

Analysis On The Current Situation And Causes Of Rural Education In The Context Of Rural Revitalization Based On The Empirical Study Of Three Villages In Sichuan Province

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Abstract: This paper is taken three typical villages in Sichuan Province as the research objects, and uses empirical research methods such as questionnaire survey and field visits. It gets a certain understanding of the current situation for rural education and the reasons for the differences of the three villages. China's compulsory education system and "9+3" free education in Sichuan have improved villagers' educational level. The improvement of rural education level is closely related to the rural economic and social development level. It can be foreseen that the Rural Revitalization strategy has a far-reaching impact on the rural education.

1.Introduction

Sichuan is a large province of agricultural and has many rural populations in China, covering about 5% of the country's land area, most of which are agricultural and pastoral areas. In order to have a deeper understanding of the specific educational conditions of the villagers in different topography and landforms in Sichuan Province, the authors selected three villages for questionnaire surveys and individual interviews respectively. This paper interviewed the villagers on the issues such as the age of birth, education level, education expenditure, the catalyst of Rural Revitalization and so on.

The three surveyed villages are located in the hilly topography region of Southern Sichuan, the mountainous region of Northeastern Sichuan and the plateau region in Western Sichuan. The results of the questionnaire show that the education level of rural residents in Sichuan Province has been greatly improved compared with that in the early days of liberation and the beginning of China's reform and opening up.

In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, illiteracy rates in rural areas were very high. At the beginning of the reform and opening up, most of the rural villagers had elementary school education. With the full implementation of the national nine-year compulsory education, the proportion of villagers with junior school education level has greatly increased. In addition, some villagers pay more attention to their children's education and hope that their children can change the fates of themselves and their families by receiving more education.

For example, the hilly topography village of Southern Sichuan in this survey, the results showed that 28% of the villagers interviewed in this village spent 20,000 or more yuan a year on their children's education. Such expenditures are relatively large in rural areas because China's rural residents' annual per capita disposable income was 14617 yuan in 2018[1] (National Bureau of Chinese Statistics, 2019). On the one hand, such a proportion of expenditure shows that farmers attach great importance to education. On the other hand, it also reflects that 21% of the interviewed villagers in this village most hope that the catalyst of Rural Revitalization is culture and education.

The villagers hope that the Rural Revitalization strategy will make efforts in rural basic education, rural public culture construction, so as to improve the cultural literacy of the villagers.

Through this empirical study, the authors find that most villagers in three villages have changed their ideas that it was a waste of time and money for their children to go to university, and they all hope that their next generation will receive more education so that compared with their parents, the next generation can rely on knowledge to gain a technical advantage in social competition and live a rich, easy and beautiful life in the future.

2. Positive Significance of Education to Rural Revitalization

The countryside is a social complex with natural environment, geographical conditions, customs and economic characteristics. It has multiple functions such as production, life, ecology, culture, etc. It is closely connected with the cities and towns. They are interdependent, symbiotic and share common prosperity. Together, they constitute the living home of the Chinese people. Especially in the Chinese society with thousands of years of agriculture tradition, the countryside has a more special status. At present, most of the direct ancestors of urban residents not exceed three or four generations live in the countryside. The countryside is the common hometown for the majority of Chinese people.

The prosperity of the countryside means the prosperity of the country, and the decline of the countryside means the decline of the country.[2](Li Haoran, 2019) In October 18, 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the strategy of Rural Revitalization for the first time in the reports of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China and published a series of important statements. The implementation of the Rural Revitalization strategy is a major decision made by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China with General Secretary Xi Jinping at its core for the work of agriculture, rural areas and farmers.

According to the general requirements of industrial prosperity, ecological livability, civilized rural customs, effective governance and rich life, [3] (Xi Jinping, 2017) orderly promoting rural revitalization is beneficial to the development and growth of the related industries with local agriculture as the core. Then, it will also increase farmers' incomes. Building ecological livable villages is conducive to building a new pattern of beautiful countryside development so as to retain people.[4] (Commentator of newspaper, 2018)

Civilized country customs can be available to carrying forward and inheriting the excellent traditional Chinese culture further. At the same time, this can remain the country-sickness. The effective governance of grass-roots villages is conducive to building an effective rural operation pattern that combines rule of law, autonomy and rule of virtue.[5] (Xi Jinping, 2017)

The key to the realization of all these goals is the human factor. As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that the revitalization of villages depends on talents [6] (Gong Shijian, 2019). Education is a key step in cultivation of talents. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China's educational achievements have been remarkable, especially in rural areas. About 80% of the 540 million people in 1949 were illiterate [7] (Zhang Li, 2019), and most of these illiterate people lived in rural areas.

