

The Impact of Geography and Economy on Education in China: The Plight of the Rural Child

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Introduction

China's economic development in the late 20th century was inevitably bound up with the emergence of significant social inequalities. Starting from 1979, when the idea of a "moderately prosperous society" was first brought up by politician Deng Xiaoping, China took a great leap forward socially and economically (Chen, 2020). Subsequently, 200 million people have been characterized as "lifted out" of extreme poverty as of 1978 (Wang et al., 2011, p.3). Despite the positive number, what comes along with this reform is the widening urban-rural gap. This gap can be broken down into several components, most notably the income and consumption gap, education gap, and employment gap. According to researchers, these gaps are deeply related to official Chinese government policies (Wang et al., 2011, p.3).

One policy that has significantly contributed to this issue is the Household Registration (Hukou) system, which prevents people from rural areas from migrating to and being classified as residents in cities, which would allow them to earn higher wages and improve their quality of life. In addition, even though China's economy has grown rapidly in contemporary times, people who benefit from this change tend to be the ones who are already well-off, the urban residents, rather than people who live in rural areas (Wang et al., 2011, p.15). Urban dwellers receive a variety of social benefits, including advanced healthcare

facilities, subsidized city transportation, and guaranteed employment benefits. By contrast, rural citizens experience underdeveloped amenities and facilities, including transportation, medical care, and social welfare. Under a Hukou system, it is nearly impossible for people who were originally from rural areas to enjoy these benefits, regardless of whether they work in the city. Children of migrant workers were previously excluded from urban public education due to a lack of a non-agricultural hukou. However, as the hukou system reforms, this restriction is gradually being removed to ensure equal access to education in cities.

Among the central causes of this urban-rural inequality are the geographical differences between urban regions and rural regions. The agricultural sector is what predominates the rural areas; agriculture is, of course, fundamentally based upon the use of land. Land is a factor of production, which follows a pattern of best being used first, and the marginal land second, which leads to diminishing returns. Specifically, due to the principle of diminishing returns, production expands to less productive or more difficult marginal lands when these prime lands are depleted, resulting in higher costs and worse efficiency. At the same time, the productivity of labor is also low, and combined with a low level of capital investment, results in a low level of income. By contrast, in cities, an economically-diverse environment allows employees to develop superior skills, for which they receive a higher income. Therefore, this

geographical difference between urban and rural areas has directly contributed to the income gap. With a steady increase of real per capita GDP, the Gini coefficient also increases significantly (Zhang, 2021, p.1192). The Gini coefficient assesses the inequality of income in nations by examining how income is allocated among their populations (Zhang, 2021, p.1192). Between the years 2000 to 2009, urban income skyrocketed, creating a gap that rural income could not catch up with (Wang et al., 2011, p.5). This income difference makes it more difficult for people from rural areas to migrate to cities. On the one hand, their earnings won't be able to support the higher cost of living; on the other hand, their limited skills will act as a barrier for them to obtain job opportunities that bring high incomes.

Moreover, this disparity arising from natural factors has been exacerbated by agricultural policies reinforced by governments. A policy known as "price scissors" refers to the government putting a higher price on industrial products and a lower price on agricultural products. Because of their concentration on heavy-industry oriented strategy, governments prioritize heavy industry over the support of agriculture, invisibly posing discrimination against rural peasants in China (Wang et al., 2011, p.13). Due to the fact that free trade in the agricultural market is forbidden by law, farmers have no means to realize the real market value of their products (Wang et al., 2011, p.13). Government planners hoped that the growth effect of the nation's overall economy would outweigh the negative impact of urban-rural inequality. In a larger scope, the Hukou system is successful from the government's perspective because industry-based development has been achieved without a significant migration of rural citizens who have worked for this goal.

