

Study on the Difference between Urban and Rural Education in Yuyao

-- Take Two Local Schools as Examples

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Abstract: As an essential foundation of social equity, educational equity has increasingly become a concern for the people. To make education more accessible to the people based on the current state of educational development in China, it is necessary to address the difference between urban-rural educational disparities. Yuyao located in the southeastern coastal region of China, exhibits disparities in education between urban and rural areas, manifested as imbalances in the educational process influenced by non-fundamental educational resources. This paper conducts a study on an urban school and a rural school in Yuyao through interview surveys, analyzing the differences in hardware conditions and soft power between the two schools, and proposing suggestions for the future development of rural schools based on actual conditions.

Keywords: Urban-rural Education; Educational Disparities; School Education.

1. Introduction

The importance attached by the people to the quality of education has been steadily growing. However, China still faces challenges in equalizing educational resources. Taking Yuyao as an example, in 2022, Yuyao adhering to the "Guiding Opinions of the Department of Education of Zhejiang and Other Three Departments on the Construction of Urban-Rural Compulsory Education Communities in the New Era" and the "Implementation Opinions of the Yuyao Education Bureau on Further Strengthening the Construction of Urban-Rural Education Communities in the New Era", combined with its local realities, deeply promoted the construction of education communities in the compulsory education stage. Wang Xiangdong (2023) cited the pioneering practice of the integrated education community in Kecheng, Quzhou, which has achieved the result of the return of rural students. Ruian has set a precedent in the province for entrusting high-quality private schools to manage small-scale rural schools, resulting in a phenomenon of "counter-urbanization" where seats are in high demand. These measures have not only promoted the growth of the number of students in rural schools, but also effectively integrated the resources of teachers in both urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, implementing educational communities has also encountered issues. For example, the top-level design is not comprehensive enough, and the effectiveness of "synchronous classrooms" needs to be improved. This article takes constructing an "educational community" as the starting point, using interview methods, literature analysis methods, and comparative research methods to clarify the current development status between urban and rural education in Yuyao, delve into the underlying reasons, and propose effective solutions.

2. Research Status

Since the reform and opening-up, China has focused on education and actively formulated strategies to narrow the gap between urban and rural education. Currently, research on

urban-rural educational disparities in China mainly focuses on the following three aspects: 1) Manifestations of the difference between urban and rural education; 2) Causes of the difference between urban and rural education; 3) Measures to reduce the difference between urban and rural education.

Firstly, in terms of the manifestations of the difference between urban and rural education, researches focus on educational funding, school conditions, and teacher resources. Feng Rong (2015) analyzed the impact of educational funding on urban and rural education in Yuncheng, from both the national and family levels, concluding that per capita budgetary expenditure for education and per capita budgetary expenditure for public funds in Yuncheng's education are higher in urban areas than in rural areas, leading to a significant difference in the quality of education between urban and rural schools [1]. Cui Xueru et al. (2022) found through comparisons of teaching facilities in urban and rural schools that urban primary schools are equipped with relatively complete facilities, while rural primary schools are in a tight state of "one room for multiple uses" and "one field for multiple uses", limiting the scope and flexibility of student activities [2]. Cui Xiaona (2013) discovered imbalances in teacher age structure, academic qualifications, professional titles, and compensation in Hebei. Rural teachers generally have lower academic qualifications, lower professional titles, unreasonable age structures, and low compensation, resulting in a serious loss of rural teachers [3].

Secondly, regarding the causes of the difference between urban-rural educational disparities, researchers have concluded that imbalances in urban-rural economic development, imbalances in government financial investment, imbalances in teacher and student resources, as well as parents' educational levels and cognitive abilities [4] are the reasons behind these disparities.

Lastly, regarding strategies to reduce the difference between urban-rural education, Kang Jie (2008) advocated for deepening the household registration system to mitigate issues of unequal educational treatment. Additionally, increasing economic development and educational

investment are crucial measures to improve the construction of rural teacher teams [5]. Bai Qiaowen (2022) believes that rural schools urgently need to innovate management models, adopt a people-oriented approach to stimulate teachers' enthusiasm, and ensure the sustainable development of rural education. In today's highly technological era, education can achieve better outcomes with the help of science and technology [6]. Fu Nina (2012) proposed a collaborative learning model for urban and rural teachers, utilizing the internet to facilitate interaction and collaboration between teachers from both areas, enabling students from both urban and rural areas to share the same class and building an "educational community" [7]. Wang Xiangdong et al. (2023) mentioned in their research that modern education relies on the internet to achieve joint management, collaborative teaching research, resource sharing, information exchange, and teacher-student interaction between urban and rural schools in Zhejiang, effectively reducing the difference between urban-rural education [8].

