

Current Situation and Future Development of Education for Children in Ecological Migrant Areas in Ningxia

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Abstract: The issue of ecological migration has been concerned for a long time. As one of the first regions to implement ecological migration projects, Ningxia has a special multi-ethnic population, and its education problems cannot be ignored. From the perspective of schools, this paper analyses the current situation of exclusion and isolation of new immigrant children in schools and the lack of holistic education for children. From the perspective of families, it analyses the situation of parents of new immigrants having low expectations for their children's education and the situation of educational differences due to different ethnic beliefs. The paper positively puts forward the ideas that teachers are expected to teach their students according to their abilities; school is ought to strengthen its infrastructure, obey the rules and regulations in the society and provide extensive training for teachers. Moreover, it is necessary to quicken the social integration of new immigrants and residents. It is hoped that with the implementation of these measures can accelerate the progress of friendly relations between indigenous people and new migrants and provide a good educational environment for children.

Keywords: ecological migration, migrant education, social integration, ethnic integration

1. Introduction

Ecological migration refers to the migration activity of relocating to areas where has better living conditions because the population size of the original place of residence far exceeds the capacity and bearing pressure of the ecological environment. Firstly, it is aimed to mitigate the damage and impact of human activities on the ecological environment, so that the fragile ecological environment can be restored. Secondly, its aim is to improve the quality of life of the poor population through off-site development. Since the 1980s, the Ningxia Autonomous Region has been one of the main battlegrounds for poverty alleviation in China due to its arid climate, lack of resources and inconvenient transportation. From then on, a series of large-scale ecological migration projects has been carried out. Since 1983, Ningxia has relocated about 1.23 million people from the Xihaiigu area [1]. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, China will continue to implement the 'Million Migrants to Wealth' campaign to ensure the relocation of migrants are stable, employed and gradually become rich [2]. In this process, the education of millions of ecological migrants has also become one of the main axes. It is true what Dewey said so well when discussing the function of education for society: Education is not the only instrument, but it is the first instrument, the primary instrument, the most prudent instrument, by which the values cherished by any social group, the goals they desire to

achieve, are assigned and made available to the individual to think, to observe, to judge and to choose [3]. Therefore, this paper provides suggestions for the future development of migrant education from the current situation of the children from new ecological migrants in Ningxia.

According to the information available so far, most of the scholars' studies are based on traditional educational migration between the city and the country. As a multi-ethnic region, passive migration process in Ningxia involves more issues than traditional migration, such as religious beliefs and cultural differences. However, this complex educational situation has not been given much attention at present. This paper mainly adopts the literature research method and case study method. Through reading a large amount of relevant literature and case studies, the current situation of migrant children's education at school and at home was analyzed successively, with the aim of identifying the problems that arise in the education process, increasing the opportunities for further education and employment, improving the cognitive and cultural level of people in poor areas. It is hoped that it can provide education assistance for the children of ecological immigrants according to the existing situation.

2. Current Situation

2.1. School

2.1.1. Isolation and Exclusion at School

The concept of social exclusion was first used by the French academic Lanoir in 1974. The UK government set up the Department of Social Exclusion in 1997. This has led to a new definition of social exclusion as a phenomenon that occurs when a person or area suffers from a combination of lack of social skills, low income or even loss of employment, unfortunate illness, lack of shelter, poor family relations and high crime rates. As a special group of people who have lived in a harsh and economically disadvantaged environment, new immigrants are easily dismissed or even discriminated against because they are less qualified than the indigenous population and lack the necessary labor skills. In addition to this, there is a deep-rooted 'city-based consciousness' and 'narrow regional consciousness' in urban basic education [4]. This consciousness may make teachers or schools reluctant to accept the children of new immigrants, considering them to have poor academic performance, low quality and lack in good living and learning habits, disrupting classroom discipline and affecting classroom morale. So, they do not have the right attitude and approach towards these children. The behavior and way of thinking of the remaining students in the class are easily influenced by the adults. This communication gap and prejudice may lead to conflicts and contradictions between the children of indigenous people and the children of new immigrants in school. Existing differences are then magnified, exacerbating the sense of marginalization of newcomers. This can lead to the exclusion and isolation to the newcomer children in the normal course of their school life.

