



# Research on the Influence of Urban-rural Dual Structure on the Social Mobility Function of Rural Education — Based on the Empirical Investigation of the Loss of Rural Junior High School Students in S City, Hubei Province

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**Abstract:** Based on the empirical investigation of the loss of rural junior high school students in S City, Hubei Province, this article explores the weakening of the social mobility function of rural education under the dual structure of urban and rural areas, and points out the deep-seated reasons — the urban-centric orientation of the national education system under the dual urban-rural structure. At the same time, the article reveals the harm of the weakening of the social mobility function of rural education under the urban-rural dual structure.

**Keywords:** urban-rural dual structure, rural education, social mobility, drain, weakening

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In modern society, education, as an important social resource, is closely related to social mobility. School education, as a "screening device" in modern society, provides a ladder of fair competition for all classes, so that people can accept their positions and maintain the stability of social order accordingly. Because under China's dual social structure, urban and rural students enjoy unfair treatment at the starting point and process of education, the social mobility function of rural education is actually steadily weakening. In this paper, the current situation of the loss of rural junior high school students in S City, Hubei Province is investigated and discussed in depth by using the interview method and the questionnaire survey method.

## 1. The realization mechanism of rural student social mobility under the dual urban-rural structure

Generally speaking, there are three main factors that influence the results of education. The degree of personal effort is an internal factor, and the education system and family background are external factors. The following three factors analyze the possibility of rural students' social mobility through education.

First of all, in terms of personal effort. The examination selection mechanism is a relatively fair selection mechanism. Passing the examination can obtain a certain degree of opportunity for social improvement. Therefore, education has become the most advantageous way for rural students to change their destiny, and it is also a way for their personal efforts to be significantly manifested. According to the author's "Survey Report on the Study of Psychological Problems of Rural Students", 73% of the students have a clear learning purpose, that is, go to the city. In key high schools and universities, almost all the students who study hardest are rural students. The fundamental reason is that their personal effort is a factor that can be controlled by the individual. It can not only make up for the disadvantages caused by factors such as family background, social class, etc., but also enable them to obtain excellent results and then have better social positions.

Secondly, as far as the education system is concerned. After the reform and opening up, due to the implementation of the key school system in basic education, rural students are at a disadvantage in the competition of education selection, and economic factors have also become a restrictive factor for rural students to receive education. According to the author's "Survey Report on the Study of Psychological Problems of Rural Students", 26% of rural students think that their families cannot afford the high cost of studying in the future and give up their desire to take college entrance examinations; 52% of rural students think that the university does not include allotments and feel that the future is slim, thus aimlessly in learning. The survey shows that due to the reform of the higher education enrollment and distribution system, some rural students with both morality and talent feel confused and disappointed, and gradually lose their enthusiasm for learning.

Finally, in terms of family background. Family background mainly includes economic resources, social resources, cultural resources and political resources. It is undeniable that in terms of economic and social resources, the family background of rural students is definitely at a disadvantage. In terms of cultural resources, the lower education level of their parents determines that they have never been exposed to school education before. For rural students to achieve social

mobility through education, they often have to put in more effort and sweat than urban students of the same age in order to achieve social improvement.

## 2. The loss of rural junior high school students: a typical manifestation of the weakening of the social mobility function of rural education under the dual urban-rural structure

This study takes the loss of students from several junior high schools in rural S City, Hubei Province as an example, and investigates the weakening of the city's rural education social mobility function through a comprehensive use of interview methods and questionnaire survey methods. The research draws on the opinions of scholars at home and abroad, and created a three-dimensional system: the whereabouts of junior high school graduates; the educational needs of farmers, migrant workers, and students; and the reasons why rural students do not want to go to school. The questionnaire survey adopts the cluster stratified sampling method to select samples, and randomly selects a teaching class from four rural junior high schools in S city to conduct a questionnaire survey on parents and students. A total of 976 valid answers were received, accounting for 92.5% of the total number of questionnaires. The students who filled out the questionnaire included 306 males, 312 females, and 63 unfilled genders. The parents included 122 males, 142 females, and 31 unfilled genders. The age of the parents ranged from 29 to 50, most of them were rural households. Or migrant workers and farmers.

