International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies
ISSN: 2202-9478
www.ijels.aiac.org.au

# Strategy Development to Improve Basic Educational Balance for Urban and Rural Education in Shaanxi Province

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**ARTICLE INFO**

*Article history*
Received: November 8, 2024
Accepted: February 14, 2025
Published: March 31, 2025
Volume: 13 Issue: 2

Conflicts of interest: None
Funding: None

**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this research were to: (1) Investigate the current problems in achieving balance in urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province, (2) Develop a strategy to improve this balance, and (3) Evaluate the adaptability, feasibility, effectiveness, and fairness of the proposed strategy. The study involved 175 teachers from urban and rural schools across 10 prefecture-level cities, 10 middle-level school managers, and 5 senior education experts. Research instruments included questionnaires, structured interviews, and expert assessments, with data analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and content analysis. The findings indicate that urban education in Shaanxi Province is significantly more developed than rural education, with disparities in teacher performance, student quality, resource distribution, and funding. Many rural students migrate to urban schools, leaving behind a declining student population. To address these imbalances, the study proposes strategies such as strengthening teacher training, enhancing rural school quality, improving educational funding, and optimizing resource allocation. Expert evaluations confirmed that these strategies are highly adaptable and feasible for promoting balanced and sustainable urban-rural education development. These findings highlight the urgency of policy-driven educational reforms to bridge the urban-rural gap and ensure equitable learning opportunities in Shaanxi Province.

**Key words:** Urban and Rural Basic Education, Sustainable and Balanced Development, Educational Resources

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Fair and high-quality education is an inherent requirement and strong support for a strong education country, as well as a common educational development goal pursued by countries around the world. In recent years, many countries around the world have taken a series of measures to promote education accessibility, balance, and sustainable development, making new progress in promoting education development. However, achieving an education balance globally still faces significant challenges. Educational equity is regarded as a social responsibility in all countries, as well as an important foundation for bridging social disparities, maintaining social stability, promoting human capital development, and ultimately achieving national prosperity. Striving to provide every child with fair and quality education is not only an inherent requirement for building an educational powerhouse but also a powerful support for its construction. Governments around the world should set clear goals, increase investment in education, strengthen international cooperation, and enable more children to enjoy fair and high-quality education. Given this, promoting the balanced and sustainable development of education is a very important and necessary thing (Yu et al., 2024). It is pointed out that the rural revitalization strategy proposes the requirement of talent revitalization, and the prerequisite for achieving talent revitalization is that rural areas have a high-quality educational environment and conditions. Quality Education (2024) elaborated on the similarities and differences between the design and implementation of project-based learning in rural small-scale schools and urban schools, Liu and Zhang (2021) proposed that at present, China is in the period of building a new type of industrial and agricultural urban-rural relationship, comprehensively implementing the rural revitalization strategy and achieving high-quality development. The Chinese government attaches great importance to national basic education. In recent years, measures such as increasing education investment, improving teaching quality, and reducing the digital divide have been taken to promote education popularization, balance, and sustainable development.

Published by Australian International Academic Centre PTY.LTD.

http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.13n.2p.529

The problem of imbalance and insufficiency in the development of education in urban and rural areas of Shaanxi Province is evident. Under the strategic deployment of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the "Several Opinions on Coordinating the Reform and Development of Urban and Rural Compulsory Education Integration in Counties" issued by the State Council in 2016 clearly stated that achieving balanced development of urban and rural areas in counties is the goal of coordinating the development structure of urban and rural compulsory education. The balanced development of basic education is a decision-making choice of the government for educational development strategies, and the responsibility for promoting the balanced development of basic education mainly lies with the government. Zhang (2014) pointed out that due to various factors such as rights, economic conditions, opportunities, information, and security, there is a certain gap in the development of urban and rural basic education, which limits the level of development of basic education.

Urban education and rural education in Shaanxi Province are interdependent, and the changes in the education system and economic and social structure in Shaanxi Province are also interdependent. Therefore, the sustainable and balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province can solve the problem of low education quality for rural students through the radiation and driving effect of cities. Developing rural education can address the shortcomings of urban students in comprehensive development through the complementary role of rural areas. Quality Education (2024) elaborated on the similarities and differences between the design and implementation of project-based learning in rural small-scale schools and urban schools, to provide a reference for the development of project-based learning in rural small-scale schools in China.