In summary, scholars have described and analyzed the difference between urban-rural education from various angles, including politics, economics, and culture, but mostly focused on specific regions and used factors such as educational funding, school conditions, and teacher qualifications (hardware conditions) as their research parameters, with a lack of exploration into the schools' soft power. Therefore, this paper introduces the factor of school management services, and from a micro perspective, uses interview methods to conduct an in-depth examination of School A in the urban area and School B in the rural area of Yuyao City, analyzing the differences in hardware conditions and inherent soft power between the two schools and exploring the reasons behind them.

3. Research on the Education Difference Between Urban and Rural Schools in Yuyao

3.1. Basic Introduction of the Two Schools

School A is located in the central urban area, mainly students in the central urban area, known as Zhejiang civilized campus, provincial demonstration middle school, and provincial modern education technology experimental school. School B is located in a rural area, near mountains and rivers, close to railways and several roads. The students are concentrated in the township area, and it is honored as Yuyao Advanced School, Ningbo Advanced Moral Education Collective, and Ningbo's First Batch of Behavior Code Demonstration Schools.

3.2. Hardware Facilities of the Two Schools

All classrooms in the two schools are equipped with smart screens and eye-care lights. In terms of hardware facilities, School A boasts a larger number of facilities that are also more comprehensive. As for the utilization of hardware, all equipment in School A remains accessible until 10 pm, while sports venues in School B are open at any time, and libraries and laboratories are open to teachers and students during working hours. It can be seen that students in School A enjoy greater flexibility in using activity venues, with a higher frequency of using venues and specialized function classrooms.

Table 1. Hardware Facilities of the Two Schools

	School A	School B
Campus area (m ²)	28000	35310
Number of students enrolled	1828	950
Number of classrooms	40	24
Class size	45	39
Number of venues	3	4
The number of multifunctional classrooms	4	13
Characteristic hardware equipment	Micro classroom, Lecture hall, News studio	STEM classroom, Auditorium

3.3. Construction of Teaching Staff of the Two Schools

(1) Basic Situation of Teachers in the Two Schools

Table 2. Basic Situation of Teachers in the Two Schools

	School A	School B
Total teacher population	147	157
College degree	0	4
Bachelor degree	144	151
Master degree	3	2
Teacher age	24-59 years old	35-45 years old
The average length of teaching	28	15
Teacher title	There are 79 senior professional titles and 58 intermediate professional titles	There are 18 senior professional titles and 32 intermediate professional titles
Teachers' awards	There are 45 backbone teachers, 72 emerging teachers, and 59 outstanding teachers.	There are 4 backbone teachers, 19 emerging teachers, and 36 outstanding teachers.

As shown in the table above, all teachers in School A hold a bachelor degree or above and possess professional titles, with an average teaching experience of 28 years. This indicates that School A places greater emphasis on the accumulation of teacher qualifications and teaching experience, with the primary goal of maintaining high teaching quality consistently. In contrast, School B's teachers have college degrees, and the number of teachers holding professional titles and winning awards is significantly lower than that of School A. This reveals a substantial gap in the teaching strength between School B and School A. However, at the same time, School B boasts more new blood, which can bring more vitality to education in rural schools.

(2) Training of Teachers' Professional Ability

For the cultivation of teachers' professional ability, the two schools have adopted various new forms in addition to the traditional ways of sharing experience and carrying out open classes and course competitions. In the form of "online + offline", School A has arranged online training, 90-hour training and professional outing training for teachers to improve their disciplinary professional ability, covering the improvement of quality under concept teaching, teaching design and implementation research, classroom teaching design and classroom practice ability cultivation and

improvement. In addition, School A has conducted teaching exchanges and assistance with a rural school. Teachers from both schools have communicated through the "Internet + Compulsory Education" model, breaking through the limitations of time, space, environment and other factors, enabling teachers and students from the two schools to conduct in-depth discussions and make progress together, thus achieving higher teaching goals. In the training, the school takes the initiative to design the guidance content and related matters and updates the training content once every semester. The training of B school mainly relies on provincial and urban teacher training activities, carries out 90 hours of teacher training, and updates the training content once every semester. At the same time, the city's famous teachers' rural studios enter the school for teaching guidance, and the provincial education Department's "sending teachers to the countryside" activity provides more teaching channels for the school. As it relies on the training support of the province and the city, the autonomy, flexibility and diversification of training in School B is weaker than that in School A.