### 2.1 Overall dropout of rural junior high school students

Table 1. Several rural junior high school dropouts in S city surveyed in the past three years

	2006		2007		2008		Remarks
	Total number of training students	Percentage of current school students	Total number of training students	Percentage of current school students	Total number of training students	Percentage of current school students	
School A	38	5%	42	6%	53	8%	Excludes students who have basically completed three years of study but did not take the high school entrance examination
School B	34	4.87%	48	6.78%	61	10.02%	
School C	58	8.76%	57	8.98%	49	9%	
School D	24	6.32%	30	7%	34	9.89%	

From the statistics of the above four schools, it can be seen that although the absolute number of dropouts in each school has increased and decreased each year, from the perspective of relative proportions, the number of dropouts each year as a proportion of the total number of students in that year is on the rise. Some schools even exceeded 10%. The survey shows that the dropouts are mainly concentrated in the second grade of junior high school. This shows that at least in some rural areas, the phenomenon of junior high school dropouts is increasing. Rural compulsory education has not been fully implemented because of the increase in the state's investment in education.

### 2.2 The whereabouts of rural junior high school students after graduation

Table 2. Survey of whereabouts of graduates from several rural junior high schools in City S surveyed

	2005		2006		2007	
	Number of people	Percentage of total	Number of people	Percentage of total	Number of people	Percentage of total
Total number of graduates	597	100%	598	100%	608	100%
Proceed to a regular high school	145	24.20%	184	30.80%	202	33.20%
Promoted to high school	84	14.10%	82	13.70%	78	12.8%
Agricultural worker	287	48.10%	263	44%	256	42.10%
Unemployed or other occupations	81	13.60%	69	12.10%	72	11.80%

The results of the survey show that in the past three years, the number of rural junior high school graduates unable to continue their studies has always accounted for more than half of the total number of graduates. From 2005 to 2007, the total

number of senior high schools, vocational high schools, and technical secondary schools accounted for 38.3%, 44.5%, and 46% of graduates, respectively. Obviously, the enrollment rate has been increasing year by year, but it has not exceeded half. The proportion of junior high school graduates working in agriculture or going out to work in the past three years has been 48.1%, 44%, and 42.1%, respectively, plus the number of people engaged in other occupations. Obviously, rural junior high school The proportion of graduates directly employed is much higher than the proportion of those entering higher education. The vast majority of junior high school graduates who have completed nine years of compulsory education will become technical talents or directly become social workers, workers, and farmers by entering secondary school and vocational training personnel.

### 2.3 Educational needs of rural households, migrant workers, and rural junior high school students

**Table 3. Educational needs of farmers, migrant workers, and students**

	Purpose of study and employment ideal			Desire to offer vocational education courses
	Go to university	Proceed to technical secondary school or technical school to become a skilled worker	Become a technical farmer	
Farmers%	34	58	8	69
Migrant workers%	48	49	3	82
Students%	52	48	0	25

The survey results show that although it is a common desire of people to go to university, students and parents from rural families also realize that it is not easy to go to university, and also believe that even if they go to university, they may not be able to find a good job. Nearly half of the parents and students choose to work as skilled workers or farmers after completing junior high school, and hope that some vocational and technical education courses can be offered in the junior high school stage to prepare their children for future employment.

### 2.4 Reasons why rural students do not want to go to school

**Table 4. Investigation on the reasons why rural students do not want to go to school**

Reasons	Options		
	Yes (%)	Do not know (%)	No (%)
Financial difficulties at home	12.28	12.57	75.15
The learning content is boring and not interesting	55.69	12.57	31.74
Can't learn and can't keep up	57.18	15.87	26.95
The teacher does not teach well	16.64	33.23	50.3
The teacher is too harsh and punishes students physically	29.04	30.54	40.12
Insufficient school teaching equipment	52.4	23.95	23.65
School teaching methods are backward	56.29	10.48	33.23
School management is too strict	13.47	20.36	66.17
School living conditions are difficult	31.74	24.85	43.41
School life is monotonous and unattractive	54.49	13.17	32.24

