

## The Status Quo, Consensus and Debates on Urbanization in Chinese Education: A General Overview of Research from the 1990s

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**Abstract :** The rapid wave of urbanization triggered by China's economic growth over the past few decades has inevitably impacted the country's educational landscape. Educational spaces in China shifted during the 1990s when, due to the government's tax reforms, large numbers of rural schools were abolished or merged with urban schools, resulting in an "urbanization" of school content and values. While urbanized education is now the status quo, there is as yet no literature review, to our best knowledge, that comprehensively summarizes academic work on this phenomenon. Besides, most research on Chinese educational urbanization relies on basic policy deductions, and there is room for improvement in both the quality and quantity of empirical research on this topic. This paper, therefore, reviews relevant literature on educational urbanization in China from three interrelated factors that shape educational inequality between urban and rural China, namely the urbanization in educational space, school content, and educational values. Results find that the main discussion on Chinese educational urbanization often addresses how Chinese rural education can be improved by reforming the urbanization model to revitalize rural society. While the complete urbanization of Chinese education does not seem feasible, the rapidly changing nature of China's development patterns and political landscape means the course of Chinese education may shift at any time. When the government does decide to fulfill its intentions to improve the countryside, many formerly dilapidated rural schools may be revived, but for the moment, both rural and urban education in China suffers from governmental neglect. In addition, the breakout of COVID-19, which led to a sudden spread of online education that reopened the gap between the educational conditions and the cultural capital of families in rural and urban areas, has also posed new challenges for China's attempts to resolve conflicting interests between urban and rural schools and promote educational equality.

**Keywords :** Chinese education, educational inequality, rural and urban education, urbanization in education

**Conference Title :** ICEEP 2021 : International Conference on Evaluation of Educational Policies

**Conference Location :** Beijing, China

**Conference Dates :** October 04-05, 2021