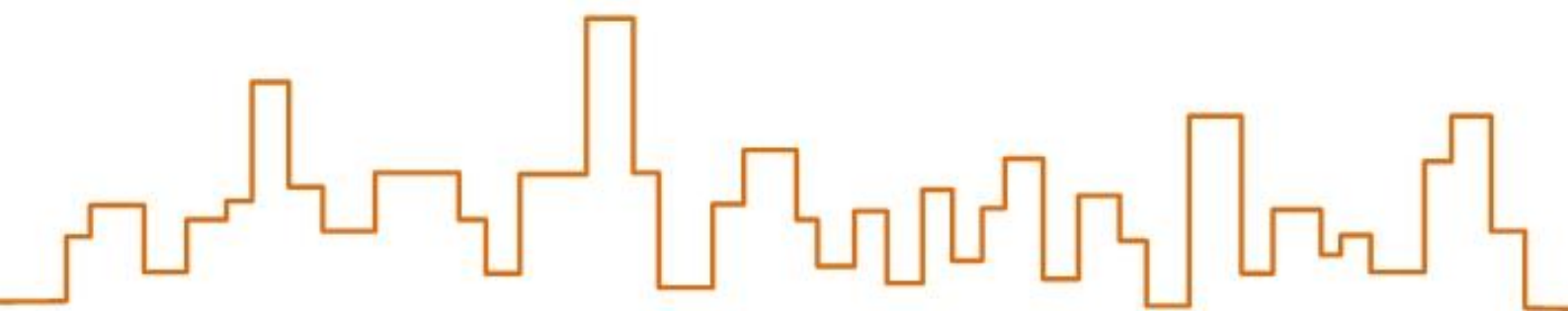


Dynamic Equilibrium of New Urbanization and
Urban-Rural Education
- Practice and Problems of Jintang County in
Chengdu City

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I. Foreword

The concept of "New Urbanization" has been proposed in the 18th CPC National Congress. The new urbanization focuses upon urban-rural integration, mutual promotion of industrial development and town construction, resource-conservation and friendly environment, livable ecology and harmonious development, as well as upon coordinated development and mutual promotion of large, medium and small cities, small towns, and new rural communities. The core of new urbanization intends not to damage the agriculture, grain, ecology and environment, but to care about rural areas and then achieve the integration of urban-rural infrastructures and equalization of public services. The promotion of urban-rural transaction integration and realization of rational allocation of educational resources between urban and rural areas are one of basic contents of urban-rural public service equalization. According to the 3rd Plenary Session of 18th CPC Central Committee, it will have significant roles in the promotion of equal exchange of urban-rural elements and balanced allocation of public resources, improvement of healthy urbanization development system, advancement of education integration, and promotion of educational equity and healthy urbanization development.

In 2003, Chengdu has launched the urban-rural integration process, and then become China's first pilot area for urban-rural comprehensive reform in 2007. In the comprehensive reform, local authorities have actively coordinated and taken actions, in attempts to explore reform practice for urban-rural integration development. Local education authorities, focusing upon spatial equilibrium allocation of educational resources, has actively carried out the practice and exploration on urban-rural education integration, and then developed the "Allocation Mode of Educational Resources in Chengdu" featuring "Six Integrations", that is, taking "development and planning integration as the guide, the integration of schooling conditions as the foundation, the integration of educational expenditure as the guarantee, the integration of teaching teams as the key, the integration of education quality as the core, and the integration of evaluation criteria as the means".

In the program of Chengdu City in late 2003, Jintang County, Dujiangyan, Qionglai, Pengzhou, Chongzhou, Dayi, Pujiang and Xinjin were classified as suburban areas (the third circle). Under the unified deployment and guidance of Chengdu City, Jintang County, in combination with her own actual conditions, has made a large number of practices and explorations of urban-rural education integration in the rapid urbanization process. Some of experiences are worthy to be learned by other regions, but meanwhile, they are faced with some common problems and issues.

