



# An investigation of satisfaction with public schools and policy satisfaction under China's new policy of "Simultaneous enrollment of public and private schools" on compulsory education: A case study of Yueqing City

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## Abstract

This paper takes Yueqing City, which is located in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province of China, as a case, representing the Yangtze River Delta, to examine the practical problems faced by the third-tier cities along the southeast coast after the implementation of China's new compulsory education policy of "Simultaneous enrollment of public and private schools". Based on 234 completed questionnaires and interviews with nine respondents, the results showed that: (1) The most important objective factor affecting people's choice of schools was "Teacher resources and teaching level". The urban and rural respondents both showed a positive attitude toward public primary schools. However, rural respondents showed a negative attitude towards public junior high schools, which was obviously different from the urban respondents. And, satisfaction with the new policy in rural areas was also far lower than in urban areas. It is the problem of unbalanced high-quality educational resources in junior high schools that leads to psychological imbalance. This requires the government's long-term planning and efforts; (2) With respect to the degree of familiarity with policy, both urban and rural respondents showed a certain consistency. The highest proportion of choice was "Slightly familiar". As for the channels from which to best gain understanding of the new policy, both urban and rural people's first choice was "Parent exchange groups" and "Ask experienced friends", but not "Government's website and service hall". This paper suggests that the government can utilize platforms such as TikTok and WeChat, and use colloquial language to strengthen the publicity of the new policy.

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## Introduction

Issues such as equal access to education, fair educational choices, and balanced development of education, are important factors related to China's stable development. The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China made a clear commitment to fair access to good education for every single child. For more than a decade, reforms of compulsory education enrollment have continuously intensified. Children can receive compulsory education at schools without having to take entrance exams and the new policy of “Simultaneous enrollment of public and private schools” has been fully implemented nationwide.

The new policy “Simultaneous enrollment of public and private schools” refers to the simultaneous application, admission, and registration of public and private schools, with a stipulation that the enrollment policies of both types of schools must be consistent. It is prohibited for private schools to establish a separate set of enrollment policies. The main purpose of the new policy is to curb the escalating trend of some schools engaging in early enrollment practices. Due to the strong autonomy of private schools, a large number of high-quality students quickly concentrate in private schools. Coupled with the advantages of teaching staff and facilities, this ultimately leads to a severe imbalance in basic education resources. Therefore, the starting point of the new policy is to ensure that every student has equal educational opportunities, so as to promote balanced development among schools. However, although urban-rural integration is undergoing continuous reform, the existence of urban-rural differences has deeply affected the allocation of educational resources.

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## Literature Review

After the implementation of the new policy in major cities, scholars paid more attention to the education gap between economically developed areas and relatively backward regions. The former are mostly comprised of first-tier cities and coastal economically developed areas, and the latter encompass areas such as the northwest and southwest. Take the first-tier city of Shanghai as an example. Relevant research includes studies concerning the impact of policies on compulsory education (Fan & Luo, 2021); the role of government functions (Li, 2020b); parents' school choice behavior (Zhang, 2022); the perception of fairness in Shanghai's admissions policy

(Lyu, 2021), etc. Some studies focused on provincial capital cities, such as Xi'an (Sun, 2020), Zhengzhou (Li, 2020a), etc. Other investigations were undertaken in relatively underdeveloped areas, such as the study of school selection in Xinhua County, a poverty-stricken county in Hunan province (Chen, 2020) and in rural G villages in Yuncheng, Shanxi Province (Jing, 2021).

However, little attention has been paid to third-tier coastal cities.

According to the data released by the Zhejiang Provincial Bureau of Statistics in 2021, the urban-rural gap in Zhejiang is the smallest among all the provinces in China. According to the evaluation of “Ranking of Cities' Business Attractiveness in China 2021” released by China Business Network, Wenzhou is listed as a “second-tier city”. Taking the GDP of the region as a measure, the data of 2020, 2021 and 2022 also prove that Wenzhou has always been the third city in Zhejiang from the perspective of economic strength. And Wenzhou's economy is dominated by Yueqing, Lucheng and Ruian, among which Yueqing's economic aggregate ranks first. According to the seventh census data of Yueqing City in 2020, the urbanization level of Yueqing has further improved in the past ten years. The urbanization rate of Yueqing City has increased from 52.25 percent to 65.37 percent, an increase of 13.12 percentage points, which is 6.98 percentage points higher than the average of Wenzhou (Yueqing City Bureau of Statistics, 2021). In short, Yueqing City is a strong prefecture-level county whose economic development is in the mid to upper level of the national development scale, and the level of urban and rural economic development is relatively balanced.

