not at home. Most of them are studying or working abroad. In addition to those who are receiving education, those who are working abroad hardly “go out of Lhasa.” They have set up teahouses in Shigatse or work in construction sites such as Lhasa or in Tibetan restaurants. The main reason is that these people have a certain ability to communicate with each other in Chinese and have a broader horizon, who are reluctant to farm and graze at home. Another phenomenon is that when village-based cadres are conducting precise recognition according to the standard -- net income per capital less than 2,736 yuan, provided that a family has migrant workers aged between 20 and 30, a population of less than 4 and a labor force of 2 or more, it will not be identified

as poor households unless non-natural or man-made disasters or diseases. As a result, in the process of building profiles for poor households, we rarely find that there are two workers in the home, and one of them is young people in their 20s and 30s. There are generally three categories of people at home: firstly, people living in poverty as a result of disease, especially those living with serious and chronic diseases, are the most difficult ones to tackle in the next stage, and must be given assistance by all means ; for those people returning to poverty as a result of disasters and changes in the market situation, the stability of poverty alleviation need to be improved ; the poor elder people must be institutional arranged and satisfied in poverty alleviation because of their old age, diseases, and their lost productivity, thus bringing enormous difficulty to the Mandarin popularization poverty alleviation.

Over the years, governments at all levels in Rinbung County have adopted a combination of measures, such as “village-wide promotion”, “cooperatives plus”, “leading enterprises plus” and “scientific research base plus” to alleviate poverty. It has significantly increased the supply of public services and public goods in rural areas. The social security system has been continuously improved. For education alone, the budget for 2018 is 99.2782 million Yuan [5], and the type of absolute poverty population who “don’t have enough to eat, don’t wear warm clothes and don’t have a place to live in” has basically disappeared, but the per capital income of the poverty-stricken households with profiles is quite different from that of the whole region and even the whole country. “Last year in Tibet (2017), the net per capital income of farmers and herdsmen was 1410 yuan”, after industrial restructuring and increased government investment, “the 13 demonstration villages and towns combining agriculture and animal husbandry have played a prominent role in promoting the development, with the per capital net income of farmers and herdsmen reaching 2,490 yuan, exceeding 58 per cent of the per capital net income of farmers and herdsmen in the whole region [6] , however, the overall per capital net income of farmers and herdsmen in Tibetan areas remains below the poverty line”.

##### 2) The Main Factors Affecting the Mandarin Popularization Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas

Factor one: In the vast rural areas, “protecting ethnic languages” and “promoting Mandarin” are both the work of Tibetan language committees at all levels, and it is difficult to hold onto both. As early as 2005, the Tibet autonomous region promulgated the Regulations on The Study, Use and Development of The Tibetan Language. It aims to promote the study, use and development of the Tibetan language and standardize the stylistics used by state organs at all levels in the autonomous region in performing official duties, judicial organs at all levels in judicial activities, official documents and meetings, press and publication, radio, film and television, compulsory education, signs and signage, etc. So far, the results have been remarkable. Wherever the author has visited, the writing and signs have been both Tibetan and Chinese. How to promote Mandarin in the process of protecting national languages and helping targeted poverty alleviation is an important subject of education and poverty alleviation.

Factor two: Rural areas lack the basis for promoting Mandarin. The survey finds out that successive rulers in Tibet have attached great importance to farming and animal husbandry, rejecting the development of industry and Commerce, which have also affected modern people's concept of production. Those who have been left behind in rural areas, especially poor households, are generally not well educated. In the words of local people, most of them have not graduated from primary school, and there are a few individuals who graduated early from junior middle school and became village cadres are not poor households at all. In addition, the Tibetans have long formed "the harmonious ecological point of view that animals have spirit and human beings should revere nature" [7]. The open living space and harsh natural conditions have fostered the national character of Tibetan men who are optimistic, open-minded and informal, but dependent on land and livestock and stick to their native land; at the same time, as a result of living under the rule of the feudal serfdom regime for a long time before liberation, the status of men is generally higher than that of women, affecting the present "Patriarchal Status of the family" in rural Tibet. Women have a relatively small say in the family, they do most of the housework, farm work and herding.

### C. Educators Are the Backbone of Mandarin Popularization

For educators and school-age adolescents, teachers are the backbone of the Mandarin popularization. Take Rinbung County as an example, the organization and leadership of Mandarin popularization poverty alleviation are held by the office of Tibetan language committee of the county education bureau. As far as its own functions are concerned, it shoulders the dual functions of promoting Mandarin and protecting and disseminating Tibetan, with the development of the times, more attention is paid to the mission that "Tibetans shall learn, speak and use Mandarin well, and non-Tibetans shall learn Tibetan well" to "strengthen the communication and exchange between Tibetan masses and foreign culture" [8], so as to enhance "blood-making" function of Tibetan areas, and then effectively promote local economic development. Among them, school education is the most important and direct way to promote Mandarin.