From this, it can be seen that based on the new development stage, top-level design in promoting the integration of urban and rural compulsory education no longer only focuses on one-way "rural tilted policies", but emphasizes promoting the free flow of factors and optimizing the spatial allocation of resources to promote the integrated development of urban and rural basic education.

Liu and Zhang (2021) proposed that at present, China is in the period of building a new type of industrial and agricultural urban-rural relationship, comprehensively implementing the rural revitalization strategy and achieving high-quality development. Looking forward to the future, the CPC will give priority to the development of rural education, strengthen the integration of urban and rural education, improve the quality of rural education, promote education equity, and accelerate the pace of moving from a large education country to a powerful education country.

### Objectives

The objectives of this research were to:

1. Investigate the current problems in achieving balance in urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province,
2. Develop a strategy to improve this balance,
3. Evaluate the adaptability, feasibility, effectiveness, and fairness of the proposed strategy.

### Research Questions

1. What are the current problems of Basic Education Balance for Urban and Rural Education in Shaanxi Province?
2. What is the strategy for improving the Basic Education Balance for Urban and Rural in Shaanxi province?
3. What is the adaptability, feasibility, effectiveness, and fairness of the balanced strategy of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province?

## METHOD

### Population and Sample

The population for this research is 320 basic education teachers from 10 urban and rural basic education schools in 10 cities in Shaanxi Province. At present, there are a total of 40000 urban and rural basic education teachers in ten cities in Shaanxi Province. This study randomly selected 10 representative urban and rural basic education schools from these ten cities in Shaanxi Province. Among these 10 schools, 5 schools are high-quality urban education and teaching schools, and 5 schools are rural.

According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table, the sample group of this research consists of 175 representative education teachers from basic education schools in urban and rural areas of 10 schools in Shaanxi Province. Using systematic random sampling and sample random sampling methods, select urban and rural basic education schools in Shaanxi Province.

The interviewees of this study are 10 middle-level teacher managers from schools in Shaanxi Province, all of whom have rich experience in basic education teaching. The qualifications of the interviewees are as follows:

1. Minimum 15 years of work experience in basic education teaching management,
2. Rich experience in education teaching management,
3. Familiar with the basic situation of education work in local schools, and
4. Skilled education managers with senior professional titles.

The 5 experts are senior education management personnel of basic education in Shaanxi Province and are experts in evaluating the adaptability and feasibility of the policy of sustainable and balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province. They come from five high-quality education schools in five different cities in Shaanxi Province. The experts held senior professional title and had a minimum of 20 years of experience in basic teaching management.

### Research Instruments

#### *Questionnaire*

The purpose is to investigate the current problems in achieving balance in urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province, a questionnaire is designed from the following aspects:

The survey focuses on various aspects of basic education in urban and rural areas of Shaanxi Province, including the following two parts:

1. Basic information of the survey subjects, including gender, age, years of work experience, subject level, educational background, professional title, and school area of teachers engaged in basic education, and
2. A satisfaction survey on the following aspects of current urban and rural basic education among respondents:
   a. Student allocation
   b. Teaching environment
   c. Teaching quality
   d. Education funding
   e. Teacher training, and
   f. Education policies and systems

The above six aspects are mainly investigated from the perspective of teachers' situation, future development expectations, school software, and hardware situation, teaching quality, survey subjects' understanding of the urban and rural basic education environment, government school district division, exemption from entrance examination policies, and high school entrance examination policies.

The questionnaire answers are in the form of simple scoring or options to simplify the survey difficulty as much as possible and facilitate statistical analysis by using Likert scale (1932). The general satisfaction is evaluated using five dimensions: "5 satisfied, 4 fairly satisfied, 3 basically satisfied, 2 average, and 1 very dissatisfied"; therefore:

1 Indicates that the balance of basic education between urban and rural areas is at an extremely low level
2 Indicates a low level of balance in basic education between urban and rural areas.
3 Indicates a balanced and average level of basic education between urban and rural areas.
4 Indicates a high level of balanced basic education between urban and rural areas.
5 Indicates that the balance of basic education between urban and rural areas is at a relatively high level

The construction process of the questionnaire was as follows:

1. Review and analysis of the literature, concepts, and theories related to the balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province
2. Development of a survey questionnaire on the current situation of balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province (teacher part), sending the paper to the guiding teacher for review, and modifying the questionnaire content according to the teacher's suggestions
3. Evaluation of the items of the questionnaire using the Objective Consistency Index (IOC), which involves the evaluation of each item by experts based on whether it measures the degree of specific goals listed by the testing developers; the IOC of this questionnaire is 1.00
4. Modifying the questionnaire based on expert advice
5. Pilot survey by publicly distributing questionnaires to 175 basic education personnel in Shaanxi Province

***Evaluation form***

The researchers developed this form by:

1. Sending it to 5 experts in urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province for evaluation
2. Inviting 5 experts to conduct a qualitative analysis and rating of the adaptability and feasibility of the evaluation
3. Determining the demarcation points based on Likert (1932). The data is interpreted as follows:
   4.50 - 5.00 Indicates the highest level
   3.50 - 4.49 Indicates the high level
   2.50 - 3.49 Indicates moderate level
   1.50 - 2.49 Indicates low level
   1.00 - 1.49 Indicates the lowest level

**Data Collection**

***Collection of questionnaires***

This instrument helped the researchers address the first research objective, following the steps below:

1. The researchers distributed invitation letters for questionnaire work to teachers engaged in urban and rural basic education in 10 schools in Shaanxi Province and obtained the consent of the participants in the questionnaire survey, who were 175 teachers engaged in urban and rural basic education from 10 schools in Shaanxi Province.
2. The researchers distributed questionnaires to 175 teachers engaged in urban and rural basic education, distributed 175 survey forms, and collected a total of 175 survey forms, with a participation rate of 100%.

***Collection of structured interviews***

Structured interviews helped the researchers address the second research objective, following the steps below:

1. The researchers made sure the selected interviewees were middle-level managers from urban and rural basic education in 10 cities in Shaanxi Province.
2. Based on the actual situation of 10 urban areas in Shaanxi Province, the researchers visited the interviewees in Xi'an and Xianyang cities and conducted face-to-face interviews.

***Collection of the evaluation form***

Evaluation forms helped the researchers address the third research objective, following the steps below:

1. According to the setting conditions, five experts come from representative educational system units that manage basic education schools in Shaanxi Province, with rich experience in balanced education evaluation, and are recognized as evaluation experts by Shaanxi Province.
2. Based on the expert evaluation work, organize an evaluation seminar for experts to exchange evaluations, score, collect data information from expert evaluations, and analyze the data.

### Data Analysis

In this phased, the researchers:

1. Analyzed the personal information of the respondents by frequency and percentage, categorizing them by gender, age, educational level, subject level, education level, professional title, and school region.
2. Analyzed the current situation and causes of the uneven development of basic education between urban and rural areas in Shaanxi Province from the following six aspects:
   a. Distribution of student sources,
   b. Teaching environment,
   c. Teaching quality,
   d. Education funding,
   e. Teacher training, and
   f. Education policies and systems.
3. Through content analysis, a structured interview was conducted on the guiding principles for the balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province.
4. Analyze the applicability and feasibility of the guidelines for balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province through mean and standard deviation.

## RESULTS

According to Table 1, it was found that the current situation of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province in six aspects was at a high level ($M$ = 3.89). Considering the results of this research aspects ranged from the highest to lowest level as follows: the highest level was education policies and systems ($M$ = 3.93), teacher strength ($M$ = 3.91), and teaching environment was the lowest level ($M$ = 3.86).

According to Table 2, the researchers provided strategies to improve the balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province, which was divided into six aspects and included 40 measures. There are 7 measures for the distribution of student sources, 6 measures for teaching environment, 6 measures for teacher strength, 7 measures for education funding, 6 measures for teacher training, and 8 measures for education policies and systems.

According to Table 3, the adaptability and feasibility of the balanced development strategy of The urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province were studied, at the highest level in six aspects, and its value was between 4.5 and 5.0 ($M$ = 4.54 and $M$ = 4.51), which indicates that the strategy of improving the balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province is adaptable and feasible.

## DISCUSSION

The research was to study the strategy development to improve basic educationn balance for urban and rural education in Shaanxi Province. The researcher summarizes the discussion into three parts, details as follows:

1. The current situation of the balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province
2. The strategies of balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province
3. The adaptability, feasibility, effectiveness, and fairness of the balanced strategies of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province.