II. Overview of Jintang County and Urbanization Process

Jintang County is located in the northeast of Chengdu Plain, and the west of Sichuan Basin, across middle basin and western basin fold belts. It is in the eastern edge of Chengdu Plain and the western edge of hilly area of central Sichuan Basin, adjacent to Zhongjiang County in the east, to Qingbaijiang District and Longquanyi District of Chengdu City in the west, to Lezhi County and Jianyang City in the south, and to Guanghan City and Zhongjiang County in the north. It is 36.9km wide from east to west, and 68km long from north to south. It is 28km away from downtown area of Chengdu City, and 20km from Guanghan City. The plane graph of Jintang County is shown in Figure 1.

Jintang County is located in the bordering area of Chengdu Plain and hilly area of central Sichuan Basin, featuring flat dams, hills and low mountains. It is Western Sichuan Plain in the northwest, alluvial flat dams and shallow hills account for 14.7% of total area; It is hilly area of central Sichuan Basin in the southeast, hills account for 74% of total area, and central low mountains account for 11.3%. Jintang County covers an area of 1156km², with 21 towns and two provincial-level industrial development zones (including 19 towns under two townships, 185 villagers' committees, 44 communities, and 4909 villagers' groups).



Figure 1: Plane Graph of Jintang County

Source: Baidu Map

In 2012, regional GDP of Jintang County was RMB 20.22955 billion Yuan, with growth rate of 14.2%, of which: the added value of the first industry was RMB 3.7258 billion Yuan, with growth rate of 4.6%; the added value of the secondary industry was RMB 9.37099 billion Yuan, with growth rate of 20.4%; the added value of the tertiary industry was RMB 7.13276 billion Yuan, with growth rate of 11.6%; gross fixed-asset investments were RMB 20.35855 billion Yuan, with growth rate of 22.2%; and local fiscal revenues were RMB 1.15689 billion Yuan, with growth rate of 20.7%. Per capita disposable income of urban residents and per capita net income of farmers were RMB 20,777 Yuan and RMB 9,409 Yuan respectively. By the end of 2012, Jintang County had 890,000 populations in all.

Jintang County is in Chengdu Metropolitan Circle, but it is relatively remote, so her economic and social development and urbanization process had lagged behind for a long period of time. After the reform and opening up, Jintang has become a domestically famous labor export county. In the peak years, about 180,000 rural residents work outside all the year; currently, there are still 141,000 rural residents who work outside all the year. In 2009, the urbanization rate of permanent populations in Jintang County was only 31.5%, nearly 25% lower than average level in Chengdu, 7.2% lower than average level in Sichuan Province, and 15% lower than average level in the whole nation. Constrained by relevant institutions and mechanisms, a lot of young people work outside, and their children cannot stay with their parents for study in a very long period, thus resulting in "left-behind children" phenomenon and problem in the education.

Since the "12th Five-Year Plan" period, Jintang County has exercised overall planning, coordinated and promoted the construction of urban areas, key towns, general towns, and farmer's concentrated residential areas, deepened the reform of unified urban-rural household registration system, and speeded up the urbanization process. In combination with actual conditions, such as "long from north to south and narrow from east to west", Jintang County has implemented group development mode for urbanization development: to build landscape ecological town around Zhaozhen Town in the north; to build airport industrial town around Huaikou Town in the middle; and to build independent pioneering town around Zhugao Town in the south. Urbanization Strategic Planning is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Urbanization Strategic Planning Figure of Jintang County
 Source: Website of Jintang County People's Government,
<http://www.jintang.gov.cn/town/detail.jsp?DeptNo=0301&ID=43001>.

III. Exploration and Practice of Urban-Rural Education Integration

In the new century, along with economic and social development and constant improvement of people's incomes, the towns have attracted a large number of rural populations due to colorful life, convenient and high-quality public services (such as better educational services and medical services, etc.), more employment opportunities and higher incomes, so great changes have taken place in the spatial distribution of populations. As incomes are increasing constantly, most of local people have moved from rural area to urban area. Under the conditions of rural-urban population transfer, Jintang County has continuously adjusted and optimized urban-rural layout of educational resources.