Non-discriminatory taxation laws have further exacerbated this disparity, particularly due to the significant imbalance in social services and support provided

to rural versus urban citizens. While rural citizens and urban citizens both have to pay direct taxes, urban citizens receive subsidies, and a variety of public services. However, rural citizens were being forced to pay regardless of their income status and ability to maintain a decent life after paying taxes. In urban areas, people tend to work harder and longer to receive higher payments in order to reach their target standard of living (Wang et al., 2011, p.15). In contrast, this method is also inapplicable to rural workers, since their work productivity is already saturated. They have no further space to work and earn higher pay in return. In fact, back in the pre-reform period, rural areas received government-supported education and health services in exchange for tax payment. But things changed—after the year 2000, this provision stopped suddenly (Wang et al., 2011, p.15). Meanwhile, funds collected by taxes each year are highly-concentrated in the urban areas. Rural areas have long experienced a lack of infrastructure, with insufficient public transportation and services (Wang et al., 2011, p.16). This inequitable taxation, among other policies practiced by the government, has preempted the efforts of market forces that have tried to reduce the gap.

Education

Among the many layers and manifestations of the urban-rural divide, education emerges as a critical battleground where these disparities are acute. Despite other factors that all play an important role in contributing to this long-existing urban-rural tension, the education gap can be seen as both a cost and an effect. Education increases an individual's ability to comprehend the world and establish one's own values that help them navigate and transform that world, thereby reducing social inequality. Data from 114 nations between 1985 and 2005 show that adding one year of schooling reduces the Gini coefficient by 1.4 points (Guo & Li, 2024, p.1). Initially established by the Ministry

of Public Security, the hukou system determines access to public services, including education, healthcare, housing, and employment. Urban residents typically receive more public education resources, while rural residents, classified by their agricultural hukou, have limited access to urban services. Because of the Hukou system, public education resources are allocated based on identity. Children with agricultural hukou receive education in rural areas, while those without agricultural hukou receive education in urban areas (Wang et al., 2011, p.16). Rural students confront significant barriers to accessing public education in cities, resulting in significant educational disparities between urban and rural areas. The education gap exists with respect to several measures, including quality, level, cost, and the return on education. Most public schools operate based on the tax the educational department receives from residents, meaning a direct association between education quality and the amount of funding. Typically, urban schools receive significant government funding collected from tax, while rural schools receive minimal support because government funding is heavily skewed toward urban development (Wang et al., 2011, p.16). Rural residents pay taxes to support school infrastructure and teacher wages.

However, many rural governments lack adequate tax revenue to fund schools, and those that are funded often suffer from poor quality. Education is a cost of rural-urban disparities because education level determines one's future potential and the ability to contribute to mitigating this disparity (Guo & Li, 2024, p.1). According to National Bureau of Statistics data, in 2005, urban areas had three times the proportion of senior high school graduates as rural areas and four times the proportion of college graduates (Wang et al. 2011, p.8). Even more recently, according to statistics, the gross enrollment rate for higher education nationwide reached

60.2%, but with significantly lower specific enrollment rates in rural areas. (Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China) For rural families, their biggest look forward to the value of education for their child is to gain intelligence and possibly lift the whole family out of poverty. Without trained teachers and essential resources, rural families find the return on education especially low, which lowers their incentives to pay for their children to go to school. It is an effect of urbanization because discrepancies in educational resources were rooted in the bigger environment, as urban cities have more desirable job conditions for excellent teachers, and are more internet-based, which allows for more technology hardware utilization.

In turn, to mitigate these educational disparities, the government has adopted a number of policies in recent years. Redistributive laws, being reinforced by governments in several aspects, are often the direct contributing approach to decreasing inequality. Sociology for a New Century, Chapter 6 on inequality and redistribution highlights: "Redistribution does not simply transfer wealth; it fundamentally alters the social structure by shaping opportunities and outcomes. Such interventions often reflect broader societal values, where governments play a key role in equalizing access to resources" (p.). This idea is overarching throughout this research, emphasizing that government policies, including taxation and property rights reform, are not only practical tools for mitigating educational disparities but also moral imperatives aimed at fostering a more equitable society. Rapid industrialization causes widespread urbanization, resulting in significant migrations of rural populations, including young and middle-aged laborers and their children (Wang et al., 2011, p.19). The urban school-age population is rapidly expanding, whereas the number of rural students is declining (Wang et al., 2011, p.19). Thus, urban educational resources must be shared by a larger proportion of the school-

aged population, whereas rural educational resources serve fewer and fewer purposes.

