

## *Original Paper*

# Research on the Development Course and Value of Education in Western Regions in the Past Seven Decades

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### **Abstract**

*With the peaceful liberation in Western regions for 70 years, it has promoted the prosperous development of the education cause here. Many distinctive periods are reflected in the long course, which have brought great influence on the social development in Western regions. In this thesis, it takes the peaceful liberation in Western regions as the context, which carries out investigation on the development process and value of education cause in Western regions. By combining with the policy and education level of various time nodes, the education cause in Western regions is divided into six stages of germination, start-up, reform, development, take-off and innovation. In addition, it makes deep analysis on the role and value of education cause in Western regions to the national unity of our country. Finally, some measures and suggestions are proposed in this thesis through the combination of the current social development level and education status in Western Regions, which cover the enhancement of the information construction of education, the promotion of integrating religion and educational institutions, the expansion of educational resources and so on, so as to provide the reference for the further perfection of education level and teaching quality in Western Regions. In this way, it can do much favor for the strengthening of the education cause in Western Regions, so as to satisfy the demands of contemporary social development, keep pace with the international environment, and truly achieve sustainable development.*

### **Keywords**

*Education cause, Western regions, peaceful liberation, the development of society*

### **Introduction**

Western Regions is a key area for the harmonious development of society in China with complex historical origin and diverse ethnic minorities that make its educational development form a unique style. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Western Regions has undergone many major social

reforms such as peaceful liberation, reform and opening up, and its education has achieved rapid development as well as breakthroughs in quality and quantity. In the past 7 decades since the peaceful liberation of Western Regions, the development of education has brought numerous benefits to the economy, culture and life of Western Regions, and played a vital role in the harmonious development and ethnic unity in Western Regions.

### **1. The Phased Development Course of Education in Western Regions**

#### **(i) Educational development in different social stages in Western Regions**

With profound religious culture and geographical characteristics, Western Regions has more distinctive education foundation. From the traditional old education to modern new education, Western Regions education course has experienced six stages, that is, “budding, starting, changing, developing, galloping, and innovating”, regarding the education course structure and education mode, while the regional characteristics of Western Regions are fully combined, and the development process of Western Regions society is followed in a scientific manner.

##### **1. Budding: The alternation of old and new education**

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China, the distribution of educational resources in Western Region was extremely uneven. The Western Regions people lived a miserable life, and the distribution of social educational resources was in an extreme imbalance with only a few children of lords and rich businessmen having the opportunity to receive education while over 90% of the people were illiterate due to their lack of education. In 1951, when Western Region was peacefully liberated, the local education cause ushered in the first reform. The first school of the Western Regions people, Changdu Primary School, was established, followed by the successive establishment of junior high school and the senior middle school in the subsequent years. Meanwhile, for the purpose of solving the problem of education in Western Region and combining with the reality of local economic difficulties in Western Regions, a number of national supporting policies such as the people's grant system were implemented. Nonetheless, due to the weak foundation of education in Western Regions, although new educational institutions and mechanisms appeared, they failed to become the mainstream of social education, and traditional private schools and Buddhist colleges still played an important role in Western Regions education. In addition, there was no democratic reform in Western Regions during this period, which formed a unique special situation of the coexistence of old and new education models in Western Regions. According to incomplete statistics, as of 1959, there were only 465 public schools in Western Regions, and only 2 percent of the school-age population.

##### **2. Starting: Public and private coordination**

In 1959, when Western Regions accepted the democratic reform, the Western Regions people's awareness of democracy gradually increased, and the demand for education also grew significantly. However, due to the regional characteristics of Western Regions and its long-term backward educational conditions, public education could not be popularized in a short time. In order to meet the educational needs of the

Western Regions people, the Chinese government adopted the educational development strategy of “private as the main and public as the auxiliary”. At that time, private schools prevailed in Western Regions as they were more flexible than public schools and highly consistent with Western Regions residents’ habits in terms of teaching methods and teaching time are highly consistent with Western Regions residents habits. With the support of the state, in only six years starting from the democratic reform, Western Regions education institutions increased to 1,828 as of 1965. Meanwhile, the first institute of higher learning in Western region. The rapid development of education has not only changed the living standards and knowledge level of the people in Western Regions, but also laid a solid foundation for the unity and unity in Western Regions. In the following ten years, the education cause in Western Regions always maintained a stable development trend. However, after the Cultural Revolution and 10 years of turmoil, the education level in Western Regions fell to a certain extent and it was not until the reform and opening up that the development of education in Western Regions showed a new change.