Firstly, Jintang County has combined actual conditions of urbanization development, and education sectors have actively negotiated with urban-rural planning departments to constantly optimize the spatial layout of urban and rural schools. To achieve the returns to scale and improve the education quality, Jintang County has cancelled and merged more than 170 schools and teaching points over the past ten years. At the end of 2003, there were 51 primary schools, 289 teaching points, and 36 ordinary secondary schools in Jintang County. At the end of 2012, there were 47 primary schools, 23 junior middle schools (eight 9-year compulsory education schools and 14 junior middle schools), and five regular senior secondary schools. While canceling and merging rural teaching points and schools, Jintang County, according to actual development conditions of each town, has built a number of new schools. Huaikou Town, as the key manufacturing town in Jintang County, in combination with industrial development, has built high-standard Huaikou Experimental Primary School in the industrial park, in order to help the children of industrial workers to study at the nearest schools.

Secondly, while canceling/merging and integrating urban-rural educational resources, Jintang County has implemented the integration of urban-rural schooling conditions and the integration of education expenditures, and also built urban and rural schools according to uniform standards. In the compulsory education stage, the urban-rural education expenditures have been allocated by Jintang County Financial Bureau according to the same amount (primary school: RMB 700 Yuan/student/year; junior middle school: RMB 900 Yuan/student/year). These measures have provided material guarantee and hardware facilities for urban-rural education integration. Apart from a few retained teaching points, all standardized schools in Jintang County have been built according to relevant standards of Chengdu City.



Figure 3: Standardized Playground of Xikou No.4 Primary School

Finally, the quality of education is the core of education, and it is most important for Jintang County Education Bureau to achieve the balanced quality of urban-rural education. Teachers are the key to improvement of education quality. How to give full play to the roles of the excellent teachers? Jintang County has taken three measures: First is to implement the "managed by the county but used by the school" strategy, that is, all teachers should be hired and allocated by local education authorities in unified pattern; Second is to implement the exchange system for teachers, that is, the county is divided into six teaching areas and teachers can be allocated appropriately inside those areas; Third is to implement the exchange system for teachers and mutual assistance system, that is, the superior schools can establish cooperation relationship with the inferior ones. The former should regularly dispatch the outstanding teachers to teach in relatively-backward schools (one semester or one academic year), and also help those teachers in the assisted schools.

After several years of efforts, Jintang County has obtained remarkable achievements in the urban-rural education integration. In terms of the allocation of hardware facilities and teachers, Jintang County has basically achieved the equilibrium in the urban-rural education integration. Up to now, in view of teacher-student ratio, Jintang County has basically achieved the consistency in urban-rural educational resources, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Status of teachers and students in Jintang County

Item	Full-time teacher	Proportion	Student	Proportion	Teacher-student ratio
Town	1539	26.84	22594	26.84	1:14.68
Countryside	4195	73.16	61587	73.16	1:14.68
Total	5734	100	84181	100	

Source: Provided by Jintang County Education Bureau

Note: The town here only indicates the urbanized area, and the rest are counted in the village range. (the same below)

IV. Education Improves the Urbanization Quality

In Jintang County, the urban-rural education integration development has not passively followed the urbanization process, but actively improved the quality of urbanization. Urbanization is not the change of identity and land purposes only, but a process from urban civilization to countryside expansion. The core of urbanization is human urbanization, including all-round reform of people's production ways and living ways. In the process of rapid urbanization development, how to help "villagers" to quickly change into "citizens"? It has become one of important contents of local education authorities.

Jintang County has established a complete community education system, and the Education Bureau has set up the Community Education College. One community education school has been founded in each town (21 in all). Nowadays, 134 community workstations have been built, with coverage ratio of 40%. Main duties of the Community Education College are as follows: take charge of community education in the whole county; take full advantage of the school's community education experimental base, survey community learning needs, develop and implement the community education development planning, and boost in-depth development of community education from point to surface; establish and improve community education network, produce and introduce teaching materials and educational resources suitable for community education, carry out various lectures and trainings, and continuously meet general public learning needs; launch project development and consulting of community education, and carry out theoretical research on community education. Community education schools and community workstations are mainly responsible for public education, especially for the education on "new citizens" and "new farmers", including civilization norms, entertainment activities, planting and breeding techniques, etc.

