

"Sustainable Development of Education in Deeply Poverty-stricken Districts in " Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures"

— The Case of Nujiang Prefecture

Xinyue Wu^{1,a,*}

¹*University College London, London, WC1H 0AL, England*

a. wuxinyue0314@outlook.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: Based on the three principles of sustainable development, educational inequalities in deep-poverty areas need to be eliminated. Nujiang prefecture is a deep-poverty region comprised of "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures." This paper analyzes the features of education development in Nujiang prefecture and its impact on development of education in Nujiang prefecture from the perspectives of geographical location, economic model, and demographic structure. The main demands of education fairness are presented, as well as related actions and proposals for further promoting the sustainable development of education in Nujiang Prefecture. This paper found that Nujiang's unique geographical location, single economic model and specific demographic structure make its development difficult. While increasing economic investment, the choice of strategies to address the sustainability of education needs to be considered in a variety of ways: (1) localization; (2) determination of the direction and path of education; (3) educational equality, etc. At the same time, there is still a great gap between the education level in the deep-poverty areas and the national average, whereas scholars in China rarely study the education in the deep-poverty counties of Nujiang Prefecture. Therefore, the research on the deeply-poverty areas in the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures" has great research value and significance, and can help people understand the current deficiencies in the education field in the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures" regions, as well as the gap between them and the national basic education level; Clarify the future development planning direction of these deeply-poverty areas, help these areas develop more efficiently and with high quality, and to inform the provision of quality education, the sustainability of education and the empowerment of the underprivileged.

Keywords: deep poverty counties, sustainable development, educational equity, social justice

1. Introduction

China is a multi-ethnic integrated country with a total of 56 ethnic groups. According to the census data, the number of ethnic minorities in China reached 125 million by 2021, accounting for 8.89% of the country's total population. In terms of the regional distribution of the population, the eastern region

accounts for 39.93% of the population, the central region for 25.83%, the western region for 27.12% and the northeastern region for 6.98% [1]. Nationally, China's economic development shows a stepwise gap, with the eastern region being the most developed, the central region being second after the east, and the western region being relatively backward in economic level [2]. The vast majority of ethnic minorities are located in the western region, which possesses a large variety of ethnic groups, a wide range of dispersion, a wide variety of ethnic languages and scripts, cultural differences, economic backwardness and unbalanced development. The large population of ethnic minorities in China, whose inhabitants' literacy and education levels are far lower than those in the central and eastern parts of the country, has resulted in an extreme inequality in education, a gap that has seriously hindered ethnic development [3]. In order to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, education and poverty are both issues that have to be addressed in the process of achieving sustainable development. Education in poor areas can not only break the vicious cycle of poverty, but also provide quality human resources for economic and social development [4]. Solving the problem of education in poor areas contributes to the sustainable development of society. and Nujiang is a typical example of poverty and lack of education.

This research paper analyses the literature on education in deep poverty areas from 1995 to 2021 and uses educational data from deep poverty areas in 2018 to analyse the sustainable development of education in deep poverty areas in Nujiang Prefecture as an example, and to investigate the educational attainment of local children, the problems of education and the measures to solve them. This paper provides a reference for providing quality education, achieving sustainable development in education and empowering people living in poverty.

2. Educational Analysis of "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures" in Deeply-poverty Areas

The general report "Learning to be - the world of education today and tomorrow", submitted to UNESCO in 1972, emphasizes the concept of "education first" [5]. The report starts from the history of education development, focuses on the main situation, existing problems and future development trends of world education development in the 20th century, emphasizes the relationship between education and social change and the viewpoint of lifelong learning, and points out strategies and approaches to realize education innovation and international cooperation and exchanges. The report believes that everyone must continue to learn throughout life, and lifelong education is the cornerstone of a learning society.