2.1.2. Lack of Holistic Education

With the in-depth reform of the curriculum, there is a growing awareness that school should develop students' moral, intellectual, physical, social, and aesthetic well-being. However, according to the results of the survey, only a small number of schools in Ningxia have made an effort to teach physical education. Others have received less support from resources and do not have clear teaching objectives, teaching plans, and mature assessment criteria [5]. A survey of ecological migrant areas showed that teachers are weak, teaching equipment is poor, so the delivery of art education is limited [6]. According to the survey, there is a serious lack of career education for junior high school students in the ecological migrant areas of Ningxia due to the lack of curriculum in schools. Besides, teachers'

teaching content in this course is fragmented and random, and students' cognition of career is shallow and one-sided [7]. These phenomena largely limit the development of students in ecologically migrant areas, affecting their aesthetic, cognitive and even physical abilities and creating a gap with students from other places.

2.2. Family

2.2.1. Low Priority for Education

Owing to the low-level awareness of the new immigrants and the fact that the majority of them are Hui, a nation nurtured by commerce. The idea of "business over education" has influenced their way of thinking and they are still stuck in the idea of "the futility of studying" [8]. As they move to a new environment and face more financial and environmental pressures, they are more willing to let their children drop out of school early and go to work to support their families. This leads them to believe that it is sufficient for their children to finish primary and middle school. Although some studies have found that the educational expectations of outsiders are influenced by the local population [9]. Especially when new migrants who live in poor areas come to a city with a good economy, they will realize the importance of education. However, the newly relocated area of the migrant household is still rural. Even though economic conditions have improved, there is still a gap compared with cities. How to solve the problem of food and clothing is still a priority, resulting in less concern about the education of their children.

2.2.2. Differences in Education

For the ecological migrants in Ningxia, one thing that cannot be ignored is the diversity of ethnic groups. The Hui makes up a large part of the ecological migrants. Even though they have arrived in the plains where the Han are the majority, they still insist on their inherent habits and customs [10]. They also have unique ideas about education such as preferring their children to attend a sutra education [11]. A sutra education is a special education system in which Muslim children are enrolled in a mosque by the opening imam to study Islamic classics, being taught basic religious knowledge including Islamic doctrine and law, and train religious successors and Muslim specialists [12]. For those Muslim families who are well off, they send their boys to the mosque to be educated in the Islamic scriptures and to recite the Islamic classics, rather than sending them to receive nine-year compulsory education. For girls, parents prefer to send them home to take care of the family or to work early [13].

3. Future Development

3.1. Schools and Teachers Working Together

3.1.1. Teaching According to Ability

There is a gap between the children of new immigrants and the children of aboriginal people because of different learning environment. Mixing students of different levels into the same class is likely to result in the poorer students not being able to keep up with the teaching and the better students not receiving a higher level of support. Therefore, it is necessary to have all students take a common mapping test and divide the classes according to their performance [14]. Providing different educational programs according to the different educational needs of the students, aiming to keep the underprivileged students from falling behind and make the good students be better, reducing the gap between the two. In addition to this, compensatory education can be offered to the children of new

immigrants, so that they can make up for their lack of knowledge, develop good study habits and acquire the right learning methods. This initiative can increase their chances of success [15].

3.1.2. Infrastructure Improvements and Compliance with Regulations

According to the available information, the rural school conditions can only meet the basic requirements of subject teaching [16]. There are certain safety hazards in medical care, food and fire fighting in schools. Schools should actively explore medical management work, strengthen the links with anniversary hospitals, open green channels for diagnosis, and guarantee the health and life safety of students and teachers. In addition, the school should make demands on the canteen to improve the quality of meals and lower the price to ensure that students are well fed. Schools should also plan maintenance and renovation work to create a good teaching environment. Extensive repairs and upgrades to lamps, tables, chairs and blackboards should be carried out, and playgrounds should be expanded and equipped to ensure that children have enough space to move around. Schools should also be conscious of the need to comply with regulations to avoid charging high loan fees or disguised loan fees so that students can enjoy equitable access to education [17].