#### 1) The Chinese Proficiency of Poor Middle School Students in Rinbung County Is Uneven

So far, there are 550 poor students with profiles in Rinbung County's middle schools, including fewer than 20 orphans with almost no fixed income source, mainly depending on the government's poverty relief and social assistance. According to a sample survey, the Chinese proficiency of these poor students is as follows: 35% of the poor students are excellent who are fluent in Mandarin and have good academic performance, and have a strong desire to get rid of poverty through "personal struggle and hard work"; 55% of the poverty-stricken students have average Chinese language proficiency, who acquire a certain level of listening, speaking and reading skills, but are poor in writing [9]. They can write about 50 words when they are assigned a 300-word composition; 9% of the students have some hearing ability, and know some simple expressions, but they are poor in reading and writing; 1% of the students have poor academic

performance, and being poor make them feel "worried" about the future. Their Chinese proficiency is poor, having a lot of misspellings and disjointed grammars, and communication with them is limited to daily language. Their listening is at the kindergarten level, and judging from their expressions, they seem to have comprehended what they have heard, but when they express themselves only simple words and sentences are used. They even resort to their habitual posture--"right-hand protecting head", nodding or bowing their heads. For those students, we encourage them to go to a vocational high school to learn a skill.

To this end, in addition to training Tibetan students in listening, speaking, reading and writing in Chinese, the Education Bureau of Shigatse and the Education Bureau of Rinbung County have also organized activities such as a speech contest for non-Tibetan teachers. Those activities have also strengthened the oral communication skills of young students, created a good language environment for the promotion of Mandarin and the learning of Chinese language, and intensified the comprehension of Chinese conditions among teachers and students in Rinbung County, who have closely linked their fate with the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics, in order to foster teachers and students' gratefulness and aspiration to serve the country.

#### 2) Successful Implementation of The Mandarin Popularization in Rinbung County Middle School

Mandarin popularization works in Rinbung County Middle School are carried out from two aspects in. Firstly, with the support of the county education bureau, preferential policies have been formulated to encourage teachers who have graduated from vocational schools to obtain bachelor's degrees or associate's diplomas through "advanced studies" or "correspondence"; secondly, starting from 2014, two "non-governmental communication classes", one for beginners of the Tibetan language and the other for Chinese practical writing have been set up, which mainly in the form of dispersed learning and self-study. The "30 letters" of the basic knowledge of the Tibetan language is the main content of the training in the elementary classes of the Tibetan language, with emphasis on the daily teaching of the Tibetan daily language and the understanding of Tibetan customs, so that Han teachers who do not understand the Tibetan language can master the basic daily language to strengthen the communication between teachers and students, and make it easy to carry out normal teaching activities, strengthening the effectiveness of bilingual teaching. The Chinese practical class mainly enables the Tibetan teachers who have relatively poor Chinese foundation to master the application of Chinese, improves the teachers' official document awareness and practical writing level, and strengthens the actual effect of bilingual teaching.

In terms of students' Chinese proficiency, there is a relatively large gap between different grades in Rinbung County Middle School. Although there is no formal Chinese proficiency test, the main reference is students' language proficiency and their ability to express themselves in writing, and the overall distribution is: among 458 ninth-grade students, most of them have strong listening, speaking, reading, writing and Chinese communication ability; 434

eighth-grade students have a certain level of listening, speaking, reading and writing ability, however, Chinese communication ability is relatively poor; seventh-grade students have poor performance in Chinese Mandarin proficiency. We were invited to do outdoor comprehensive development training for 2018 freshmen, and among 465 freshmen, 98% of students cannot understand Chinese, but could only understand and dictate simple words and sentences, so we must divide them into different groups based on "students who have relatively strong Chinese expression ability". Total amounts of groups were reduced to 20, only half of the original plan, and some head teachers took on the role of team leaders to carry out those activities smoothly.

Why is this happening? This is mainly because in the Tibet autonomous region, primary schools are mostly taught in Tibetan language. Primary and middle schools in the region implement two types of teaching models: the first is Tibetan teaching model, the second is the Chinese teaching model. Primary schools and some schools in farming and pastoral areas in the region implement the first type of teaching model curriculum plan, and urban primary schools and most junior and senior high schools implement the second type of curriculum. Therefore, all the teachers in Rinbung County Middle School are shouldering the task of Mandarin popularization. Judging from this situation, the seventh grade is a critical period for the Mandarin popularization work. It is an arduous task to complete the teaching mode of Tibetan in primary school and the teaching mode of Chinese except "Tibetan language" in middle school. To some extent, the real popularization work starts from middle school. When it comes to this, Qimi Quzhen, the excellent head teacher at Rinbung County Middle School once said: "When we give a lesson to freshmen, we use less multimedia teaching. Usually, we teach it in Tibetan first, and then add some Chinese words that students can understand, so that we can 'grind' slowly and smoothly until the second grade of the Middle School, and in the third year, there is no problem at all."