When investigating the attrition situation around the students, we found that 85.33% of the students had students who lost halfway around, and only 7.78% of the students had no students who lost halfway around. Among the students participating in the survey, 67.36% of the students had "the idea of not wanting to go to school", and only 31.74% of the students "have never had the idea of not wanting to go to school". From Table 1-4, it can be seen that among the students surveyed, the main reasons for the idea of "do not want to go to school" are "the content of learning is boring and not interested", "cannot learn, can't keep up", "insufficient learning and teaching equipment", "School teaching methods are backward", "school life is monotonous and unattractive". When answering the open question "Where do you think the school can be improved" at the end of the questionnaire, nearly 65% of the students mentioned "improving school food"

and "improving school accommodation conditions". There is a shortage of education funds in rural primary and secondary schools, the level of education is low, and the learning conditions are poor. Rural primary school graduates have little knowledge and poor academic performance. Most of them have difficulty adapting to the systematic learning after middle school and have lost interest in learning. So many students feel that they "do nothing" or even feel "unhappy" in school, and they have thoughts of "do not want to go to school", which is worthy of our deep consideration.

### **3. The deep-seated reasons for the loss of rural junior high school students: the urban-centric orientation of the national education system under the dual urban-rural structure**

After the founding of New China, my country chose a unique economic development strategy and a supporting resource organization and management system, namely, by extracting agricultural surplus to obtain the primitive accumulation needed for industrialization. In order to further ensure the smooth progress of industrialization, the state has begun to introduce a series of policies and regulations at the social level, especially the "Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Household Registration" promulgated in January 1958, which divided citizens' household registration into agricultural and non-agricultural household registration. Confirmed the dual household registration management system. This system strictly restricts the conversion of rural population to non-agricultural population, thus confining farmers to the countryside, forming a dual social structure of urban-rural divide and rule. Today, this dual urban-rural system has played a decisive role in China's basic education and the distribution of educational resources. This is the root cause of the loss of rural junior high school students.

#### **3.1 "Urbanization" mode of rural education under the dual urban-rural structure**

In the current education policy formulation, due to the influence of the urban-rural dual structure and the catch-up modernization development path, my country's education is centered on the city, and the advantageous educational resources continue to be concentrated in the city. In addition, the policy makers come from the city, and the city has the absolute right to speak in the formulation of educational policies and the distribution of educational resources. Whether it is textbooks, teaching methods, or trained teachers, they are positioned in accordance with the urban development model.

In our country, both urban and rural education have the tendency of "single one", that is, the tendency of "preparatory education" or "exam-oriented education". According to the above survey, this tendency is obviously inconsistent with the teaching hopes of rural parents and students, and even more inconsistent with the actual whereabouts of rural junior high school students. The "urbanization" of the student training model has led to a lack of awareness of the rural education of both junior high school graduates and the diversion of junior high school students, and the lack of a sense of response to the needs of the construction of a new socialist countryside and the needs of farmers and their children for labor. Tired of school, drop out of school. This is mainly manifested in the following aspects.

First, the rural education goals are seriously misplaced, causing rural students to drop out of school due to "no hope for further studies". Due to the misplacement of rural education goals, rural students have to pass the level-by-level examination and finally become urban residents or leave the rural life as the ultimate goal and orientation of learning. Rural education simply becomes the education for further education. As a result, a very small number of winners of rural education were admitted to universities, while the vast majority of those who failed to "accompany" returned to the countryside with loss and frustration. Faced with this situation, more rural parents and students believe that since entering a higher school is an unattainable goal, instead of wasting time in school, it is better to leave school early and return to their own village or join a migrant worker team as soon as possible to make money to support their family.

Secondly, the content of rural education is divorced from the actual needs of rural areas, causing rural students to drop out of school due to "useless reading". The current curriculum setting in rural schools in my country ignores urban-rural differences and regional differences, and implements an exam-oriented education model that centers on subject knowledge and aims to advance to higher education. The curriculum standards and the knowledge content of the textbooks are all compiled for further studies. This has led to the fact that the content of school education has deviated from the actual needs of the countryside, and has neglected the basic knowledge and basic skills required for young people to enter the social production and life. Education can neither solve the problem of a child's way out, nor can it improve the child's knowledge and abilities. Instead of letting the children spend their youth in school, it is better to return to the village as soon as possible to work in farming or to work outside to earn money for the family.