In a region where the level of urban and rural economic development is relatively balanced, whether the educational resources are fair, whether the level of educational development is basically balanced, and how satisfied people are with the new policy are all practical issues worth exploring. A field investigation of this representative city can be of practical significance. Therefore, this paper takes Yueqing City as the representative of the Yangtze River Delta.

## Research Purposes

Taking Yueqing City as a case study, this paper has three research objectives under the dimensions of “from kindergarten to primary school” and “from primary school to junior high school”.

Firstly, it investigates respondents' satisfaction with public primary/junior high schools in the experimental area, conducting a comparative analysis between urban

and rural areas. The study identifies the primary objective factors influencing respondents' school choices.

Secondly, it comprehensively examines respondents' understanding and satisfaction with the new policy in Yueqing.

Finally, based on these investigations, the paper identifies current issues in education reform and provides relevant suggestions.

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## Methodology

### *Research Methodology*

This study mainly used 'wjx.com', a universal questionnaire designer software, to distribute questionnaires. The questionnaire was issued from July 23th to August 13th, 2022. The survey participants were residents of Yueqing City who have the right to compulsory education for their children, with children ranging from kindergarten to junior high school. Parents with children who are too young to attend kindergarten or have already enrolled in senior high school are not within the scope of this study. A total of 242 questionnaires were collected, with 8 identified as invalid, resulting in 234 valid questionnaires. According to the division of Yueqing Education Bureau, Yueqing is divided into the urban, Dajing, Hongqiao and Liushi school districts. The urban area referred to in this paper is the urban school district, and the rural school districts refer to the Dajing, Hongqiao and Liushi School districts. Accordingly, the 234 questionnaires included 38 questionnaires from urban and 196 from rural districts. In the later stages of the investigation, interviews were conducted with three respondents from urban school districts, two from Dajing, two from Hongqiao, and two from Liushi. That was, 3 urban respondents and 6 rural respondents.

### *Questionnaire Design*

Yueqing started implementing the new policy in 2020. Students under policy-care, such as children of martyrs, children of policemen who died or were disabled on duty, children of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan and so on, are free to select primary/junior high schools. Those who are not under policy-care are assigned to a public primary/public junior high school in the corresponding experimentation area according to household registration. They can also enroll in one or two (no more than two) private schools and participate in a lottery system. If one or two private schools are shaken up, students can choose

to go to the private school they enrolled in. If they give up, they are automatically divided into public schools. After the lottery, if some private schools are still not full, in the next round of lottery, students can continue to apply for these private schools. All the students are exempt from entrance examinations in compulsory education.

The questionnaire was mainly divided into three parts as follows.

The first part was basic information including the experimentation area, parents' education level, how many children in the family, etc.

The second part was to investigate the issue of respondents' school choice strategies and their objective influencing factors in the stage of "from kindergarten to primary school" and "from primary school to junior high school". According to each respondent's answer to the question "whether your kid(s) belongs to students under policy care", it entered the questionnaire system of "under policy-care students" or "non-policy-care students", respectively. In the corresponding questionnaire system, according to the answer of the question "what grade is your kid(s) studying in", respondents entered the questionnaire system of "from kindergarten to primary school" automatically when the answer was kindergarten, primary school Grade 1, Grade 2 or Grade 3. And respondents would enter the questionnaire system of "from primary school to junior high school" automatically when the answer was primary school Grade 4, 5, 6 or junior high school.

The division standard of primary school grades mainly took the implementation time of the new policy in Yueqing into account. Since 2020 was the first year of the implementation of the new policy, a student who was applying to enter primary school in 2020 is now in Grade 3. And also, considering it is still three years away from entering junior high school after all, their parents may not yet have specific plans. Therefore, an investigation of these respondents' experience of "from kindergarten to primary school" whose kids are currently studying in G1, G2, G3 in primary school is more appropriate. Similarly, the students who are studying in the first, second or third grade of junior high school have already had the experience of "from primary to junior high school" under the new policy. Thus, they are also within the scope of our "from primary to junior high school" survey. As for those students who are currently studying in G4, G5, G6 in primary school, they will soon face the problem of entering junior high school. At this stage, parents generally have certain plans in mind regarding their choice of school. Accordingly, it is suitable to investigate their experience of "from primary to junior high school".