(3) Cultivation of Teachers' Scientific Research Capabilities

Both schools have seen extensive participation from teachers in cultivating their scientific research capabilities. In School A, 147 teachers are involved in scientific research, engaging in over 70 research projects. The school provides assistance to teachers in scientific research by offering venues, and training content, inviting expert teachers, and organizing training activities. In School B, 157 teachers are involved in research projects, engaging in over 50 research projects. The school supports the conduct of research activities by providing resources such as venues, laboratories, teachers and students. Additionally, the school rewards teachers who win awards through performance-based pay.

(4) Cultivation of Teachers' Ethics

In terms of enhancing teachers' professional ethics, both schools have organized relevant lectures and leveraged online platforms for smart education. School A conducts 7 training sessions on teacher ethics and conduct every semester, including diverse and unique training initiatives initiated by the school, such as flower arranging and tea ceremony training. Additionally, there are comprehensive training programs for all teachers during the summer vacation, including 32 hours of training on professional ethics and regulations, comprehensive quality improvement training for "contract-based" teachers in the compulsory education segment in Yuyao, psychological training, and 24-hour research training. School B incorporates teacher ethics training into its bi-weekly teacher meetings. The content of the 2023 summer teacher ethics training focused on issues such as teachers engaging in paid tutoring, corporal punishment of students, and drunk driving. The training content is updated every semester. Overall, School A offers more frequent and diversified training, while School B's training tends to be more fixed and less targeted.

From the perspective of the interviewed teachers, both schools' teachers hold a positive attitude towards participating in various training programs. Teachers from School A expressed the need for more teaching and research activities related to frontline teachers based on the school's current development, which they believe would greatly benefit the improvement of teachers' teaching quality and efficiency. Teachers from School B proposed a new teaching model: "Simulated Classroom", where teachers deliver a micro-

lecture online within a short period, suggesting that more simulated classrooms be introduced and their content expanded to enable students to learn more through them during their free time. Teachers from the two schools have slightly different focuses in terms of professional development. Teachers from School A prioritize research activities for frontline teachers, while teachers from School B pay more attention to teaching abilities and innovative teaching methods.

3.4. Construction of Spiritual Civilization in Two Schools

(1) Campus Landscape Development

Both Schools have beautiful campus environments. School A, located in an urban area, has a relatively small footprint, making its greenery and architectural designs of teaching buildings more exquisite. Within the school, there stands a garden featuring various famous trees and flowers, accompanied by detailed introductions for students to admire and learn about. Apart from posters displayed in the civilized publicity columns, many statues of renowned educators are placed along the main roads on campus, embodying the school's educational philosophy of "teaching and learning benefiting each other, and pursuing all-round development". School B, with a larger area and situated near the foot of a mountain, enjoys excellent air quality within its campus. As a green school in Ningbo, School B boasts excellent landscaping arrangements, reflecting its educational philosophy of "laying a solid foundation for students' lifelong development". The campus is adorned with a Nine-Flower Osmanthus Garden and a Hundred-Fruit Orchard, both of which are open for students to visit and learn. Teachers from the Youth League Committee conduct extracurricular service expansion activities, school clubs, and labor classes in the orchard, such as observing flowers and fruits, fertilizing, and identifying plants. Through these activities, students gain insights into botany and farming, experience agricultural production, and explore the mysteries of biology.

(2) Development of Campus Cultural Activities

The two schools have launched special moral education micro-courses. School A offers about 20 minutes of moral education courses every day, in the form of celebrity lectures, micro-film appreciation, singing teaching, and live TV broadcasts. Students serve as hosts, enhancing their work experience and artistic professionalism. B school also offers a variety of special micro-classes, but the teachers are responsible for the whole micro-class.

The two schools conduct discipline competitions in Chinese, mathematics, science, English, and sociology every semester, and hold an art festival, sports festival, singing and dancing competition and artistic performance every academic year. To encourage hands-on creation, School A hosts an annual technology production competition for unique campus projects. Teachers oversee the organization and review of the literary and artistic performances, but students are encouraged to actively participate by submitting programs and organizing rehearsals, taking charge of various event matters. School B conducts specialized subject competitions like history and current affairs quizzes, as well as English and Chinese reading and writing contests. In sports and arts, it organizes gymnastics and basketball matches, with the student union responsible for designing event rules and organizing activities for the artistic performance.

Regarding after-school activities, both schools offer two

hours of after-school services for homework assistance. School B has also set up two mutual learning societies to encourage students to supervise and improve each other. School A focuses more on cultivating students' extracurricular interests in terms of clubs. The school has a total of 22 clubs, such as the aircraft model club, ship model club, and car model creation club. It also has 4 full-time teachers who provide professional guidance.