### 3. Changing: The integration of resources led by public schools

In 1978 when China entered the stage of rapid development of reform and opening up, Western Regions, however, due to the lack of overall planning for education, had uneven distribution of educational resources and low utilization rate. In addition, the overall planning of education became a new bottleneck in the development of teaching. In the late 1970s, Western Regions made unprecedented achievements in education, initially forming the prototype of an ethnic education system, ranging from preschool education, primary and secondary education, secondary professional education, higher education to adult education and cadre training. Since 1980, in order to meet the educational needs of Western Regions in the new era, China began to reform and develop local educational institutions in the trinity of “adding, merging and restructuring”, and expand the proportion of public educational institutions. Considering that basic education in primary schools had been basically popularized, China began to shift the focus of education in Western Regions from primary schools to middle schools and higher learning, and pay attention to the quality of educational institutions instead of blindly pursuing the number of educational institutions. All primary and secondary schools in cities and towns in Western Regions were exempted from tuition fees, the standard of financial aid for the people was raised, and the “three guarantees” (food, clothing and accommodation) for farmers and herdsmen and students in border counties were implemented. Besides, the development policy of “supporting the area outside the area” was formulated, that is, the education in the area mainly aimed to meet the local production and life, cultivating local talents and ethnic talents, and the education outside the area mainly served the function of cultivating other professionals, so as to facilitate the targeted goal in the early stage of education development and focus on upgrading.

### 4. Developing: Education priority development

Since the peaceful liberation of Western Regions to 1989 fruitful reform and opening up, Western Regions education course has experienced 30 years of development, initially forming a relatively solid

foundation of education, and its education contradiction has been from upgraded from “contradiction between the need for the popularization of education and the serious shortage of teaching resources” to “the contradiction between the knowledge and cultural demand and the backward education level”. In response, in 1989, China issued the *Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Further Governance, Rectification and Deepening Reform*, and put forward the basic strategic principle of “giving priority to the development of education”. Under the guidance of this strategy, the education cause in Western Regions entered a stage of rapid development. On the one hand, the enrollment management of school-age children was strengthened, and relevant laws and regulations were promulgated to prohibit school-age children from dropping out of school and becoming lamas or nuns. On the other hand, in order to deepen the level of education, an extensive literacy campaign was carried out in Western Regions during this period, the educational development policy of “3 pastoral areas, 6 rural areas and 9 urban areas” was fully implemented, and the popularization of basic culture was strengthened through social education and training and enrollment supervision of school-age children. Moreover, based on the gradually rich educational resources in Western Regions, the educational policy of the previous stage of “supporting the areas outside the area” in the previous stage was also changed to expand the secondary and higher education institutions in the region, and focus on the cultivation of high-end talents. By 2000, more than 20,000 primary school graduates, and nearly 10,000 students from universities, technical secondary schools and vocational schools had returned to Western Regions to devote themselves to the construction of their hometown in Western Regions, which greatly promoted the economic and cultural development of Western Regions.

##### 5. Galloping: Remarkable quality education effect

After entering the 21st century, China started to carry out quality education. Western Region has basically realized the comprehensive nine-year compulsory education, and has begun to pursue the training and development of higher talents. To better adapt to the national and even global talent trend, and meet the development needs of multi-industries in Western Regions under the market economy, it began to focus on social resources outside universities, emphasize the cultivation of diversified talents, and accelerate the circulation and transformation of educational resources within and outside the region. During this period, centering on the educational development policy of talent exchange and resource exchange, Western Regions universities began to exchange talents with mainland universities. Moreover, with the support of local governments, they established long-term and stable academic exchange relations with a number of mainland universities, which steadily improved the educational level of the universities. During this period, Western Regions education not only strengthened external exchanges, but also improved the characteristic process of local education in Western Regions, promoted the application of Western Regions cultural communication in education, and accelerated the cooperation between religious organizations and educational institutions, thus forming a characteristic Western Regions classes to meet the learning habits and local development needs of local students. With the spread of Western Regions culture in China and the multi-culture in China, under the influence of characteristic Western Regions