The findings of the research are discussed in the following sections.

### Current Situation of the Balanced Development of Urban and Rural Basic Education in Shaanxi Province

The balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province exhibits significant disparities across six key areas: student distribution, teaching environment, teacher strength, education funding, teacher training, and education policies. Urban schools, particularly in Xi'an, benefit from abundant educational resources and well-equipped facilities, whereas rural schools struggle with limited funding, outdated equipment, and a lack of extracurricular activities (Li, 2024). Additionally, the disparity in teacher distribution exacerbates the quality gap, as experienced educators prefer urban areas, leading to a shortage of qualified teachers in rural schools (Hu et al., 2023). Financial imbalances further hinder rural education, despite government policies aimed at supporting weaker schools. Teacher training programs also differ, with urban educators receiving more advanced and technology-driven training, while rural teachers focus on fundamental skills. However, the government has implemented initiatives such as 13 years of free education and the construction of standardized schools to bridge the gap, but structural and policy-based urban biases persist. To achieve educational

**Table 1.** The average value and standard deviation of the current situation of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province in six aspects (n=175)

| NO | Urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province | *M* | *SD* | level | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Distribution of student sources | 3.90 | 0.91 | high | 3 |
| 2 | Teaching environment | 3.86 | 0.88 | high | 6 |
| 3 | Teacher strength | 3.91 | 0.88 | high | 2 |
| 4 | Education funding | 3.89 | 0.92 | high | 4 |
| 5 | Teacher training | 3.87 | 0.87 | high | 5 |
| 6 | Education policies and systems | 3.93 | 0.91 | high | 1 |
| Total | | 3.89 | 0.89 | high | |

equity, increased investment, policy refinement, and targeted support for rural schools are necessary (Yang, 2023).

### Strategies for Balanced Development of Urban and Rural Basic Education in Shaanxi Province

The balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province faces disparities in six key aspects: student distribution, teaching environment, teacher strength, education funding, teacher training, and education policies. Urban schools, particularly in Xi'an, benefit from abundant educational resources and well-equipped facilities, whereas rural schools struggle with limited funding, outdated equipment, and fewer extracurricular activities (Roberts & Hannum, 2018). The uneven distribution of teachers further exacerbates educational inequalities, as experienced educators prefer urban areas, leaving rural schools understaffed (Chunhai et al., 2022). Financial imbalances hinder rural education, despite government policies supporting weaker schools (Duan et al., 2017). Additionally, teacher training opportunities differ significantly between urban and rural schools, with urban teachers receiving advanced training while rural teachers focus on fundamental skills (Chen et al., 2022). Tiang-Uan (2023) highlighted the role of online applications in improving English learning, engagement, and knowledge retention among Thai EFL students, demonstrating the effectiveness of digital tools in language education. Similarly, the strategy development for basic educational balance in Shaanxi Province emphasizes digital integration to address urban-rural disparities. Both studies underscore the need for targeted teacher training to enhance digital literacy and ensure effective implementation of technology-driven learning strategies, ultimately promoting equitable education.

To address these disparities, Shaanxi Province has implemented policies such as 13 years of free education, standardized school construction, and digital education platforms (Fan, 2021). However, structural barriers and urban-biased policies persist. Solutions include increasing investment in rural schools, improving teacher incentives, and enhancing technology integration for equitable education (Yang, 2023; Hei, 2019). These strategies aim to ensure balanced educational development across urban and rural areas.

**Table 2.** A List of strategies

| NO. | Aspects of strategies | Numbers of measures |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Distribution of student sources | 7 |
| 2 | Teaching environment | 6 |
| 3 | Teacher strength | 6 |
| 4 | Education funding | 7 |
| 5 | Teacher training | 6 |
| 6 | Education policies and systems | 8 |
| Total | 6 | 40 |