In 2014, the National New-type Urbanization Plan (2014-2020) aimed to shift the focus of basic public services in urban areas from registered to residential populations (Guo & Li, 2024, p.10). The plan also aimed to address the issue of basic public services for migrants in cities and towns. This move ensures that children of migrant workers have equitable access to schooling in urban areas. Data shows that the number of migrant workers' children enrolled in compulsory education climbed from 9.97 million in 2009 to 14.30 million in 2020, with around 80% attending public schools (Guo & Li, 2024, p. 9). Moreover, China's rural educational development has improved through rural-bias policies and actions. Basic public education services have been equalized between urban and rural areas. In simpler words, that means both rural and central areas now receive comparable levels of educational resources by redistributing government resources and implementing new policies. Yet regional disparities still result from uneven development on the economic level. Regional inequalities in economic development are caused by natural and human conditions, as well as unbalanced development strategies. As a result, a large population migrates from central and western regions to eastern regions, relieving supply pressure on educational resources in the former region but worsening the latter (Guo & Li, 2024, p.10). In response to economic imbalances and the socio-economic problems they bring, China has vigorously promoted coordinated regional development, putting forward major strategies such as the development of the western region and the rise of central China. It has also supported the accelerated development of special regions such as the old revolutionary regions, ethnic areas, and border areas. Lastly, it has introduced a series of policies and measures for educational development that are skewed in favor of the central and western regions.

Research Problem

Given the background of the significant rural-urban educational divide, the investigation of this paper will be primarily focused on evaluating the effectiveness of one currently existing approach. Some approaches include establishing digital tools that assist inadequate teaching abilities, recruiting online qualified teachers to remotely teach classes for rural students, and different initiatives of "supporting teachers" in rural areas. The last approach is chosen as a central focus for this research because it is more open-ended, in which its results can be viewed from different perspectives of individuals, combining in order to produce a more thorough conclusion from authentic stories. Different initiatives include primarily the government's efforts, but also international self-funded non-profit organizations and local charity work. From the government side, the specific approach that has been taken is encouraging and guiding more outstanding teachers to contribute their talents and establish themselves in difficult and remote areas. Since teacher shortages are a critical issue in rural areas, balancing and making the allocation of educational resources equitable between urban and rural areas, specifically teacher resources, is the ultimate plan for mitigating this widened divide. "Rural Teacher Support Plan" is a long-term plan proposed by governments since the late 1990s and 2001 to strive for educational reform. Prior to this, the Ministry of Education of China reorganized primary and secondary schools in rural areas across the country, specifically, the massive abolition of primary and secondary schools in rural areas, so that students are concentrated in a small number of town schools (Baidu Baike). However, it is challenging for urban teachers to serve as support teachers due to harsh conditions and a significant amount of sacrifice. In contrast, non-profit organizations that are not affiliated with the government also contribute to mitigating

this disparity. This includes international organizations like Teach Future China, founded by the United Nations, and other earnest individual-founded organizations that go across countries. Therefore, the effectiveness of such a long-term solution to the educational divide between rural and urban areas is worth investigating.

Methodology and Data

The research will be focused on diving deep into the biographical cases of specific individuals' experiences, with a preliminary assessment of recent government policies. According to the latest news from the Ministry of Education and Finance, in the 2024-2025 school year, 15,952 teachers are planned to be sent to the three regions (remote poverty-stricken areas, border ethnic areas, and old revolutionary areas), including 6,655 in junior high schools, 9,035 in elementary schools, and 262 in kindergartens. (Xinjingbao, 2024) In the study, four biographical stories will be analyzed within a time frame between 2022 and the present. No evidence earlier than 2022 will be considered due to the vastly different environmental constraints that were in place during COVID-19; otherwise, biased information may result as a consequence. The analysis will be broken into two parts: conceptual evidence and empirical evidence. The conceptual evidence includes an analysis of quantitative data that reflects the cultural upheaval of "peidu," which further caused the government to take action. Peidu essentially means rural workers sending their children to urban boarding schools to strive for better educational resources while they're seeking jobs. In return, this accelerated the educational division between rural and urban areas, as more and more rural schools were being abandoned by governments. Following along with the conceptual evidence, empirical evidence will zoom in into 5 biographical stories collected from different margin areas of China, including the Guizhou mountains, Xinjiang, the village

