
Improving Minority Compulsory Education in Yunnan, China: Challenges and Policies

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Outline of Presentation

- (I) Background
- (II) Key Questions
- (III) Method & Data Sources
- (IV) Major Challenges in Minority Education at the Compulsory Level
- (V) Policy Goals, Strategies and Interventions
- (VI) Looking Ahead

Forthcoming in Tsang, M. et. al. (2007). Studies on the Financial Reform of Compulsory Education in China. Beijing, China: Education Science Press.

Publication A-11, www.tc.edu/centers/coce

Map of China with Yunnan Province Highlighted



(I) Background: Yunnan

- 43 million people
- Frontier (stability)
- Mountainous (94%)
- Minorities (14 million, 25 minorities with over 5,000 people)
- Multiple spoken and written languages
- Among the least developed provinces in China (2003-04)
 - Per-capita rural income: 1,697 Yuan (64% of national average)
 - Per-capita income: 7,643 Yuan (90% of national average)
 - No. of post-secondary students: 80 per 10,000 people (56% of national average)
- Economy
 - Tobacco
 - Tourism & Cultural Services
 - Hydropower
 - Biological resources
- History of Educational Development (see paper on CoCE website)

(II) Key Research Questions

- Concepts: Minority population, Minority Areas, Minority Education, Minority Compulsory Education
- Importance of minority education in achieving quality compulsory education in Yunnan
- What are the key challenges confronting the development of minority compulsory education today?
- What policies may contribute to the improvement of minority compulsory education?

(III) Methods and Data Sources

- Literature review
- School and community visits
- Discussion with policymakers
- Experience from education development projects
- Government policy papers

(IV) Major Challenges in Minority Compulsory Education

- (IV.a) Expanding education opportunities for minority children
- Significantly lower enrollment ratios
- Inadequate funding
- Higher dropout rates
- Cultural & religious impacts

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- (IV.b) Raising the quality of compulsory education for minority children
 - Significant lower learning outcome
 - Inadequate resources & poor school facilities
 - Lower teacher quality
 - Inadequate bilingual instruction, curriculum, & textbooks

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- (IV.c) Improving efficiency in minority compulsory education
 - Significant dropout rates in certain minority counties (Deqin, Lu Jiang)
 - High unit cost in teaching points and low quality
 - Outdated teaching technology

(V) Policy Goals, Strategies, and Interventions

(V.1) Factors constraining the development of minority (compulsory) education in Yunnan

- Weak economic & cultural foundations, highly uneven development
- Weak education foundation, rapid expansion with limited resources
- Dispersion of minority populations, in rural/mountainous/border areas
- Large varieties of languages & ethnic groups
- Impact of religious and diverse cultures

(V.2) Factors influencing minority education policies in Yunnan: Policy-making Contexts

- Macro-economic and social policies of the country (rapid growth vs. balanced growth, growth vs. social inequality, etc.)
- Central policies (fiscal and education) towards poor, rural, and minority areas
- Yunnan provincial socio-economic policies
- Yunnan response to central policies

(V.3) Policy Goals, Strategies, and Interventions (1)

| Goals | Strategies | Interventions |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Increase coverage | Expanding supply | Rational distribution of schools; boarding schools; remove dilapidated buildings; strengthen education technology; significant increase in government resources; guaranteeing funding for poor areas |
| | Strengthening household demand | Establishing & improving financial aid scheme for poor students; strengthening school-community relation; properly dealing with religious & cultural factors |

| Goals | Strategies | Interventions |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Improving quality | Increasing education funding | Developing a qualified teaching force; assisting low-performing schools |
| | Improving instruction | Strengthening bilingual instruction, the use of education technology, parental involvement, school-community relation |
| | Raising learning outcome | Curriculum reform & better knowledge and skills |

| Goals | Strategies | Inventions |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Improving efficiency | Improving internal efficiency | Strengthening board schools; Economies of scales & school distribution |
| | Improving external efficiency | Strengthening parental & community participation in school; curriculum reform & learning goals for 21st century |

Policy Recommendations

- Significant increase in funding for compulsory education, especially in minority areas
- Establishing and improving the system of financial aid for needy students
- Establishing a stable and qualified teaching force
- Eliminating unsafe school buildings
- Achieving efficient distribution of schools and strengthening boarding schools
- Strengthening bilingual education at the primary level
- Strengthening information and technology education
- Improving school community relationship
- Implementing curriculum reform
- Strengthening research on minority education

(VI) Looking Ahead

- Implementation of selected policies
- Macro economic, political, and social stability
- Social inequality vs. harmonious society
- Strategic role of Yunnan Province
- Cautious optimism