Furthermore, the rural education requirements are not in line with the reality of rural students, causing rural students to drop out of school due to "learning difficulties". Because of ignoring the huge gap between rural teachers and school-running

conditions and cities, curriculum plans and curriculum content are basically established and formulated with reference to developed urban areas. This will inevitably lead to huge difficulties in the implementation of the curriculum in rural school teaching and the difficulty in achieving the curriculum goals. In addition, rural schools are forced to abandon the education and management of poorly-learned students because of the large class size and limited teachers' energy. This makes it more difficult for these students to study and eventually give up their studies.

### **3.2 The huge gap in investment in urban and rural education under the dual urban-rural structure**

Although the proportion of my country's fiscal education expenditure to GDP has increased in recent years, 4% is still lower than the level of 5% to 6% in developed countries in the world, and also lower than the average level of 4.4% in developing countries. In the case of insufficient total input, under the guidance of the value orientation and mode of thinking of urban centralism, most of the national education funds flowed to the cities. In 2004, from a national perspective, there was a significant gap in public expenditures between rural and urban primary and secondary school students. The ratio of urban and rural expenditures per student was 1.3:1 and 1.4:1, with the largest gap reaching 3:1, and even 113. The average budget for public expenditure for elementary schools in 8 counties (cities, districts) and junior high school students in 142 counties (cities, districts) is zero, of which more than 85% are concentrated in the vast rural areas of the central and western regions. In 2007, the average budgeted public expenditure for ordinary primary school students nationwide was 425.00 yuan. Among them, the rural public expenditure per student was 403.76 yuan. Although it was an increase of 62.64% over the previous year's 248.53 yuan, it was still lower than the national average and far lower than the urban public expenditure.

These conditions have directly led to insufficient investment in rural education funds, and the conditions for running schools in rural areas are generally poor. Coupled with the "county-based" management system, the weakening of the education development awareness of the township government, the implementation of the new educational funding guarantee mechanism, and the shortage of school funding after the reform, especially the heavy debts left during the "Nine-Effective" period. As rural education fails to develop healthily, the dropout rate naturally remains high.

Taking the rural junior high school in S city surveyed by the author as an example, the insufficient investment in education funds is mainly manifested in the following aspects.

First of all, the school building teaching equipment is outdated and aging, and is seriously lacking, which cannot meet the normal teaching needs. According to the 2007 census conducted by the Education Bureau of S City on the city's rural school equipment, living rooms, and teaching equipment rooms, the city's school living rooms are very tight, with serious shortages of equipped rooms and functional rooms, and serious mixed use; Equipment rooms such as laboratories and instrument rooms are accounted for in accordance with provincial standards; there is a serious shortage of instruments in primary and secondary schools, and many experiments cannot be carried out; and there is a shortage of microcomputers for teaching.

Secondly, the "General Nine" is heavily indebted, and special funds for education have not been implemented. In 2006, the "General Nine" debt of City S was 19.7 million yuan. Especially after the implementation of the new mechanism, some schools have no source of funds to repay their debts, and some high-interest loans are simply unable to repay. At the same time, special education funds, such as teacher training funds, vocational education funds, adult education funds, education teaching and research funds, and education supervision funds, which should be included in the financial special according to the policy, have not been put in place. There is a shortage of education funds in rural schools, low levels of education, and poor learning conditions. Students naturally lose interest in learning.

### **3.3 The low level of rural education teachers under the dual urban-rural structure**

Among the many factors that affect the development of education, teachers are at the core. The professional quality of the teacher directly affects the knowledge structure of the students; the attitude of the teacher's words and deeds directly affects the behavior of the students; the values of the teacher directly affect the students' outlook on life. However, under the dual structure of urban and rural areas in my country, teachers with unqualified academic qualifications are mainly concentrated in rural areas, and teachers whose salaries are owed are also mainly concentrated in rural areas.

If the quality of teachers cannot be guaranteed, it is naturally difficult to improve the quality of teaching. Even in these poverty-stricken areas, corporal punishment of students is almost an open secret due to the entrance rate, the pressure of the college entrance examination and the low quality of individual teachers. And their parents, because of their low educational level, naturally do not question the teacher's education methods. Under such conditions, the dropout rate of students has naturally increased greatly.

Taking the S rural junior high school surveyed by the author as an example, the low level of teachers in rural education is mainly manifested in the following aspects: First, the number of teachers is insufficient and the structure is unreasonable.



