CHAPTER 5

Research on the Learning and Life of Primary and Secondary Students in Rural Schools

Zhou Jinyan and Qi Xiang

Abstract

In recent years some issues of rural education became more and more obvious, such as the education of the left-at-home children, transportation safety issues and student dropouts issues, which were mostly caused by excessive closure of rural schools. Those problems arouse great concern from the government and the society on the rural students’ living and learning. The 21st Century Education Research Institute conducted a large-scale survey on Chinese rural primary and junior high schools. This article reported the survey results of general learning and living conditions of rural primary school students and junior high school students respectively, and built up statistical models to explore the influencing factors of the students’ academic performance.

Keywords

Rural Education – Education Survey – Learning and living – Influencing Factor

Rural education has always been the focus area as well as the week point in China’s education development. It has an important bearing on the educational modernization and the development of rural areas in the long run. In 2012, the Report to the Eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) (中共十八大报告) pointed out again that “educational resources should be allocated appropriately, prioritizing the needs of the rural areas, remote areas, poverty-stricken areas and ethnic autonomous areas, so that every child can grow into a competent person”. In order to implement this important development strategy, we need to conduct an in-depth research on

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current education situation in rural China, especially in central and western regions of China, and get a good understanding of the learning and living conditions of primary and secondary school students in rural areas. In recent years, both the government and the public are paying great attention to many issues in rural education, such as issues with left-at-home children (留守儿童). The removal and merge of rural schools also caused many problems: it becomes harder for some students to find a school; it brings transportation safety issues; drop-out rates rise and all other kinds of problems relating to the learning and school life of rural students occur. All these issues catch the attention of the government and the public and call for prompt solution.

The 21st Century Education Research Institute (21世纪教育研究院) conducted a survey of fairly large sample size on above mentioned rural education issues with fifth, sixth and eighth graders in rural schools during April to August in 2012. The survey included questions on students’ home environment, whether they are left-at-home children, boarding school conditions, transportation conditions, studying, expectations on future education and life, and etc. The samples mainly covered rural areas in central and western China, including ten provinces: Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Jiangxi, Liaoning, Chongqing, Hainan, Anhui, Hunan, Yunnan, Hubei. We were able to receive 1382 properly completed questionnaires from primary school students, including 50.5% males and 49.5% females. 55.5% of the respondents were of Han nationality, while 44.5% were from other ethnic groups. The average age of the respondents was 12.13 and they were 146.11cm tall in average, among them, 40% were boarding students. For junior high school students, 1598 properly completed questionnaires were collected, including 46.2% male and 53.8% female. Han students took 58.8% of the total respondents, while 41.2% were from other ethnic groups. The average age and height of the respondents were 14.71 and 159.77cm, respectively. 61.6% of the respondents were boarding students.

Based on the survey data, this article will report on the basic studying and living conditions of rural primary school and junior high school students. Then we will further explore factors that influence the academic achievement of rural primary school and junior high school students, through establishing statistical models.

I Rural Primary School

A Research on General Condition of Rural Primary School Students

The study shows that a large proportion of rural primary school students received pre-school education. 81% of them had been to kindergarten or preschool, while 19% of them hadn’t.