Some schools have both primary and junior high levels. In these schools, students at the primary level have the right to rise directly to junior high. According to whether they choose to enter junior high directly, “from primary to junior high school” questionnaire for non-policy-care students was divided into a “direct-rise to junior high school” questionnaire and a “non-direct-rise to junior high school” questionnaire.

Therefore, this part of the questionnaire consisted of two sub-questionnaires: a “policy-care student questionnaire” and a “non-policy-care student questionnaire”. The former included a “from kindergarten to primary school” questionnaire and a “from primary to junior high school” questionnaire of the policy care students. The latter included a “from kindergarten to primary school” questionnaire, a “direct-rise to junior high school” questionnaire and a “non-direct-rise to junior high school” questionnaire of the non-policy-care students.

The third part examined respondents’ understanding of and satisfaction with the new policy in Yueqing. It included the degree/way of understanding of the new policy, satisfaction with the new policy and whether it disrupted their original education planning.

## Results

### *From kindergarten to primary school*

For the non-policy-care students from kindergarten to primary school, the satisfaction with the public primary schools designated was ranked as follows: “Satisfied” (60.47%), “Neutral” (16.28%), “Very satisfied” (11.63%), “Slightly dissatisfied” (6.98%), and “Very dissatisfied” (4.65%). Among these, urban respondents’ satisfaction with public primary schools was ranked as

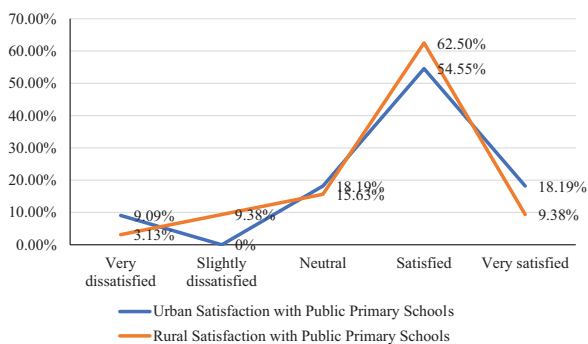
follows: “Satisfied” (54.55%), “Very satisfied” (18.19%), “Neutral” (18.19%) and “Very dissatisfied” (9.09%). Rural respondents’ satisfaction with public primary schools was ranked as follows: “Satisfied” (62.5%), “Neutral” (15.63%), “Very satisfied” (9.38%), “Slightly dissatisfied” (9.38%) and “Very dissatisfied” (3.13%). On the whole, the attitudes of urban and rural respondents towards public primary school showed a unified trend.

Regarding the main reasons why non-policy-care students were satisfied with public primary schools, the results showed that 70.97 percent of the respondents were satisfied with “Teacher resources and teaching level”, and 22.58 percent were satisfied because of being “Close to home”. 3.23 percent were satisfied because of “School food, accommodation conditions” and 3.23 percent because of “The cost”.

From the perspective of urban respondents alone, 87.5 percent were satisfied with “Teacher resources and teaching level”. 12.5 percent because of being “Close to home”. Among the rural respondents, 65.22 percent were satisfied with “Teacher resources and teaching level”. 26.09 percent were satisfied because of being “Close to home”, 4.35 percent because of “School food, accommodation conditions” and 4.35 percent because of “The cost”.

The main reasons for non-policy-care students’ dissatisfaction with public primary school are ranked as follows. 50% of the respondents chose “Teacher resources and teaching level” as the main reason for dissatisfaction. 25 percent of the respondents were not satisfied because of “School food, accommodation conditions”. 25 percent were dissatisfied because “Other kid(s) in the family is in another school and separate delivery is not convenient”. Separately, 66.67 percent of urban respondents were dissatisfied with “Teacher resources and teaching level” and 33.33 percent because “Other kid(s) in the family is in another school and separate delivery is not convenient”. As for rural respondents, 44.44 percent were dissatisfied with “Teacher resources and teaching level”. 33.33 percent were dissatisfied with “School food, accommodation conditions”, and 22.22 percent because “Other kid(s) in the family is in another school and separate delivery is not convenient”.