2.1. Current Status of Ethnic Education in China

After a long period of development, China's ethnic education has achieved fruitful results. After the reform and opening up, China has also been influenced by the concept of "education first" [6]. And after the 18th Congress, a number of policies and measures were promulgated and implemented to promote the development of national education, and achieved outstanding achievements.

2.2. Problems Faced by Ethnic Education

As an important part of China's educational modernization, the development of educational modernization in ethnic areas has made remarkable achievements, but due to the historical environment, natural environment and economic development environment, the modernization of education in ethnic areas started late, the level of development is uneven, and still faces some outstanding problems.

2.3. Over-emphasis on Basic Pre-primary Education at the Expense of Higher Education

Ethnic minority areas are restricted by traditional thinking, leading to an emphasis on basic education and thus neglecting higher education. Due to the backward thinking of the inhabitants, it is considered better to study than to work for the family earlier. There is no awareness or goal for the educational development of their children, so even less importance is attached to it.

2.4. Excessive Pursuit of Quantitative Indicators at the Expense of Education Itself

As the nation attaches great importance to education in minority areas, the central and the government have increased their investment in education, and the proportion of funds invested has reached or even exceeded the average level of national investment in education. But at the same time, it will make education to pursue indicators excessively, while ignoring the improvement of education itself [5]. There will even be malicious competition and mutual comparison.

2.5. Neglect of the Cultivation of National Culture

The implementation of the bilingual mode of teaching has reduced students' mastery of the traditional language and script of the nation. This includes the spread of national culture, which has also been affected in the process of popularizing basic education.

2.6. Unbalanced Ratio of Teachers to Students

The development of education in poor areas faces a shortage of external teachers, especially professional teachers [7]. As the natural environment in ethnic minority areas is harsh and development is backward, this has led to many talented teachers being reluctant to come and teach. This is mainly reflected in: (1) the insufficient number of teachers and the high teacher-student ratio; (2) the scarcity of professional teachers and the poor quality of education [8].

3. Research on Education in Deep Poverty Counties in "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures"

3.1. The Natural and Social Environment of the Deeply-poverty Areas in the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures"

Firstly, natural conditions are poor, with high altitude, a cold climate, large land areas and poor access. The harsh natural environment has led to a scarcity of available land. Secondly, the special economic model, with an economy based mainly on agriculture and animal husbandry, is homogeneous. The poor environment leads to short effective working hours and low productivity of the local population. The high cost of transport leads to slow economic development. Finally, the special demographic structure, it is a gathering place for China's ethnic minorities, bringing together most of the country's ethnic minority population [9].

In the case of Nujiang, more than 98% of the area is high mountain valleys and 76% of the cultivated land area has slopes of 25 degrees or more. The region's harsh natural environment and multi-ethnic demographics contribute to the high incidence of poverty [10]. In 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council of the People's Republic of China made special arrangements for the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures" and other poor areas. The regions where the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures" are located have formulated their own poverty eradication programmes, specifying how and when to eradicate poverty. By the end of 2019, the number of people living in poverty in these regions was reduced

from 3.05 million at the end of 2017 to 430,000, and the incidence of poverty fell from 14.6% to 2% [10].

3.2. Characteristics of Education in "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures"

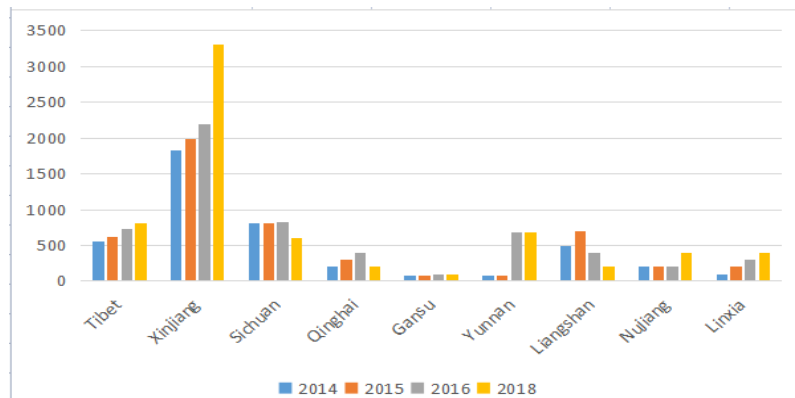


Figure 1: Number of pre-schools 2014-2018 [11].