According to statistics of the Ministry of education, by March 2019, 92.7% of the counties in the country have achieved basic balanced development of compulsory education, and more rural children have enjoyed better and fairer education; the results of rural general education census show that 42.5% of rural residents have junior school education, 11.0% of rural residents have got senior school or technical secondary school education, and 3.9% of rural residents have received junior college education or above, therefore the cultural quality of rural residents has improved significantly.[8](National Bureau of Chinese Statistics, 2019)

3. Analysis on the Current Situation and Causes for Villagers' Education Level of Three Villages in Sichuan Province

Table 1. Proportions for different educational levels in three villages in Sichuan

Education Level	The hilly topography village in Southern Sichuan	The mountainous village in Northeastern Sichuan	The plateau village in Western Sichuan
Primary school	29%	62%	45%
Junior school	54%	38%	28%
Senior school	15%	0%	16%
College degree or above	2%	0%	11%

Table 2. Age composition of villagers interviewed in three villages in Sichuan

Age group	The hilly topography village in Southern Sichuan	The mountainous village in Northeastern Sichuan	The plateau village in Western Sichuan
18-30years old	9%	0%	13%
31-45years old	28%	12%	34%
46-60years old	44%	42%	24%
61 years old or above	19%	46%	29%

3.1 Background for this Empirical Study in Three Villages

It is necessary to explain the data of the mountainous village in Northeast Sichuan. The research team conducted the investigation in this village during the end of November 2019. It was not a busy farming season or holiday, and there was no large-scale activity in the village at that time. Therefore, the migrant workers did not return to the village in large quantities. So, there was an empty gap in the 18-30 years old age group for the interviewed villagers. At the same time, because a large number of young and middle-aged people did not return to this mountainous village at that time, the proportion of the interviewed villagers in the age of 31-45 accounted for only 13% of all the interviewed villagers, and the rest of the interviewed villagers were all over 46 years old. In most rural areas of China, the villagers over 46 years old are not well-educated, and there are few villages who had got high school education, let alone for the college education or above.

The survey in the hilly village of Southern Sichuan was conducted during the National Day in 2019, which was the most lively time except for the Spring Festival in the countryside. A large number of villagers in this hilly village had spent the National Day holiday going back to their hometown to visit relatives and friends. Therefore, from the survey results, it can be easily seen that the distribution of villagers receiving the questionnaire survey in this hilly village area of Southern Sichuan was relatively balanced in terms of age groups.

In addition, the survey of the plateau village of the Western Sichuan was conducted in December 2019. During that time, a family was holding a banquet in this plateau village. Moreover, many villagers had returned home near the end of the year. Therefore, the survey results in this western plateau village were more balanced in the age distribution data than the Northeast mountainous village in Sichuan.

3.2 The Current Situation for Villagers' Education Level

According to the feedback from the questionnaire, we can easily see that the proportion of primary school education is close to 50%, and the proportion of junior school education accounts for nearly 30%, so the villagers interviewed in the plateau village of Western Sichuan have a low educational level commonly. In other words, nearly 80% of the villagers interviewed in this plateau village only have a junior school or primary school education. In this village, people with senior high school or junior college degree or above are considered highly educated. According to the general distribution of academic qualifications, the proportion of college education and above should be less

than that of high school education. But this plateau village data showed that the proportion of high school and college education among the villagers interviewed was roughly the same.

This plateau village is located in the ethnic rural area of the Western Sichuan plateau. Due to the imbalance of development stages and regions, a large proportion of the 45-year-old villagers in this plateau village have a primary school education. But at the same time, in this village, about 10% of the villagers interviewed have college degrees, which is close to the proportion of the villagers with high school education. This surprised the research team. The research group got the reason in the questionnaire itself and found that most of the villagers who received college education or above were between 18 and 30 years old. However, most of the villagers in primary school education are over 46 years old. It turns out that younger villagers in this village are highly educated.