In terms of study tours, School A offers a rich variety of formats. Additionally, it invites "mobile museums" to the campus to educate students about history and disseminate local ancient site culture. The school actively participates in local cultural events, fostering students' cultural confidence and emphasizing the inheritance of traditional culture. For international study tours, it has invited friendship schools from the US, New Zealand, and others for a week-long exchange, during which schools collaborate on classes, and clubs organize unique cultural activities like calligraphy workshops and Chinese cuisine classes, contributing to a more international atmosphere. School B adopts traditional study tour methods with fewer activities. Domestic study tours include summer camps and visits to patriotic education bases. The teacher-student interaction is relatively simple and standardized.

(3) Home-School Communication

Both schools attach great importance to home-school communication. School A provides various channels for parents, including telephone interviews, home visits, parent-teacher meetings, and anytime campus visits and class observations, achieving more effective communication with parents. School B holds parent-teacher meetings and invites representatives from the Parent Committee to discuss ways to improve teaching quality and strengthen home-school ties. School B is a rural school, parents often have limited access to information resources and may not consider their children's future development in detail. Therefore, teachers provide information on further education and career planning to assist parents in making plans for their children.

Addressing the increasing attention to students' psychological issues between home and school in recent years, School A has introduced full-time mental health educators, established a psychological counseling station open to all teachers and students, and conducts individual and group counseling, student psychological assessments, and psychological research. Furthermore, the school organizes a Mental Health Week, encouraging students to actively participate in educational activities such as psychological essay writing, painting, and debate competitions to enhance their awareness of mental health and strengthen self-regulation abilities. School B arranges expert lectures for parents of new seventh-grade students during the summer vacation, providing guidance on family education. It also collaborates with the city's psychological guidance center and the Third Hospital to arrange psychological teachers for consultations, catering to the needs of the community and parents. In terms of psychological counseling, School A can receive consultations at any time during office hours, with a more comprehensive and professional mental health education process.

(4) Usage of Online Media and Automated Office

School A has a website, Weibo account, and official WeChat account, which publishes campus news, major policies, weekly menus, honors of teachers and students, etc. The update frequency is twice a week, realizing information

transparency. School B currently has no channel for information disclosure, which may affect its popularity and openness.

In terms of smart campus construction, both schools have achieved full network coverage and are equipped with multimedia classrooms and smart screens, enabling teaching to be conducted in conjunction with the "Internet+" model. They can also connect with teachers and students from other schools to share the same class online. Additionally, School A has established tablet computer classrooms where students attend classes and complete coursework through tablet computers. Teachers can directly grade assignments and provide feedback on the online platform. During holidays, teachers can conduct classes through tablets and monitor students' learning progress in real time, significantly enhancing classroom participation and student concentration. School B does not currently use tablets collectively in classes. This disparity is largely related to the economic strength of urban and rural areas, parental attitudes, and family support.

Overall, the level of smartness in these two schools still lags behind that of middle schools in first-tier cities, particularly in areas such as the development of WeChat mini-programs, informationization of archives, campus one-card systems, campus logistical support, and the establishment of intelligent security systems.

4. Conclusion

Through the aforementioned interview survey and result analysis, the author has found that the issue of balanced education development in Yuyao City manifests as an imbalance in the educational process influenced by non-basic educational resources. While the government has invested significant support in both urban and rural educational infrastructure, disparities in software development between urban and rural schools have emerged. Furthermore, urban schools have officially integrated the "Internet+" model into teaching, striving to create "smart campuses". This not only enables remote teaching and shared classes with teachers and students from other schools but also introduces specialized "pad classes", where teachers and students can submit and grade assignments through online platforms, significantly improving teaching output and feedback efficiency. In terms of information exchange with the outside world, urban schools have established official WeChat accounts and Weibo pages, updating campus news, teachers' awards, weekly menus, and more on a weekly basis, providing a shortcut for outsiders to understand the actual situation of the schools. In contrast, rural schools have invested less in information-based teaching and social media accounts, leading to a more monotonous teaching model and relatively closed-off information flow, which hinders the full display of their strengths. In terms of faculty, rural schools lack high-quality teacher teams, and their teacher professional development relies heavily on provincial and municipal training support, with limited autonomy, flexibility, and diversity in training programs.

To sum up, the government should pay attention to the teaching needs of township schools, not only increase the financial allocation, but also pay attention to the training of rural teachers and improve their salaries. Secondly, administrators of rural schools should attach importance to the construction of information technology and intelligence in schools, strengthen the communication between schools and parents, and the society, rely on the advantages of rural

schools, advocate personalized and characteristic schools, and improve the comprehensive strength of rural schools.

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