classes, students from the mainland have also begun to attend universities in Western Regions. According to statistics, by 2012, the number of students in institutions of higher learning in Western Regions had reached 33,452, more than the 4,021 before the 21st century (1999). During this period, Western Region's "Education priority" development policy "illiteracy removal" activity has reached its peak. After the Fourth Symposium on Work in Western Regions, Western Regions education has entered the stage of complete literacy, and the gross enrollment rate of high schools has improved across the board. Besides, in 2012, the goal of free education for 15 years has been achieved (i. e., free from kindergarten to high school), and the total number of students in primary and secondary schools (including technical secondary schools) has exceeded 490,000.

#### 6. Innovating: The competition of the education model

In 2012, the 18th Party of China was held, and the goal of education development at the present stage was positioned as: the level of education and the training of innovative talents have been significantly improved, the country has been among the ranks of talents and human resources, and the modernization of education has been basically realized. Against this background, Western Regions continued to deepen the two major education sectors of compulsory education and higher education. In the field of compulsory education, it continued to improve educational conditions and improve the educational environment, completing the reconstruction of school buildings, nutrition plan, teacher promotion and other work. In 2015, based on the practical problems encountered in the development of Education in Western Regions, the State Council issued the *Decision on Accelerating the Development of Ethnic Education*, which made the fairness of education a new goal of education development in Western Regions in the future. In terms of higher education, based on the gradually improved characteristic higher education system, Western Regions embarked on a new journey of "innovation and reform", centering on the two general directions of vocational education and higher education. During this period, vocational colleges and institutions of higher learning in Western Regions focused on school-enterprise cooperation and the combination of industry and education, and actively used social resources to enrich teaching methods and improve teaching quality. The education mode also developed from the traditional "classroom knowledge teaching" to the "social practical teaching". In the meantime, great importance was attached to the protection of Western Regions religious culture, and Buddhist education in Western Regions, as well as Tangka and other artistic characteristics were actively developed. In the "13th Five-Year Plan", it was proposed to explore new ways of Internet + education Western Regions, making the "Internet +" as the core of Western Regions education the hot spot of education development. A large number of Western Regions culture network platforms, all kinds of colleges and universities began to establish independent campus network platform, which complemented the traditional education, greatly driving the education level in Western Regions. So far, the level of Western Regions education has been with the pace of that of the mainland cities. Although there is a large gap between Western Regions and a second-tier city in quality of education, with the information education, university-enterprise cooperation, the introduction of local education concept, Western Regions has become the important fulcrum of our education course. It has

not only trained a large number of local builders in Western Regions, but also trained a number of outstanding talents for all parts of the country.

(ii) The characteristics of the education cause in Western Regions

1. Aiming at building a strong sense of national cultural community

Ethnic culture is the biggest difference in the social environment between Western Regions and other regions. In the long history of Western Regions, the Western Regions ethnic culture with religious characteristics has always led the development direction of Western Regions as the spiritual pillar of the Western Regions people. The core socialist values and the national culture of Western Regions have become the distinctive feature of the social development of Western Regions. This feature also extends to the development of education in Western Regions. In the 7 decades since the peaceful liberation of Western Regions, China, instead of regarding religious education as an obstacle or opposite of modern education, has actively strengthened the linkage between religious education and modern education through integration, cooperation and complementarity, and given full play to the complementary and assisting role of religious education in modern education. Meanwhile, it has supported the majority of the construction and development of educational institutions with Western Regions cultural characteristics, providing a free, open and democratic development platform for religious education, which not only respects and protects the ethnic culture of the people in Western Regions, but also provides an opportunity for strengthening the sense of ethnic cultural community and ensuring the stability of education in Western Regions.