of Yangjiagou, the southwest village of Guizhou, and Inner Mongolia. Each story tells a real-life experience of supporting teachers from urban areas who devoted themselves to such a spectacular educational reform.

Conceptual Analysis

"Peidu" refers to working parents leaving their children to get enrolled in a boarding school and normally taking care of them by grandparents (Wang, 2023). As parents, they see greater opportunities and potentials in the city for their children. They envision providing them a better educational environment and creating an easier path for them along the road. This has resulted in an increased rural population moving to central urban areas, with a declining rural community that demands locally provided educational resources. In this case, the government once ordered to close a round of rural schools to retain an efficient allocation of limited resources back in 2001. The number of primary schools in rural areas shrank from 416,000 in 2001 to 155,000 in 2012. (Wang, 2023) However, after almost a decade, the governments realized the unavoidable negative side effects: dropout rates have continuously increased, which have only severed this existing problem of a wide gap between education effectiveness between rural and city areas.

This policy shift has profoundly impacted the educational landscape, particularly for children left behind in rural areas. To better understand the consequences, we will explore several cases studies from individual teachers that have dedicated themselves to reviving various rural communities. These stories highlight the struggles and resilience of students, the trade-off faced by educators, and the motivation source of several individuals. Through these cases, we can gain deeper insights into the realities of "Peidu" and the enduring effects of these policy decisions.

Case Studies (Empirical Analysis)

Government effort—teacher from Guizhou mountains dedicated to bringing back education to his hometown

Liu Xiuxiang (Wangmo, Guizhou)

Liu Xiuxiang comes from an underprivileged family from Wangmo, Guizhou province, a village in deep mountains. His father passed away when he was 4 years old, and his mother has long suffered from mental illness. During his junior high school, he collected waste in exchange for money in his spare time to help relieve the family's burden. By believing studying can change one's fate, he devoted himself to studying in school and dreamt to make his dream come true. After he graduated, he received lucrative opportunities, including a job offer in Beijing and financial donations, brought by his honors. He could have lived an easier and more comfortable life in big cities, but he turned them all down. At the bottom of his heart, he knows the responsibility on him to change his small village. He signed up to join the Communist Party of China (CPC), to better assist the education plan of supporting rural areas. Bring plans to life have never been easy. Two years ago, during the 20th CPC National Congress in Beijing, Liu said emotionally in front of the media: "In 2012, only 70 people in our county were admitted to universities. In 2022, more than 1,300 people have been admitted to universities, and each village has at least one college student."

Wangmo County Strategies

Wangmo County regards education as a major goal. They combined educational resources and began offering children some of the best teachers and schools for elementary and junior high school. Liu

and the CPC's approach is consistent with China's National New-type Urbanization Plan (2014-2020), which aims to equalize public service allocation between urban and rural areas. Liu has considerably improved educational outcomes in Wangmo County by assuring access to quality education, demonstrating the efficacy of focused, community-based interventions in closing the urban-rural gap. In the most recent years, Liu and his team have also been learning how to provide help to the entire student body instead of certain individuals, enlarging their scope of impact. "We want to elevate the quality of teachers available, letting them become mentors for the children." (Jie, 2022)