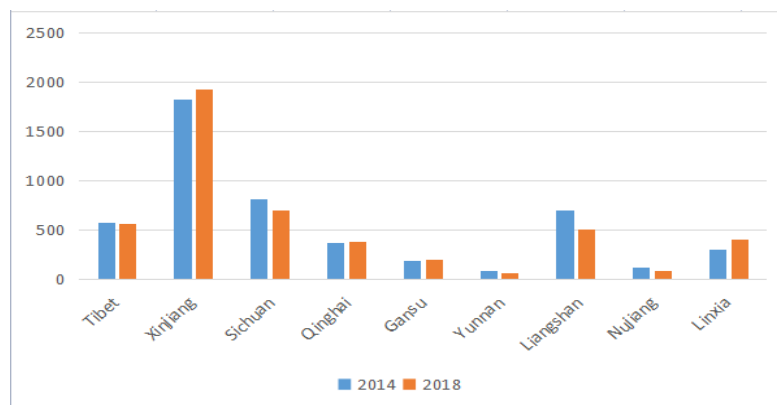


Figure 2: Number of primary school 2014-2018 [11].

As can be seen in Figure 1, the number of preschools in areas of deep poverty is increasing. After maintaining a steady increase from 2014-2016, the number of preschools increased sharply from 2016-2018. In contrast, the number of primary and secondary schools in Figure 2 showed a decreasing trend from 2014-2018.

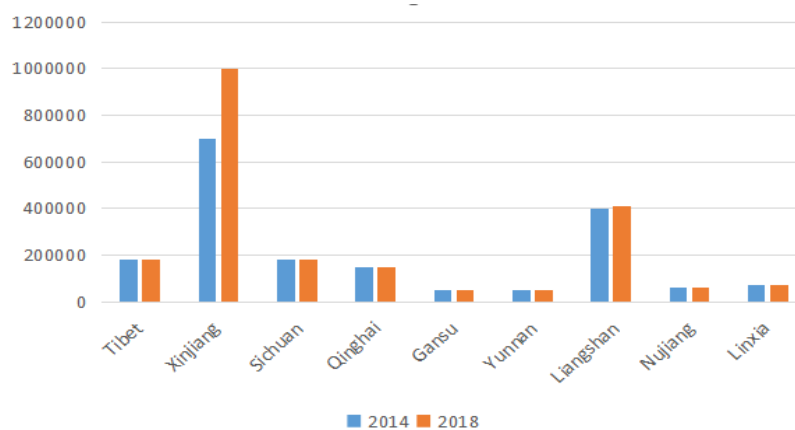


Figure 3: Number of students in primary schools 2014-2018 [11].