2. Guided by the integration of Western Regions and the mainland

In recent years, China has continuously strengthened the integration of Western Regions and the mainland through education, and accelerated the interaction between educational resources and students by means of bilingual education, Western Regions classes in the mainland, and running schools in other places. Through the human communication carrier, the language and living habits of the mainland and Western Regions are constantly integrated. Meanwhile, it has provided a broader education platform for the Western Regions people living in different places, and met the needs of the Western Regions people to integrate into life in the mainland.

3. Support and penetration of external resources

Due to the many problems left over from history in Western Regions and its complex ethnic relations, the education cause in Western Regions has always lagged behind other regions in China, and the educational development has great resistance. In this regard, to meet the development needs of education in Western Regions, China has always taken the introduction of external resources as a key work in the development of education in Western Regions, and also as an important means to make up for the shortcomings of education in Western Regions. From “collaborative training of talents inside and outside the area” to “exchange and cooperation with mainland universities”, under the guidance of China’s targeted poverty alleviation policy, the development of educational institutions and talents across the country is reflected in the development of educational undertakings in Western Regions. This kind of

sharing weal and woe and caring for national unity has also become an inexhaustible driving force for the continuous breakthrough and leaping of education in Western Regions.

#### 4. Guidance and guarantee of education policy

Western Region has a vast territory and is located in the border areas of China. Its social stability is of great significance to the harmonious development of China while its complex religious relations and backward educational conditions make it a difficult area for the development of education in China. In this regard, in the 70 years since the peaceful liberation of Western Regions, China has always attached great importance to the educational cause in Western Regions, and promulgated a large number of relevant policies, laws and regulations. On the one hand, policies were made to guide the development direction of education in Western Regions, so that it could always keep in the right and scientific direction; on the other hand, the safe and stable development of education in Western Regions was ensured through policies, and other social factors affecting all kinds of education reform and construction measures were avoided. Therefore, the frequent education policies of governments at all levels are highly compatible with the development of education, which is also a major feature of the education cause in Western Regions.

## 2. The Role of Western Regions Education in the Development of Western Regions

### (i) Promote ethnic unity in Western Regions

Due to its special geographical location and historical origin, Western Region's characteristics of multi-ethnic coexistence have been deeply rooted here. In the long river of history, these nations have formed a very personalized diversified culture due to their unique way of life and cultural inheritance. Although these splendid and rich cultures have created immeasurable potential and countless possibilities for the development of Western Regions, they have also formed huge cultural barriers for ethnic unity in Western Regions.

Over the past 70 years since the peaceful liberation of Western Regions, education has developed steadily, and Meanwhile has fully respected and protected the unique religious culture of Western Regions. The organic integration of religious belief and science education makes the Western Regions people's religious concept more open. It has avoided the intensification of religious belief, actively examined the ethnic cultures of other ethnic groups from a modern perspective, eliminated the exclusion of different cultures by religions, and thus promoted the harmonious integration among multiple ethnic groups, and made a great contribution to the ethnic unity in Western Regions. With the continuous development of science education, the cooperation between religious organizations and modern teaching institutions is closer, and the ideological and political courses in the teaching institutions better combine the religious and cultural characteristics of Western Regions. It contributes to the integration of religious beliefs and the core socialist values, constantly find the common ground between them, and eliminate the estrangement between them. Furthermore, on the basis of guaranteeing the religious beliefs of the people in Western Regions, it also enables them to fully understand and implement the core socialist values,

enhance the spirit of patriotism, and further promote the unity of the ethnic groups in Western Regions. Therefore, through the development of education in Western Regions, the cultural barriers among the ethnic minorities in Western Regions have been basically eliminated, and a multi-ethnic cultural system with socialist core values as the central axis has gradually formed. Under the blessing of the cultural system, the whole Western Regions people's thoughts are deeply together, mutual humility, understanding, support, encourage cooperation has become a new development of Western Regions, the early Western Regions different religions, different ethnic independence exclusion phenomenon in sharp contrast, laid a solid foundation for the development of Western Regions.