Policy Effectiveness

Following that, under the execution of the CPC's strategy plan, it has been proven success. The province saw significant changes, with infrastructure considerably enhanced to connect every county and every area, effectively overcoming severe poverty. The dramatic increase in the number of students that got enrolled in universities over the past 10 years has underscored this success made by Liu and his CPC group. Liu's decision to return to his village, despite attractive city job offers, demonstrates the perseverance and sense of responsibility of government officials and those dedicated to rural development. Historically, China's education system has faced a significant urban-rural gap. While cities have benefited from improved infrastructure, resources, and teaching staff, rural areas such as Guizhou Province have lagged. Wangmo County illustrates the efforts of the government departments. Through national and provincial programs, the county has greatly increased its educational investment, with funding used to bring top talent to remote schools and renovate learning facilities. As a result, educational outcomes have improved dramatically, as indicated by the increased number of Wangmo students pursuing higher education. By focusing on long-term development, the country has aligned

with China's larger "poverty alleviation through education" approach, which seeks to break the cycle of poverty by providing rural children with access to high-quality education.

Government effort—young teacher at Xinjiang lighting up a path to better education for rural children

Aynagul Bagjuli (Akto, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region)

In the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the country of Akto is a remote and poverty-stricken area where more than 90% of the area is mountainous terrain, with elevations exceeding 4,000 meters above sea level. Life there is difficult due to the severe natural environment, which impedes economic progress. Aynagul Bagjuli is a native of the small county of Akto, and when she was three years old, her father passed away, leaving her mother to raise her three children and survive on her own.

Government's support in reflection of Bagjuli's teaching strategy

Speaking of Bagjuli's study career, she studied her high school in the city of Wenzhou, in the bigger county of Zhejiang. Later, she studied at the Capital Normal University in Beijing. Spending her school career far from home, 5000 kilometers specifically, she is among more than 100,000 students in Xinjiang's remote areas that received better education in the central area of China. In the years of studying, Aynagul Bagjuli traveled to multiple cities and villages in various provinces, learning about varied cultures and histories, before landing a teaching position in her hometown. Aynagul Bagjuli teaches literature at Jamatirki Middle School in Akto County, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. She finds that engaging her students with anecdotes from her own life is a great approach to sparking their curiosity. She provides her students

with a more visual grasp of a location by introducing content about places. she has visited with images or videos of local cuisine and scenery. To immerse herself in supporting underrepresented areas like her hometown, Aynagul Bagjuli left behind a number of job chances in cities in order to return to Xinjiang, her hometown. "These children need me more," she remarked, expressing her wish to give back to society by paving the way for the next generation to have access to higher education. (Huaxia, 2023) In the meantime, the Chinese government has increased financial assistance for isolated and underdeveloped regions while also steadily improving its policies around education.

Policy Effectiveness

This approach, combining individual effort and the government's plan, is mostly successful but restrained by inevitable geographical difficulties. In Xinjiang, where the central government's favorable policies are promoting rapid economic and social development, an increasing number of young professionals, like Aynagul Bagjuli, are following their passions and writing their own stories. However, the enduring geographic and economic barriers that characterize living in Xinjiang's isolated regions frequently outweigh the benefits of these initiatives. Even though educators like Aynagul Bagjuli are changing education for the better by going back to their hometowns to teach the next generation, there are still larger structural problems that need to be addressed in order to significantly improve educational outcomes in these autonomous regions. (Huaxia, 2023) Moreover, the region's economic underdevelopment, which results from past constrictive laws like the Hukou system, exacerbates the scarcity of education in Xinjiang. Historically, this arrangement has made it more difficult for rural populations to obtain urban resources, such as high-quality education. Because of this, it is extremely difficult for students in Xinjiang and other autonomous regions to attain educational parity with their

colleagues in urban areas. Since not all people are as lucky as Aynagul Bagjuli to be a part of the limited number of students who grasp the opportunity of getting an education outside of the small town.

