

## Original Paper

# The Development Dilemma of Primary Education in Western Ethnic Areas—Based on the Perspective of the Postgraduate Teaching Group

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### **Abstract**

*Common prosperity is the essential requirement of socialism with Chinese characteristics and an important feature of Chinese modernization. Common prosperity is inseparable from the all-around development of people. Promoting the all-round development of people is inseparable from education. Education is an important starting point for realizing the common prosperity of the people. Education in western minority areas is important to achieve the strategic goal of common prosperity. Based on the practical experience of the volunteers of the postgraduate teaching group, this paper analyzes the national policy and probes into the dilemma of primary education in western ethnic areas. It puts forward countermeasures to improve China's education, help it build a strong country, and realize the common prosperity of all the people.*

### **Keywords**

*western ethnic areas, primary education, the postgraduate teaching group*

## **1. Introduction**

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China has outlined a beautiful vision for the people of the whole country to build a socialist modern power and comprehensively promote the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation with Chinese-style modernization. According to data from the seventh national census, ethnic minorities in China account for 8.89% of the country's total population, mainly distributed in the relatively poor western regions of China. Education is the foundation of the country and the lasting power to achieve common prosperity. As an important position to realize the

strategy of common prosperity, promoting the development of primary education in western ethnic areas has become a key task to achieve the goal of common prosperity, which is related to our country's sustainable development and the nation's future. Therefore, it is urgent to analyze the difficulties faced by primary education in western ethnic areas of China and put forward corresponding countermeasures, aiming to provide some reference for the coordinated and integrated development of education in the eastern and western regions and the improvement of the primary education level in western ethnic areas.

## **2. Analysis of the Present Situation of Primary Education in Western Ethnic Areas**

Most western ethnic areas are relatively remote, with limited economic development, and are prone to natural disasters such as sand and dust, earthquakes, droughts, and floods, which hinder the development and integration of primary education. Therefore, the primary problem of high-quality education development in western ethnic areas of China is to solve the current situation of unbalanced and uncoordinated development of primary education and ultimately achieve common prosperity (Su et al., 2024).

### *2.1 The Rapid Development of Primary Education Has Achieved Remarkable Results*

Under the gradual increase of investment in primary education in the country and ethnic areas, primary education in western ethnic areas has developed rapidly, primarily meeting the needs of students to go to school, effectively improving the quality of teaching, further improving the enrollment rate of primary education, and gradually expanding the ranks of full-time teachers. The national language education system in ethnic areas has gradually improved. However, due to the constraints of geography, history, natural endowments, and other aspects of ethnic areas, ethnic areas are still weak in economic and educational development, and there is still a big gap compared with the national and eastern regions.

### *2.2 The Allocation of Primary Education Resources Is Optimized, and the Supply of Education Needs to Be Increased*

The team of full-time teachers in western minority areas has been expanding, and primary and secondary schools have continuously optimized and adjusted their school layouts. However, due to the vast land and sparsely populated areas in western ethnic areas, the ethnic living is characterized by large mixed living and small settlement, "which leads to an increase in the radius of students' learning, a significant increase in the cost of learning, and an increase in the loss rate of students. The ratio of teachers and students in primary education in western ethnic areas is relatively low, the education supply is relatively insufficient, and the quality of education still needs improvement.

### 3. Analysis on the Development Dilemma of Primary Education in Western Ethnic Areas

#### 3.1 Poor Educational Environment

##### 3.1.1 Natural Environment

Western minority areas are rich in natural resources such as solar energy, wind energy, and underground minerals. However, most are plateaus, mountains, deserts, and Gobi. The geographical location is relatively remote, the land is sparsely populated, and the natural environment is poor. Therefore, the educational resources in western minority areas are insufficient, and the process of educational modernization is slow.

##### 3.1.2 Humanistic Environment

The culture, language, religion, and customs in western ethnic areas are relatively complex. When modern primary education is popularized, modern educational thoughts inevitably collide with traditional thoughts in western ethnic areas, and the integration and development of modern values are relatively slow.

#### 3.2 Educational Resources Are Relatively Scarce

##### 3.2.1 Faculty Strength Is Weak

Teachers are the soul of the school, and the level of teachers determines the quality of education. With the continuous improvement of the state's emphasis on education in ethnic areas, the investment in education is increasing. The education policy is constantly tilted, such as implementing policies such as the postgraduate teaching group and the ten thousand teachers' teaching plan, which introduces many educational talents for primary education in western ethnic areas (Wang et al., 2024). At the same time, vigorously develop western local education normal colleges and universities, cultivate local teachers, and constantly supplement primary education teachers in western ethnic areas. The level of education has been significantly improved. However, according to the data of China Statistical Yearbook 2023, in 2022, the ratio of students in ordinary high schools in Gansu Province to the number of faculty and staff is 8.25. The ratio of students in ordinary high schools in Xinjiang Province to the number of faculty and staff is 8.39, much higher than that of students in ordinary high schools in Beijing and the number of faculty and staff 2.89. Compared with the central and eastern regions, there is still a big gap in the development level of primary education in western ethnic areas (Ye et al., 2023). It is necessary to expand educational resources further and improve teaching ability.