Jintang County has made full use of ordinary schools in the compulsory education stage to strengthen the cultivation of citizen quality, and incorporated urban civilization education into cultural education and school life, thus developing into living habits; Meanwhile, through the "small gap hand", it has enhanced those parents' civilization accomplishment. Yangliu Ciji Primary School was originally a countryside primary school in Jintang County, and it has more than 60 teachers and 900 pupils (including 300 children). After the 2008 earthquake in Wenchuan, Sichuan Province, funded by Taiwan Tzu Chi Foundation, it was moved from the mountainous area into current area – Zhaozhen Town; and meanwhile, those villagers also moved here and then changed to citizens. The school's hardware facilities have been greatly improved. For maintenance and utilization of superior educational facilities, Yangliu Ciji Primary School has applied the education of civilization accomplishment on students and their parents into the overall school education. There are no cleaning staffs or garbage cans/dustbins in the school, but no garbage can be found in the campus, even a piece of paper, and teaching facilities are clean as ever. All students bring garbage bags and rags to go to school, and then bring them out and discard into the trash after school.

Figure 4 Clean campus of Yangliu Ciji Primary School

V. Problems and Thoughts

Jintang County has obtained certain achievements in the urban-rural education integration development. Nevertheless, similar to some other areas, there still are some universal and institutional problems in further development of urban-rural education integration.



Firstly, constrained by the structure and institution, the flow of teachers is subject to greater restrictions, the teaching teams are not consistent with education development situation. Along with the accelerated transformation from examination-oriented education to quality-oriented education, the discipline structure of teaching team is obviously incompatible with education development situation, for instance, teachers are sufficient in Chinese, mathematics and English, but insufficient in music, sports, art, and computers, etc.

Secondly, due to too large gap between urban and rural socioeconomic development, it is very difficult for countryside to attract and retain high-quality educational resources, especially the outstanding teachers are reluctant to stay at the countryside. According to the teacher's age structure, nearly 20% of teachers are over 50 years old in rural schools, 9% higher than that of urban teachers (see Table 2). According to academic structure, only 5.5% of teachers have the academic background of senior middle school or below, but such ratio is 18.83% in rural schools; More than 60% of urban teachers have bachelor's degrees or above, nearly 17% higher than that in rural schools (see Table 3).

Table 2 Age structure of full-time teachers in Jintang County

	Below 30	Proportion	31-50	Proportion	Above 50	Proportion
Town	162	10.53%	1223	79.47%	154	10.01%
Countryside	687	16.38%	2699	64.34%	809	19.28%
Total	849	14.81%	3922	68.40%	963	16.79%

Source: Provided by Jintang County Education Bureau.

Table 3 Academic structure of teachers in Jintang County

	Senior middle school and below	Proportion	Junior college	Proportion	bachelor's degrees or above	Proportion
Town	86	5.51%	533	34.14%	942	60.35%
Countryside	807	18.83%	1603	37.41%	1875	43.76%
Total	893	15.28%	2136	36.54%	2817	48.19%

Source: Provided by Jintang County Education Bureau.

Thirdly, in the process of urbanization and new countryside construction, a large number of people have poured into the towns, so the unbalanced distribution of students occur in urban schools, and some classes have more than 60 students. But why? The rapid urbanization process is one cause, but additionally, the schools are planned in strict accordance with household registration system, without forward-looking thoughts. Therefore, if the superior urban schools can take moderate forward-looking thoughts, such problem might be alleviated probably.

Fourthly, it is very hard for teachers to adapt their knowledge and discipline structures to educational requirements. Restricted by the structure of teachers, it is very difficult to hire those teachers who are urgently needed; Meanwhile, the community education, especially new countryside community education is short of teaching forces. For this reason, the older teachers, especially former rural teachers can be transferred into community education after relevant trainings, thus we can achieve win-win results. It is suggested that indigenous teachers would be transferred into other posts, it is because that they can keep long-term and natural contacts with local people. Furthermore, they are familiar with local culture and customs, and can communicate with local residents smoothly.

Finally, people live dispersedly. There are two townships and 19 towns, 185 villagers' committees, 44 communities, 4,909 villagers' groups and countless residential points in Jintang County. According to economic and social development trend, the countryside will not disappear completely, and rural schools will still exist in the future considerable period of time. In the socioeconomic development process, rural schools should not only provide cultural knowledge education for students, but also provide trainings for civilization accomplishment and new skills to the masses, thus inheriting local styles.