Global non-profit work—teacher Bai and Ms. Wu establishing local elementary schools in northern Shaanxin province

Bai Guiling (Yangjiagou, Ansai)

This article explores the story of establishing a non-profit organization that supports rural China education, called Friends of Rural China Education (FORCE). It all starts with one woman, Bai Guiling, who was born in 1964 to a farming couple with a family of five children. Her mother was illiterate, and her father only went to primary school. She was determined to study hard and eventually became the first person in her village to earn a high school diploma. Since she was being recruited to teach, she packed all her belongings and moved to Yangjiagou, a village in the county of Ansai, without any hesitation. With poor teaching conditions, she endured no electricity, a few books, and the ever-present risk that the cave could collapse from silty soil. Despite all of the struggles, she began to teach two dozen students from several grades. Her goal was to battle widespread illiteracy, discourage dropouts, and make learning accessible and happy for the youth. (Tyson, 2023)

FORCE Strategies

Far from the other side of the world, Ms. Wu, a Chinese-American who achieved a degree at Peking University, read a news letter about teacher Bai's struggle. Ms. Wu and her husband decided to use all of their savings to build a proper school in the village of Yangjiagou for teacher Bai and her students. Ms. Wu, the founder, gathered money through community activities and

donations. To transfer monies securely in the face of corruption worries, she recruited trustworthy intermediates, such as a Catholic nun, to hand-deliver money to local educators like Teacher Bai. With these funds, FORCE constructed schools in disadvantaged areas, prioritizing places with the most deteriorated facilities while maintaining strong community involvement and transparency to assure success. Later on, after this organization they established (FORCE) built their first primary school in Yangjiagou, where teacher Bai sent her children, they opened up five more schools throughout rural China. This moving story connects to the broader context of China's socioeconomic changes and the growing urban-rural split. Due to the Hukou system, the government tends to focus on the bigger picture of China, which results in a concentration of resources in the central cities. As cities rapidly modernize, rural areas often lag behind in infrastructure, education, and economic opportunities. FORCE's work, led by Ms. Wu and Teacher Bai, addresses this gap by empowering rural communities through grassroots fundraising and direct action. Their initiative reflects a broader challenge faced by China: ensuring that the benefits of economic development reach remote, underserved regions, where access to quality education remains a critical issue for long-term growth.

Policy Effectiveness

The remarkable outcome achieved by FORCE is strongly indicating the success of globally connected non-profit organizations. Bai's journey reflects the ambitions of many rural educators working to address the fundamental disparities mentioned previously. Her FORCE-supported activities directly contribute to eliminating educational gaps, increasing access to education for rural kids, and boosting social mobility—all of which are important to China's broader attempts to achieve balanced development. In addition, the story of Ms. Wu founding this international organization reflects the raising awareness of educational disparities

in China. In the past decades, China's severe division of literacy level has received more and more attention, and organizations from worldwide were sending helping hands just like FORCE. For instance, Teach Future China (TFC), which is part of the UNESCO International Research and Training Center for Rural Education, found it in 2008. The program sends outstanding university graduates to teach in rural schools or urban schools for working children for two years, providing continuous and systematic training to cultivate and gather talented people who care about education, thereby contributing to the progress of Chinese society. These organizations' initiative is consistent with government efforts to equalize educational access, demonstrating the potential benefit of individual commitment and community-based solutions in solving rural educational challenges. (Tyson, 2023)

Local charity work ---- A retired professor gives free lessons to children in the mountains

Liu Xiaosheng (Tongzi County, Guizhou Province)

In the remote mountain villages of southwest China, "Daba English" (daba refers to the well-known dam of the village) is very popular. Liu Xiaosheng, a retired professor from Chongqing, gives English lessons to local children on the dam of Shuijing Village in Tongzi County, Guizhou Province. The summer of 2022 has been the 10th year of Liu's tutoring in English for children in the mountains, ushering in 60 students; 10 college students from the village who have been admitted to the university have all listened to his "English on the dam".

Strategies

For rural students, English can easily become a shortcoming. The imbalance of educational resources between urban and rural regions has left them in dire need of "compensation for vulnerability"

in the competition for education. As a kind of public welfare activity, "retired professors give free lessons to children in the mountains" effectively benefits rural children and gives them a brighter future. Retired professors give free lessons to children in the mountains, obviously not for material incentives but for spiritual comfort, to realize the "old for the purpose of" and enrich their elder life.