### Adaptability, Feasibility, Effectiveness, and Fairness of The Balanced Strategies

The adaptability, feasibility, effectiveness, and fairness of the balanced strategy of urban and rural basic education in six aspects were at the highest level, with values between 4.00 and 5.00. This indicates that the guidelines for the development of financial aid education are suitable, feasible, effective, and fair (Fan, 2021). The urban and rural basic education strategy in Shaanxi Province has high applicability and feasibility. In the process of promoting the balanced development of urban and rural basic education, Shaanxi Province has formulated and implemented a series of strategies aimed at optimizing the allocation of educational resources, improving the quality of education, promoting educational equity, and narrowing the gap between urban and rural education (Deng & Zhang, 2021). From multiple aspects, these strategies demonstrate high applicability and feasibility. Research highlights that measures such as financial investment, teacher training, and school infrastructure improvements contribute to a more balanced educational system (Duan et al., 2017; Chen & Li, 2019). Moreover, promoting digital education and equitable resource distribution further supports educational fairness (Yang, 2023; Hei, 2019). The findings from Karanjakwut and Sripicharn (2024) on digital literacy training for older Thai EFL teachers parallel the challenges identified in strategy development for urban and rural education balance in Shaanxi Province. Both studies highlight issues of technological accessibility, resource availability, and disparities between different teacher groups. While Karanjakwut and Sripicharn found that older teachers struggled with computer

**Table 3.** The average value and standard deviation of the evaluation of the adaptability and feasibility of strategies for improving the balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province in six aspects. (n = 5)

| Guidelines for improving the Balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural basic Education | Adaptability | | | Feasibility | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | level | *M* | *SD* | level |
| Quality distribution of students | 4.49 | 0.54 | high | 4.47 | 0.50 | high |
| Teaching environment | 4.43 | 0.49 | high | 4.55 | 0.57 | highest |
| Teacher strength | 4.41 | 0.46 | high | 4.53 | 0.60 | highest |
| Education funding | 4.74 | 0.46 | highest | 4.57 | 0.56 | highest |
| Teacher training | 4.62 | 0.50 | highest | 4.38 | 0.52 | high |
| Education policies and systems | 4.54 | 0.51 | highest | 4.55 | 0.55 | highest |
| Total | 4.54 | 0.49 | highest | 4.51 | 0.55 | highest |

specifications, teaching style adaptation, and Internet accessibility, similar barriers were noted in Shaanxi, where rural teachers faced limitations in professional development, funding, and infrastructure. To sum up, the urban and rural basic education strategies in Shaanxi Province show high applicability and feasibility in terms of ideological understanding, practical results, planning and construction, and specific implementation.

## CONCLUSION

The prospect of urban and rural basic education policy in Shaanxi Province is mainly reflected in promoting balanced development, improving the quality of education and deepening the reform of the household registration system.

The current situation of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province in six aspects was at a high level ($M$ = 3.89). Considering the results of this research aspects ranging from the highest to lowest level were as follows: the highest level was education policies and systems ($M$ = 3.93), followed by teacher strength ($M$ = 3.91), and teaching environment was the lowest level ($M$ = 3.86). Additionally, the strategies to improve the balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province were divided into six aspects and included 40 measures. There are 7 measures for the distribution of student sources, 6 measures for teaching environment, 6 measures for teacher strength, 7 measures for education funding, 6 measures for teacher training, and 8 measures for education policies and systems. Furthermore, The adaptability, feasibility, effectiveness, and fairness of the balanced development strategy of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province were studied, at the highest level in six aspects, and its value was between 4.5 and 5.0 ($M$ = 4.54 and $M$ = 4.51), which indicates that the strategy of improving the balanced development of urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province is adaptable, feasible, effectiveness, and fairness.

The findings of this research on the development of strategies to improve the balance between urban and rural basic education in Shaanxi Province emphasize critical areas where disparities persist. Urban schools benefit from better resources, more qualified teachers, and superior facilities, while rural schools face challenges such as inadequate funding, outdated equipment, and teacher shortages. These imbalances exacerbate the educational gap between urban and rural areas, impacting students' overall development.

The research proposes several strategies to address these issues, including increased investment in rural schools, enhanced teacher training, and better allocation of resources. These strategies focus on improving the teaching environment, student distribution, funding, and education policies. The study also underscores the importance of digital education and the development of infrastructure to bridge the gap between urban and rural education.

It is recommended that the government continue its efforts to implement policies that promote equitable education by focusing on teacher incentives, rural school quality, and improved access to digital tools. Additionally, continuous evaluation of the feasibility and effectiveness of these strategies is necessary to ensure their long-term success in promoting balanced and sustainable education development in Shaanxi Province.

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