3.3 Analysis on the Causes for Villagers' Education Level

3.3.1 “9+3” Free Education Program

From the data, it is obvious that the proportion of college education in the plateau village is much higher than the survey results of the research group in the other two villages. One of the reasons is that the number of the interviewed villagers in the 18-30 age group in the other two villages was relatively small. The interviewed villagers in 18-30 age group in the hilly village is 11%, and there is no villagers in 18-30 age group in the mountainous village.

Another contributory reason is the “9+3” free education program implemented in ethnic minority areas in Sichuan Province since 2009. Since then, Sichuan Province has launched the “9+3” free education program. On the basis of nine-year compulsory education, junior school and senior high school graduates from ethnic minority areas in Sichuan Province are organized to receive three-year secondary vocational education free of charge. This had helped these students' employment. The implementation scope of this free education program initially covers 32 counties in Tibetan areas and 13 counties in Yi Nationality Region of Liangshan Autonomous Prefecture Sichuan Province, which encourages “9+3” graduates to continue studying in higher vocational colleges.

Over the years, more than 10,000 “9+3” graduates have been admitted to higher vocational colleges to continue their studies.[9](Sichuan Daily, 2019) The education development program for this ethnic region in Sichuan Province ensures that the “9+3” students can not only get full employment, but also pursue further study. Such a good policy of free education has created a good atmosphere among these regions that it is promising and easier to find jobs when their youngster study in vocational colleges.

It has made many families in ethnic minority areas shake off poverty and become prosperous. It has also benefited people from the real changes in the life brought about by getting more education and more skills, which has made people gradually change the backward misconception that receiving education is useless. They are more willing to send their children to study in school instead of dropping out of primary and secondary schools to herd. It has given people in minority areas a sense of accomplishment of having education and better educational choices in suitable educational paths.

Therefore, after the implementation of the “9+3” free education program in Sichuan Province, it has not only changed the fate of the students in the vast minority areas, but also changed and reversed the ideas of the masses in the minority areas. To some extent, the latter is of far-reaching significance. After the concept of respect for skills and knowledge is established, people in ethnic areas are more likely to let their children have education, rather than let their children pasture or work after primary school.

3.3.2 Rural Revitalization Strategy

Another very important reason for the higher proportion in college education in the plateau village is that this village is a model village of Rural Revitalization in Western Sichuan. There are relatively good natural conditions and adequate infrastructure in this village, and the good economic conditions of the villagers themselves are also one of the factors. As the saying goes each place has its own way of supporting its own inhabitants. The ecological environment of the plateau village is very good, which can provide surroundings to support people's living.

In addition, the villagers can increase their income by running agritainments, going out as a migrant worker and doing business. The plateau villagers can afford their children to study in colleges. Therefore, based on the analysis of the above factors, we can conclude why the proportion of college degree or above is the highest in this Western ethnic plateau village among these three.

4. An Analysis of the Reasons for the Difference of Educational Expenditure

In the aspect of education, there is another data worthy of study. That is, there is a clear difference in the stratification of certain data in the proportion of villagers' spending on children education yearly in three villages. As shown in the following table, the proportion of yearly education spending under 5,000 yuan between the hilly village and the plateau village is approximately 30%. In the mountainous and plateau village, both the proportion of 5000-10000yuan expenditure are about 40%. Both the hilly and plateau village who cost 10,000-20,000yuan expenditure for a child education, which are close to 20%. The proportion of spending more than 20,000 yuan per child is similar to the mountainous and plateau village, about 8%. However, the proportion of the hilly village in this level is as high as 28%.

Table 3. Statistics for the proportion of education expenditure in Sichuan

Expenditure for a child	The hilly topography village in Southern Sichuan	The mountainous village in Northeastern Sichuan	the plateau village in Western Sichuan
Under 5,000 yuan	32%	15%	28%
5,000-10,000 yuan	17%	39%	46%
10,000-20,000 yuan	23%	38%	19%
Above 20,000 yuan	28%	8%	7%

Children's expenditure in three different rural areas has shown different emphases and tendencies. The distribution of children's spending in the hilly village of Southern Sichuan do not differ sharply. That is to say, the proportion of children's spending in each section is slightly different, with the largest difference being 15% and the smallest being only 6%.