#### IV. IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES OF MANDARIN POPULARIZATION POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN RINBUNG COUNTY

We should increase investment in the promotion of Mandarin in rural areas, and adhere to the "two-pronged" approach, that is, academic education and rural "night classes" of cultural knowledge to construct the interactive pattern of academic education and rural popularization. In the course of continuing to do a good job of the "quality improvement project" for grassroots cadres and the Mandarin training for young and middle-aged farmers and herdsmen, special Mandarin training institutions and vocational skills training institutions shall be established to give full play to the basic role of schools in the process of popularizing Mandarin and to carry out activities of "sending students to the countryside". "Bilingual" classes will be set up in village committees and even in the fields, and be scheduled in holidays and between work.

We must innovate poverty-alleviation models, encourage the investment promotion and capital introduction, encourage poor households to learn and master "a skill", encourage "non-Tibetan" administrative and public-sector workers and

migrant workers to work in villages and conduct research, and provide information on how to become rich, broaden employment channels and actively create a "Mandarin" context and atmosphere, so that Tibetan villagers can change from "someone wants me to say" to "I want to say".

We shall involve the popularization rate of Mandarin into the poverty alleviation performance evaluation system. In the past performance evaluation of poverty reduction, there was a big difference between the East and the West. East region supported by strong injection of fund implemented "general system of poverty alleviation", whilst in the western region, the resources for poverty alleviation were limited, and there was a lack of relatively strict household income verification mechanisms. There are also some poor households that are "off target", and it is not yet possible to verify the exact income of the households and their economic sources. It can only be judged by the staff stationed in the village, the village committee and their neighborhood according to the real-time family situation. As a result, this approach is short of scientificity and practicality, in addition, those poor households lack abilities of industrial development and independent development and implementation, and only rely on migrant workers and traditional agriculture and animal husbandry poverty, all of which make true equity and efficiency to a certain extent difficult to achieve. Imagine being able to hire a third party or design a set of practical operating procedures around "precise poverty alleviation" that would allow examiners to make accurate judgments based on solid data in the countryside, and this kind of judgment keep away from poverty-stricken families themselves. In this regard, the central region has the relatively mature poverty alleviation performance assessment, so it is a good choice for it to act as a third party. At this time, there is only one factor affecting the assessment, that is, smooth communication and exchange, so the role of "common language-Mandarin" is highlighted. Meanwhile, incorporating the increase in the prevalence rate of Mandarin into the appraisal of poverty alleviation performance can also play a role in encouraging poor families to learn Mandarin and non - Tibetan staff members to learn Tibetan, thereby strengthening the friendship between the Tibetan and Chinese people, and jointly improving the quality of language and culture.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The driving force for the construction of a beautiful village is the new type of farmers in the new era, who should be educated, skilled, able to manage and adapt to the modern production mode. For the poor areas in the western region, these conditions are not yet fully met by farmers, including poor households. Precise poverty alleviation requires actions not only in hardware, such as infrastructure, but also in software such as the level of educational public service, through continuing education and talent assistance to reinforce the most active factor of productivity development – people. When people get more knowledge and have stronger ability, their subjectivity can be further stimulated by incentive mechanism, which can be a huge step in the process of improving local backwardness, during which popularization and application of common language – Mandarin has become a serious problem for every citizen in

Tibet to tackle.

On the one hand, we should establish a balanced education and targeted poverty alleviation ledger management, regularly compare the information of the poor education population by setting up a registration card, and precisely locate every poor student which had been given a registration card, so to provide a basis for the accurate implementation of education poverty alleviation policies and the accurate investment of education poverty alleviation funds. We should establish an annual report system on the education and financial aid status of impoverished students, take compulsory education as the core, develop pre-school education to consolidate the foundation, popularize senior high school education to widen the channels, strengthen the construction of a contingent of teachers to ensure the quality of education, improve the system of funding policies to prevent school drop-outs due to poverty, and ensure that the consolidation rate remains at the current 100%. On the other hand, we will continue to deepen the “cadres’ quality project”, and meanwhile we will involve the promotion of Mandarin proficiency into the performance evaluation of the poverty-relief work of local poverty-relief departments and education departments, as well as into the main tasks of village cadres and village-based general secretary. We can strengthen the youth training by means of “special training” and “night classes”, and record the learning situation of Mandarin into poor population file card. Only in these two ways can we to some extent eliminate the situation that people cannot get rid of poverty due to language barrier.

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