According to provincial standards, in 2006, the primary school staff in S City were basically saturated, and there were 476 junior high school teachers lacking, and the natural attrition of teachers could not be supplemented normally. As far as the subject structure is concerned, there are not enough teachers in music, physical education, beauty, English, history, biology, geography, and information technology. The proportion of teachers in junior high schools and elementary schools is only about 30%. Second, the overall quality of teachers is poor. In 2007, there were more than 1,000 substitute teachers in S City. They are mainly concentrated in rural primary and secondary schools, with a low starting point of education and a low degree of specialization, making it difficult to adapt to the teaching needs of the new curriculum.

### **3.4 Changes in farmers' values under the dual structure of urban and rural areas**

Under the effect of the dual structure of urban and rural areas, as opportunities for migrant workers increase, farmers have become more aware of the meaning and value of money to them. With the prevalence of migrant workers in rural areas, the concepts and attitudes of rural junior high school students have also changed. At the same time, the city has also become a place where young and junior high school students yearn and pursue. Parents of students also firmly believe in the way of part-time work, and hope that their children will take the same path in the future. In the survey, we found that many peasant parents believe that offering their children to school does not necessarily mean that they can be admitted to college; if they fail to enter the university, it is better to let their children work early to earn money. Regardless of whether they are farming or working outside, children who go to school do not necessarily have much advantage over those who do not go to school or who go to school less. Even if you are admitted to the university, several years of university tuition is a heavy burden.

## **4. Harm of the weakening of rural educational social mobility under the dual urban-rural structure**

Education, as the main driving mechanism for the realization of social mobility in contemporary society, is a ladder for farmers to change the status of the bottom and lead to higher social strata. However, with the weakening of the social mobility function of rural education, rural parents and students gradually have a crisis of trust in the educational mechanism. The harm caused by this crisis of trust is huge, whether it is to the students themselves or to the society.

First of all, the educational function of the school has been completely damaged in the rural areas, which will eventually lead to a decline in the education level and cultural quality of the entire society. Compared with urban students, the social stratification function of school education is more important to rural students. This is due to the large investment in education costs of rural students, and rural students lack social capital. If school education cannot meet their needs for status promotion and improvement of their living conditions, they will withdraw from school education, leading to the loss of other educational functions of the school (such as educating people and individual socialization functions), resulting in the loss of school education functions in rural areas. The overall damage.

Second, a large number of rural teenagers leave school prematurely and enter the labor market. In recent years, due to the lack of awareness of engaging in business and other activities, even though they have been away for many years, they are still peasant workers. They are engaged in manual labor in the city and cannot get rid of their original peasant status. Dropping out of junior high school is more and more inclined to create the same social status as their parents in the future for rural teenagers. In the end, when they are unable to obtain opportunities for upward social mobility in education, they will face a more marginalized and fixed social status.

Furthermore, it has contributed to the propaganda of public opinion that "reading is useless". This kind of public opinion has further weakened the importance that rural parents attach to education, leaving rural students lacking motivation and enthusiasm for learning. Thus, a vicious circle is formed, and the peasants' social status is fixed. From the perspective of rural education, this kind of school education, which originally entrusts the hope of rural students' advancement, hinders the promotion of rural students' social status, and has become a negative potential function; for society, school education leads to the production of rural society. The theory that reading is useless is an unintended consequence, and the influx of rural people with low educational qualifications into cities for manual labor also has a weakening effect on the adjustment of the social system.

## **5. Conclusion**

As long as the urban-rural dual structure is not fundamentally reformed, the balanced development of urban and rural areas cannot be achieved, which will eventually restrict the balanced development of urban and rural education. Inequity in education will further affect and deepen the characteristics of the dual economic structure, increase the gap between the rich and the poor among members of society, and hinder the healthy flow of all classes of society. Educational policy reform

alone cannot truly achieve educational fairness and benign social mobility. Only through the integration of urban and rural areas can the urban-rural dual structure system be gradually broken to achieve balanced economic development, and at the same time, the government's redistribution function can be used to ensure the priority development of rural education from the education system and rural students' access to educational opportunities and the allocation of educational resources. Only when the situation is improved can the benign development of rural education and the beautiful vision of rural students realizing social mobility through school education be realized.

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