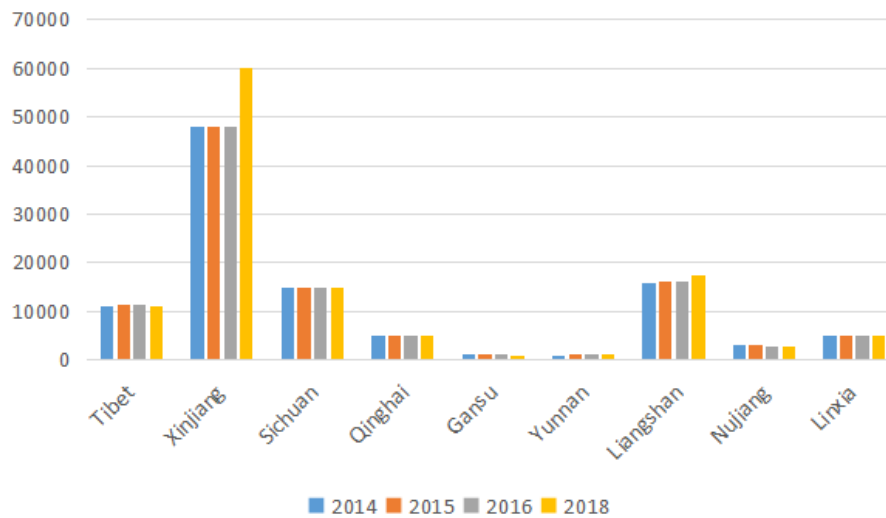


Figure 4: Number of primary school teachers 2014-2018 [11].

Figure 3 and Figure 4 indicate that the number of primary schools students and teachers in Nujiang did not increase markedly from 2014-2018, but remained at a stable level.

Based on the current situation, several issues have arisen. Firstly, in 2016 Nujiang implemented 14 years of free education from pre-school to high school stage [12]. and the data shows that there is no significant effect in the short term. Secondly, the number of teachers is insufficient to meet the needs of basic education development in poor areas, where the overall capacity of teachers is poor and their teaching concepts are relatively old-fashioned, unable to keep up with the current learning goals [7]. Thirdly, educational resources are unevenly distributed across the regions. Compared to other regions, Nujiang Prefecture does not invest enough in basic education and faces a lack of funding and support for educational activities. Finally, investment in pre-school education is greater than that in basic and higher education [8].

Analyses of the literature on education in deep-poverty areas from 1995 to 2021 and data from deep-poverty areas from 2014 to 2018 reveal that the proportion of pre-school institutions is greater than that of basic and higher education; that the number of schools and teachers has not increased enough in the short term to meet the needs of educational development in poor areas, driven by policy; and that there is an uneven distribution of educational resources and a wide disparity between regions in the special-poverty states.

3.3. Problems & Solutions

Driven by various national policies, the deeply impoverished areas have achieved rapid development. In education, however, there are still some issues that need to be addressed. Ideologically: the local government needs to publicize and formulate corresponding policies to encourage and guide the local people to allow school-age children to receive education. In addition, the government must abandon the old concepts that are not conducive to the development of education, and actively promote the education concept to the local people. Economically: funding is particularly important for the development of poor areas. As deeply impoverished areas have limited economic capacity of their own, national preferential policies need to be tilted towards these areas. At the same time, local governments need to make the most of their education funds. On teachers: teacher training is equally important, and it is difficult to attract talented university students to teach in areas where ethnic minorities are concentrated and development is lagging behind. Therefore, local governments need to improve the welfare benefits of teachers and broaden the channels for teachers to attract talented

people from outside the country to teach, as well as building a high quality and large number of teachers.

4. Conclusion

From 1995 to 2020, scholars have been paying attention to the education in the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures" region, but there are still many problems. The analysis of preschool and primary education in the deep-poverty areas of the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures" from 2014 to 2018 indicates that there are considerable shortcomings in education in the deep-poverty areas. These include the low priority given to higher education, the lack of teachers and their poor quality, and the small number of different types of curricula and their inappropriate arrangement. Even with the excellent results achieved so far, the current level of education in the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures" differs considerably from the average level of education in the country. There is also a significant gap between the deep-poverty counties in "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures". Education funding is the most important factor in the development of education in deep-poverty counties, and without sustained investment, education will stagnate. The number of teachers is particularly important for the development of education in the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures". In addition, the hardware of schools needs to be further improved.

In addition, the main literature for this research is from 2014-2018, which is an inadequate sample size and could be improved by applying data from recent years. The research perspectives are not comprehensive enough, as the research on geographical environment and demographic structure is only at the basic level, and should be followed up by in-depth research on these areas. The study of the "Three Districts and Three Autonomous Prefectures" is only written, and fieldwork could be carried out to give a more comprehensive and realistic picture of the actual situation.

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