The expenses of the mountainous village of Northeastern Sichuan are more concentrated in the middle two sections in 5,000-20,000 yuan. The ratio gap between the two reach 28% in the mountainous village. The data for the plateau village in the Western Sichuan are concentrated in the two columns below 10,000 yuan. The ratio gap between the two intervals reach 39% in the plateau village. The main reasons for the above data are as follows.

4.1 The Hilly Village in Southern Sichuan

Although there are some differences in the distribution of expenditure in each consumption segment of the hilly village in Southern Sichuan, but the gap is not obvious. This reflects that the hilly village has a relatively balanced investment in raising children. The raising funds for children of different ages are different, especially when children enter college, they will cost more than in primary and middle school.

Here should be mentioned is that, the hilly village of Southern Sichuan is located in a small valley plain, and its agricultural production is relatively convenient. Moreover, the county in which this village is located in is famous for exporting labor services, especially the construction workers. Many villagers work in different big cities and have better income than farmers at home. They also have more contact with modern things and have broader horizons and wider knowledges. These villagers are generally engaged in technical jobs in the construction industry, so their income is higher than that of ordinary laborers, which also enables them to satisfy their children's higher educational consumption demands.

4.2 The Mountainous Village of Northeastern Sichuan

The mountainous village of Northeastern Sichuan invested the most in the two intervals of 5,000-20,000yuan, accounting for nearly 80% of the total number of questionnaires received. This shows that the vast majority of children's expenditure in this mountainous village are at a middle level. This village was a poor village before, and the poverty was removed at the end of 2017. However, due to the low economic income of the villagers, they attach great importance to the children's investment in compulsory education not in senior high school or college education.

4.3 The Plateau Village of Western Sichuan

In recent years, Sichuan Province has continuously increased investments in compulsory education in ethnic minority areas and this has greatly improved the balanced development of education in ethnic minority areas, enabling many children to go to school near home. Sichuan Province has managed to solve the problem that the children in some rural regions walk 1 or 2 hours to arrive school in the past, which has greatly reduced the phenomenon of dropping out of school because of the long distances. The data distribution of the plateau village in the Western Sichuan illustrates this achievement, and more villagers are glad to invest money in children's compulsory education.

Since the per capita net income of farmers and herdsmen in the city where the plateau village is located in was around 15,000 yuan in 2019[10](Xu Denglin, 2019), that means a family with three or four members in ethnic minority areas spend about one third of their household income on raising their children. This expenditure ratio is relatively close to the average living standard for the farmers and herdsmen in this plateau city.

Moreover, as early as in 2009, Sichuan Province has implemented “9+3” free education program in ethnic areas, and this enables students to receive secondary vocational education free of charge after graduation from junior school. The demonstration effect of this policy is very obvious, which not only changes the employment channels of the students and improves the economic situation of their families, but also makes the villagers in ethnic areas experience the great changes brought by more educations. So, the data in this ethnic plateau village of Western Sichuan shows that 26% of the interviewees' spending were more than 10,000 yuan per year. In the interview of this village, many villagers also expressed similar views that they are willing to spend more on their children's education. In fact, more and more families in this plateau village are willing to spend more for children's education now.

5. Conclusion

The Report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that the principal contradiction in our society has now become the contradiction between the unbalanced and insufficient development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life.[11](Xi Jinping, 2018) Among them, due to objective reasons, the contradiction between people's ever-growing needs for education and the unbalanced development of public educational resources is more prominent in the rural areas. Our country is still in and will be in the primary stage of socialism for a long time. It is largely reflected in the countryside, and the modernization of rural education still has a long way to go.

The modernization of rural education is the inevitable requirement and essential connotation of socialist modernization. Only with the development of rural education and the improvement of the education level of the majority for the people in the countryside, can we provide a strong talent guarantee for rural revitalization, and lay a solid foundation for solving the principal social contradiction in the new era, realizing “the two hundred years” goals and the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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