(ii) Promote the development of local economy

In the new era, science and technology has become the first productive force, and the realization of scientific and technological development and scientific and technological innovation must be inseparable from the support of a large number of high-tech talents. However, when the overall economic conditions of Western Regions are relatively weak and the ethnic contradictions are relatively intensified, few talents are willing to devote themselves to the construction of Western Regions after graduation, even though some colleges and universities in Western Regions have realized the commissioned training of some students through educational exchanges. But in the end, many of these overseas students failed to return to Western Regions for development. In this regard, the local talent training in Western Regions has become a decisive factor in Western Region's economic development and construction.

Since the peaceful liberation of Western Regions, with the development of education, the local talent training ability in Western Regions has been gradually improved. More and more outstanding talents have devoted themselves to the economic construction of Western Regions with their rich scientific knowledge, enabling the Western Regions people to carry out production activities in a more scientific way. Meanwhile, the educational exchanges between Western Regions education and other regions have also introduced a large number of outstanding talents from outside Western Regions, with a rich talent structure in Western Regions, and brought more advanced production technology to Western Regions. The increasing number of talents also helps to promote the investment promotion and capital introduction in Western Regions. A large number of industries, such as Western Regions medicine, plateau characteristic biological industry, green food (drinks) industry, agricultural and livestock products processing industry, national handicrafts, mining and building materials industry, have risen rapidly, and obtained rich resources inside and outside the province, providing a solid foundation for the improvement of economy and life in Western Regions.

After the 18th Party of China, the children of the "education priority development" policy during the reform and opening up period have gradually grown up and began to pour into the society. A large number of local Western Regions youth who have gained good resources in the development of education have begun to devote themselves to the local economic construction in Western Regions. With the strong support of the state, by 2019, Western Region has basically eliminated absolute poverty, and the market economy has shown vigorous vitality. In 2016, Western Region's GDP increased by 10 times compared

with the beginning of the century to 115 billion yuan, and its per capita GDP also increased from 4,558 yuan in 2000 to 35,143 yuan. With the stimulation of education, the people's lives have been greatly improved.

(iii) Ensure social harmony in the border areas

Wilderness is an important factor causing social conflicts. Before the peaceful liberation, due to the backward development of education and the uneven distribution of educational resources, under the rule of religious politics, the knowledge level and ideological consciousness of all ethnic minorities were very limited. Social conflicts occurred frequently and could only be managed by coercive means. Even after the peaceful liberation, due to the timeliness of educational development, Western Regions failed to get rid of the chaotic social environment for a long time, and fights, wounding and even a large number of malignant group events happened frequently. Ethnic minorities in Western Regions, who lacked cultural cognition, could not understand and tolerate each other, and the majority of the people were also very resistant to the management of the local government.

From peaceful liberation to reform and opening up, and then to the 18th Party of China, Western Regions had popularized compulsory education and characterized higher education. The development of education in Western Regions had improved the cultural level of the Western Regions people and eliminated the “wilderness and ignorance” before the peaceful liberation. With the improvement of their comprehensive quality, the high-quality people in Western Regions have become more harmonious and friendly in their social life and work. Meanwhile, the improvement of the education level has also generally strengthened the legal awareness of the Western Regions people, strangled a large number of behaviors that hinder social stability and national unity in the bud, and eliminated the hidden dangers of social stability. On the other hand, the Western Regions people with high quality also derived a more positive and healthy public opinion atmosphere. The spread of positive energy has given the Western Regions people a more positive and optimistic attitude, weakened the contradictions between ethnic groups, alleviated the contradictions between the public and the local government, and provided a strong guarantee for the social harmony in Western Regions.

By 2019, the criminal crime rate in Western Regions has dropped to 0.31 percent, and it had risen from a city with really unstable social security in the early days of peaceful liberation to the city with the lowest crime rate in China. Meanwhile, communication among ethnic groups has generally improved, and intermarriage among Western Regions, Hui, Han, Uygur, Kazakh and other ethnic groups became more frequent and common. Different ethnic groups also began to break the original geographical way of living. With the development of urbanization, they began to live in the same community and jointly accept the management of the community and the local government, laying a solid foundation for national unity.

### **3. The Prospect of the Development Direction of Education in Western Regions**

With the advent of the Internet era, shared thinking has gradually become the mainstream thought of the

society, and integration, coordination, complementarity and sharing have become the theme of this era. In this context, to achieve a higher level of development, the education cause in Western Regions must be fully combined with the characteristics of The Times. It is necessary to actively absorb the advanced teaching experience at home and abroad, combine it with the local cultural characteristics, avoid copying and put an end to formal bringism.