The natural conditions in western ethnic areas are harsh, and the human environment is complex. As a result, the quality of teacher training in western ethnic areas is low, and the educational talents are limited by the local development situation, lacking sufficient opportunities to improve their educational ability, scientific research level and international vision (Zhang et al., 2023). In addition, the introduction of teachers is limited by language and customs, resulting in a physical or ideologically possible acclimatization phenomenon, and then with the local teachers, students, and parents teaching cooperation problems, teaching enthusiasm is reduced, and ultimately, the loss of educational talents.

### 3.2.2 Education Funding Is Relatively Inadequate

Under the tilt of national education resources, primary education facilities in western ethnic areas have greatly improved. However, there are still obvious areas for improvement compared with the central and eastern regions with higher levels of primary education development. For example, the old and damaged teaching places, the shortage of sports facilities, and the need for extracurricular reading materials. The reason is that the teaching conditions are backward, and the teachers' team needs to be stronger due to the lack of education funds (Woodcock et al., 2023). According to the data of China Statistical Yearbook 2023, the total investment in education in Gansu in 2022 is 84.98 billion yuan, the total investment in education in Xinjiang is 111.46 billion yuan, the total investment in education in Beijing is 153.26 billion yuan, and the total investment in education in Shanghai is 157.65 billion yuan. Compared with the advanced areas in the central and eastern regions, the investment in education funds in western ethnic areas is insufficient. Without sufficient financial support, the revitalization of primary education is harder to achieve.

### 3.2.3 The Concept of Education Is Relatively Backward

Due to the relatively remote geographical location of western ethnic areas, economic development is relatively slow, and infrastructure renewal is slow. There is still inert thinking in primary education in western ethnic areas. It is believed that the improvement of the insufficient and unbalanced development of primary education can only rely on the state's help and assistance while ignoring the main body's active role. In addition, ignoring the national characteristics of ethnic minority areas and applying them mechanically in policy implementation is inconsistent with the requirements of high-quality development advocated by the state, so it is difficult to achieve high-quality development of primary education in western ethnic minority areas. Due to the uneven quality of teachers, the training of teachers in primary education schools in some ethnic areas is insufficient, and there are problems such as insufficient training funds, unbalanced training content structure, and weak effectiveness of training content, which leads to the backwardness of teachers' teaching methods for students (Wu et al., 2023). Therefore, primary education in western ethnic areas needs to refer to more abundant educational resources, create more opportunities to exchange teaching experience with excellent peers, continuously improve the comprehensive education quality of teachers, timely change teaching thinking, improve teaching methods, improve teaching ability, integrate ideological and political elements, and cultivate high-quality talents in line with the needs of contemporary social and economic development.

## 3.3 *Inherent Influences and Emerging Problems*

### 3.3.1 The Influence of Inherent Ideas

Most western ethnic areas are relatively poor, and there is a phenomenon of intergenerational transmission of poverty. Influenced by the concept of negative poverty, there are "fatalism", "destiny view", useless theory of reading, and other viewpoints in western ethnic areas. Due to the limitation of geographical location, the educational income in western ethnic areas is lower, and it is difficult for

residents to change the educational concept ideologically. Students' willingness to receive education could be stronger. Parents also believe that it is the best choice for children to enter society as soon as possible, which will eventually form a vicious circle.

### 3.3.2 The Left-Behind Children Problem

Due to the remote geographical location and relatively backward economic development in western ethnic areas, many rural laborers go out to find jobs and work outside for a long time, and children become left children. Especially in western minority areas, the proportion of left-behind children in the primary education stage is higher. Due to the long-term lack of parental care and guidance, left-behind children are psychologically prone to poor academic performance, eccentric personalities, low self-esteem, and rebellion, and even bad behaviors such as theft, bullying, and fighting (Zhang, 2023).