3.1.3. Strengthen Training for Teachers

Regular training is ought to be organized in schools to correct teachers' prejudices and perceptions of the children of new immigrants and to establish the right mindset of equal dedication to each student [4]. Schools need to work on developing teachers' communication and problem-solving skills. They should have the ability to communicate with each child in an open manner, to understand their current situation and the problems and difficulties they face in their studies. Teachers also need to act as a bridge between the children of aboriginal people and the children of new immigrants, breaking down barriers between the two groups of students and enabling them to understand and communicate with each other. It is necessary to develop teachers' professional skills, learning new knowledge and expanding their knowledge, and learn a variety of educational methods that are flexible and adaptable to different audiences.

3.2. Accelerating Social Integration

3.2.1. Improving People's Livelihoods and Raising Living Standards

Accelerating the reform and innovation of the labor and employment system to successfully realize the employment of new immigrants [18]. Government needs to classify the employment of new migrants under the employment policy, strictly enforce the labor contract system and ensure that wages are paid in a timely manner. New immigrants will be included in career planning training, and they should be guided to establish a new concept of having skills to have good employment. Continuously upgrading infrastructure construction, improving medical and security places and increasing leisure and entertainment facilities to strengthen their sense of belonging and identification in the newly relocated areas. At the same time, the social security of the new immigrants should be strengthened so that they can enjoy the same medical and pension benefits as the locals, thus reducing the integration risks of the new immigrants. Establishing a unified hukou registration system for new immigrants so that they can have equal status with local residents such as enjoying a unified system of education, transport and other basic public services, diluting the prejudice of foreign domicile in people's minds.

3.2.2. Interleaving Residences and Maintaining Traditional Minority Cultures

By intermingling the newcomers with the indigenous people, their attitudes to production and life will change under the influence of the locals. As they integrate with the locals, they will also gradually change their concept of education, attaching importance to the education of their children, investing more in their children's education and having higher expectations of their children's education [10]. It is conducive to the children to have a new career plan for the future, driving the local economic development and common prosperity. Maintaining the cultural traditions of new immigrants does not have a negative effect on the change in educational attitudes [10]. On the contrary, when respecting and understanding their culture and not imposing other cultural standards on them will they feel that they are valued and respected, without a sense of isolation and exclusion, which is of great significance to social integration.

3.2.3. Creating a Climate of Social Inclusion

It is recommended that the media step up positive publicity for new immigrants, showing their contribution to social development and economic construction and strengthening the local residents' sense of identity with them. The community can also organize occasional mass events to introduce immigrant families some local food habits and economic conditions as a way of deepening their understanding of the local area. In the process, cultural exchanges between the two groups of people can be fostered to increase understanding and knowledge of other cultures, breaking down prejudices and misunderstandings and building a more harmonious social relationship.

4. Conclusions

As temperatures rising nowadays, the frequency of extreme weather such as soil desertification, droughts and floods tend to increase. The fragile ecological environment can cause great difficulties for people to survive and live. There will be an increasing number of people leaving their original place of residence for a new environment in the future, either actively or passively, which will require people to explore and think deeply about the issue of migrant education in the new environment. Reviewing the phenomenon of ecological migration in Ningxia and considering the various dilemmas facing the education of the children of new immigrants find that among the new immigrants in Ningxia are many Muslims of the Muslim faith, so the differences in beliefs and values lead to differences in education, and the children of new immigrants not only need to retain and learn the traditional national culture, but also need to integrate with social education to make a positive contribution to building their homeland, carrying a greater responsibility and pressure on their shoulders. Incomplete policy considerations and weak economic support have led to a lack of fair and equal educational resources for the children of migrants. While addressing the hardware needs of education, the government also needs to look within to help them find their way. The development and advancement of education in the region is beneficial to national unity, economic development, and social stability, contributing to the building of a community of Chinese people.

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