(i) Use information education to promote the formation of national community consciousness

With the maturity of network technology and the popularization of mobile devices, the network and informatization of education have gradually become a mainstream education trend. Information technology is widely used in the reform of teaching means and teaching content and other fields, and is applied to compulsory education and higher education. In recent years, with the rise of a large number of online education platforms, students' learning space extends from teachers to the Internet, and their learning time also extends from school time to extracurricular time. It not only provides students with rich knowledge resources, but also enables students to better combine their own learning situation and lifestyle to carry out personalized learning. In this context, the development of education in Western Regions needs the strong support of information technology, and the construction of an information education system will become an indispensable part of the education cause in Western Regions in the future.

To strengthen the sense of national community needs to keep pace with The Times. In information age, it is necessary to make full use of the Internet platform, respect the era development trend, the Western Regions national culture, deepen the development of "Internet + education" thought, take information education as a bridge, connect the new era of mainstream ideas and national community consciousness, encourage all kinds of social organizations to participate in the education field, and embrace open mind to stimulate the diversification of education mode and platform, and transform from the "development education course" into "bigger and stronger education industry".

In this regard, the function of the online education platform in Western Regions should be gradually improved, and social organizations and public colleges should be encouraged to participate in the network of national community consciousness to realize the organic integration of scientific knowledge education and national community thinking and consciousness education, as well as the organic combination of online and offline.

(ii) Strengthen the linkage and integration between Western Regions and the mainland

Strengthen cooperation between Western Regions and the mainland, develop a two-platform teaching system with educational institutions in Western Regions as the core and educational institutions in the mainland as the wings, and form synergy in terms of curriculum content, teaching mode and organizational structure. On the basis of respecting the religious culture in Western Regions, it is necessary to guide modern education in the way of thinking of the people in Western Regions. On the basis of preserving the national culture, it is of necessity to try to guide Western Regions students to understand the study and life style in inland cities, gain the ability of mainland and life in terms of

language, thinking and behavior, and finally stimulate the positive role of education in national unity.

(iii) Expand educational resources

The richness and adequacy of educational resources determine the ability of educational development in Western Regions. In the past few decades, China has always been committed to the expansion of educational resources in Western Regions. However, it is difficult to meet the social requirements of education only by relying on the support of the government and other regional educational institutions. In this regard, we should make full use of social resources, expand the scope of education, and improve the educational ability.

First, it is needful to deepen the cooperation between schools and enterprises, integrate the integration of industry and education, drive education by industry and support industrial development through education, enrich the teaching resources of higher education and vocational education in Western Regions, fully connect them with the social industries, and create a good atmosphere for the cultivation of innovative and practical socialist talents in the new era.

Second, it is requisite to gradually explore the integration of Western Regions education with international education, and make use of the important opportunity of Belt and Road to strengthen exchanges and cooperation on educational resources in Western Regions and other countries. The past policy of “regional cooperation” in Western Regions should be developed into “domestic and foreign cooperation”.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The 70 years of peaceful liberation is an important milestone in the development of education in Western Regions and a sign of the improvement of the average level of the comprehensive literacy of the Western Regions people. Through 70 years of development, education in Western Regions has gradually caught up with the average level of education in China, fully realized the development goal of compulsory education, and also improved the quality of higher education. A large number of high-quality talents began to pour into the economic construction of Western Regions, which provided conditions for the harmony, stability and long-term peace and stability of Western Regions, and also made great contributions to national unity.

With the change of Western Regions society and the rapid improvement of China's comprehensive national strength, to realize the further improvement of education in Western Regions in the future, it is necessary to make concerted efforts and overall planning, and to continuously improve and perfect the education cause in Western Regions with scientific and sustainable development ideas. It is also of necessity to make Western Regions education a priority of Western Regions ethnic unity, and strengthen the support of the Western Regions people for the CPC and the People's Republic of China by improving the comprehensive quality of all ethnic groups in Western Regions.

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