## 4. Countermeasure Analysis of Improving the Development Level of Primary Education in Western Ethnic Areas

### 4.1 Strengthen Ideological Guidance and Pay Attention to Students' Development

For the students in the primary education stage in western ethnic areas, limited by the local or family economic level, compared with the students in the advanced areas of primary education in the middle and eastern regions, the opportunities for social education are less. Most parents in western ethnic areas are not well educated. The level is low, and the help for children in learning is limited. In this case, education from teachers is particularly important. According to the actual situation of the local area, the policy should be implemented to attract excellent educational talents to teach in primary education schools in western ethnic areas, and the teaching staff should be continuously expanded. Improve the student management system, accurately check students, establish student problem files, strengthen education security and care, give full play to the role of teacher education, and strengthen teacher care responsibilities. In the face of students' individualized needs, teachers respond positively to form a student care mechanism, help students establish a positive outlook on life and values, ensure the quality of primary education in western ethnic areas, form a virtuous circle, and help the early realization of the goal of common prosperity.

### 4.2 Increase Financial Investment, Expand Sources of Funding

Primary education in western minority areas needs to have a complete financial guarantee. On the one hand, sufficient funds promote the improvement of "soft power" in educational resources, such as improving teachers "wages and benefits, ensuring teachers" living needs, providing teachers with sufficient teaching skills training, developing characteristic courses, and promoting teaching reform. On the other hand, the funds promote the "hard power" of primary education. The teaching equipment and facilities are improved as much as possible so that the primary education stage of western ethnic areas can receive education in a comfortable environment and try to eliminate the imbalance of educational resources between regions. Increase investment in education funds, formulate corresponding management systems, and effectively ensure the implementation of financial allocations

to achieve long-term development of primary education in western ethnic areas.

#### *4.3 Introduce Foreign Aid Forces and Improve the Support Mechanism*

To promote the realization of the goal of common prosperity in education, it is also necessary to “get rich first” to drive “get rich later”. The state has introduced corresponding education assistance policies to introduce foreign aid forces for primary education in western ethnic areas to improve education development in western ethnic areas. We should coordinate the overall situation, implement the responsibilities of all parties, and form an efficient and reasonable assistance mechanism; we can select the areas with advanced education and the provinces and cities with better economic development to help western ethnic areas with the lack of primary education, and formulate effective assistance programs according to the situation of the two sides (Sang, 2023); in terms of the content of assistance, the assisting party can regularly send high-quality educational talents to western ethnic areas. The assisted party regularly sends personnel to the assisting party for learning and training, introduces advanced educational concepts and teaching methods for primary education in ethnic areas, and combines the characteristics of ethnic areas to realize the modernization of education (Ma, 2023). In addition, taking the opportunity of education development will help the development of various industries in western ethnic areas and promote the realization of the goal of common prosperity in many aspects.

#### *4.4 Based on National Culture, Develop Characteristic Education*

Under the background of accelerating the modernization of education, primary education in western ethnic areas needs to take advantage of its characteristics and take a characteristic development path to achieve high-quality development of primary education. Compared with the central and eastern regions, the primary education resources in western ethnic areas are insufficient. Therefore, primary education in western minority areas can make full use of the excellent national culture according to its unique natural conditions, build a “learning environment” and “living environment” with national characteristics, take quality education as the guidance, and develop multi-dimensional and innovative high-quality courses based on the traditional culture with national characteristics. For example, it develops courses with national characteristics, learns traditional culture with national characteristics, inherits national culture, and enhances the cultural self-confidence of ethnic minority students. With the help of a network media platform, it shows the characteristic culture of ethnic minorities, plays the leading role of education and culture, develops the characteristic education of ethnic schools, integrates ethnic culture into teaching, develops characteristic education, and promotes regional social and economic development (Song, 2024).

### **5. Complimentary Close**

Primary education in western ethnic areas is an important foundation for casting a strong sense of the Chinese nation community and a primary guarantee for a solid sense of the community. The high-quality development of the economy in western ethnic areas mainly depends on education in the

ethnic areas. In promoting economic growth in the ethnic areas, the function and role of primary education cannot be ignored. Primary education in western ethnic areas is important for accumulating human capital and promoting economic development. It is an inevitable requirement for the development of the new era to realize primary education and high-quality economic development in western ethnic areas. In recent years, primary education in western minority areas has developed rapidly. Great achievements have been made in the construction of teachers, ethnic education, and school conditions, and the quality of education has been greatly improved. However, there is still a gap between the quality of primary education in western ethnic areas and the developed areas in the central and eastern regions. Due to social and economic development limitations, western ethnic minority areas cannot copy the primary education model in the central and eastern regions. Under the background of modern education development, it is necessary to continue to strengthen the corresponding policy inclination, constantly explore the effective path of primary education development in western ethnic minority areas, promote education equity, and promote the high-quality development of primary education in western ethnic minority areas based on ethnic characteristics, to help achieve the goal of common prosperity.

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