Policy Effectiveness

"Daba English" is a successful program established by an individual's charity work because it allows mountain children to receive quality educational resources, stimulating their interest and enthusiasm for learning English. This reciprocal relationship reflects a win-win situation even though it is situated with simple teaching conditions. The teaching effect is remarkable, which vividly illustrates that the hardware facilities of education and teaching and the conditions of running a school are important, but the teacher's ability and determination are the core. Every summer vacation, the villagers may hear the sound of reading books from an empty courtyard, which helps to keep their everyday mood bright. "Daba English" constructs an invisible school, which has drawn the villagers' attention and served as the focal point. In addition to teaching knowledge and skills to kids, "Baba English" also has other purposes, such as "educating the township," sowing the seeds of civilization in rural areas, preserving rural morality, encouraging local social governance, and strengthening village communities. Professor Liu's volunteer effort is clearly an example of people's encouraged action stimulated by the appealing idea spread by the education sector of the governments. Promoting the balanced development of urban and rural education, helping more rural students to change their destiny through education, and providing more intellectual support for rural revitalization call for more resources to be tilted towards the countryside (Yang, 2022).

Conclusion

While China's rapid economic growth has lifted many out of poverty, it has also widened the gap between urban and rural areas, particularly in education. Central to these disparities is the Household Registration (Hukou) system, which has restricted rural citizens from accessing the benefits of urbanization, including a series of social amenities. Except for all the fundamental services—transportation, health care, and entertainment—education is a significant sector in which the Hukou system has limited the rural citizen's potential. The urban-rural gap grows wider by agricultural policy and tax legislation that encourage urban expansion. Education appears to be a critical aspect of this difference, both contributing to and potentially mitigating inequality. Despite government reforms and programs aimed at eliminating inequities, such as the National New-Type Urbanization Plan, problems remain.

By reviewing several cases from individuals throughout the north to south of China, regional-based impact is being evaluated through the lens of a specific individual who experienced it personally and through their testimonies. All of these individuals exemplify the efforts of individuals committed to improving education in rural areas. Some of them were a part of the government's party and carry a heavy responsibility of escalating rural regions' literacy degree of coverage; others are dedicated individuals who have experienced the same life trajectory themselves and wanted to return back to society after they finish their own educational career. The case of Liu Xiuxiang, a teacher from Guizhou, exemplifies his determination as a party's leader, wanting to succeed their long-term goal. His dedication highlights the importance of local initiatives in bridging the educational gap, yet it also underscores the need for continued systemic reforms to achieve lasting equity.

Similarly, the professor Liu from Guizhou, after finishing his successful career as a professor, felt it was necessary and willing to complete his mission in his elderly life. He tried to use his efforts to fulfill the summer of rural children, simultaneously balancing out the disparity in literacy in English between rural and urban areas as best he could. The "Daba" program provides a window for the left-behind children, giving them one more possibility for their summer vacation instead of staying home and having no where to be. Through the fun and educational teaching activities, it not only increases the children's learning but also enriches their spiritual world. Alternatively, others were motivated because they were once the beneficiaries of "stepping out of the village."

Bai Guiling from Shannxi and Aynagul Bagjuli from Xinjiang both tell stories of rural educators in China who returned to their hometowns to improve education for underprivileged children. Both narratives emphasize individual dedication and the critical role of education in bridging rural-urban divides. To truly address the educational inequalities in remote autonomous regions like Xinjiang, there must be a sustained focus on enhancing infrastructure, increasing funding and attracting qualified educators to these underserved areas. The success of these efforts will depend on a combination of government policy, local leadership, and community involvement, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their geographic location, have access to the opportunities that education provides. In the future, educational inequality still has room to be improved, but absolute educational equality does not exist. To encourage coordinated development of urban/rural education in China, we need to optimize resource allocation, promote "Internet + education," strengthen twinning support mechanisms, and reform the hukou system.

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