In the analysis of the satisfaction with public primary schools of the non-policy care respondents, we found that “Teacher resources and teaching level” was the most considered factor by urban and rural respondents. Primary school students are still young, so in addition to considering “Teacher resources and teaching level”, school food, accommodation conditions, and pick-up and drop-off problems are all important indicators for



**Figure 1** Comparison of satisfaction with public primary schools in urban and rural areas

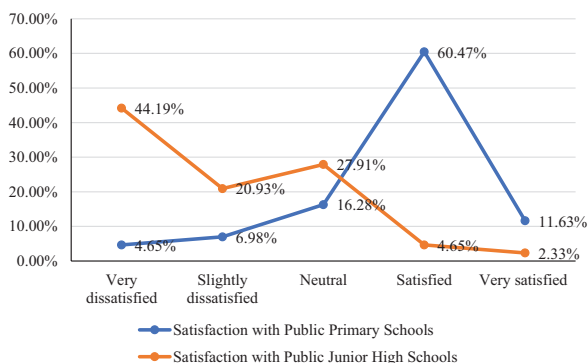
respondents to measure the public primary schools. Rural respondents would also be satisfied with the public primary schools because of the cost, which was not reflected among the urban respondents. This is also understandable. According to the “Statistical Bulletin of National Economic and Social Development of Yueqing City in 2021”, the average per capita disposable income of Yueqing City residents in the whole year is 62,942 yuan. The average per capita disposable income of urban and rural residents is 73,287 yuan and 4,1991 yuan, respectively (Yueqing City Bureau of Statistics, 2022). After all, there is still a significant disparity between the typical monthly income of households in urban and rural areas.

On the whole, “Teacher resources and teaching level” was the most considered factor why non-policy-care students were satisfied with public primary schools.

### From Primary School to Junior High School

#### *Satisfaction with public junior high schools in the experimentation area*

According to the statistics, for students under non-policy-care who gave up the opportunity of direct-rise, and students under non-policy-care as well as non-straight rise, the satisfaction of the public junior high school in the experimentation area was as follows: “Very dissatisfied” (44.19%), “Neutral” (27.91%), “Slightly dissatisfied” (20.93%), “Satisfied” (4.65%), and “Very satisfied” (2.33%). From the perspective of urban respondents alone, the percentage of “Very satisfied” was 50%, and “Very dissatisfied” was also 50%. The attitude was polarized. From the perspective of rural respondents alone, the responses were “Very dissatisfied” (46.34%), “Neutral” (29.27%), “Slightly dissatisfied” (19.51%), “Satisfied” (4.88%), and “Very satisfied” (0%).



**Figure 2** Comparison of non-policy-care students' satisfaction with public primary and public junior high schools

It can be seen that for students under non-policy-care, the urban respondents had both positive and negative attitudes towards the overall satisfaction of the public junior high, while the rural respondents' attitude towards the overall satisfaction of the public junior high was negative, and the percentage of “Very dissatisfied” ranked first, far exceeding the percentage of “Neutral”, which ranked second. Only 4.88 percent were “Satisfied”, and even 0 percent were “Very satisfied”.

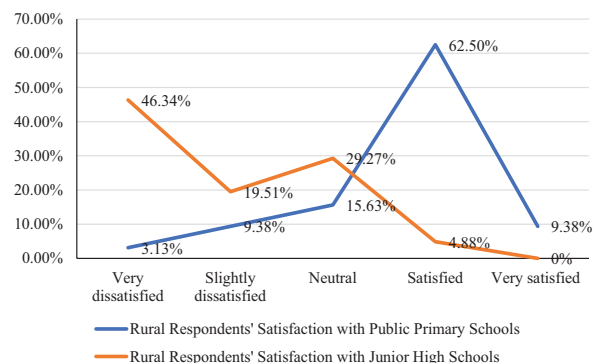
The biggest reason for dissatisfaction with public junior high was “Teacher resources and teaching level”.

Let us compare the satisfaction in public primary and public junior high schools of students under non-policy care, as shown in Figure 2, with the satisfaction of rural respondents with public primary and public junior high, as shown in Figure 3.

It can be clearly seen from the figures that there was a great difference in the satisfaction with public primary and public junior high, especially the satisfaction of rural respondents. The results showed that satisfaction with rural public primary was positive, while satisfaction with rural public junior high was overwhelmingly negative. This also greatly affected people's satisfaction with the implementation of the new policy (see *Analysis of understanding and satisfaction with new policies*).

#### *Objective factors affecting school choice in junior high school*

According to the data, the objective factors that affect the choices of students under-policy-care when entering junior high school were mainly as follows: “Teacher resources and teaching level”, “Good teaching hardware facilities”, and “Others”.



**Figure 3** Comparison of rural non-policy-care students' satisfaction with public primary and public junior high schools

The objective factors that affect the students under non-policy-care when choosing junior high schools were mainly as follows: “Teacher resources and teaching level”, “School’s good reputation”, “School is close to home”, and “Good teaching hardware facilities”.

*The next round of lottery in registering private junior high schools for students under non-policy care*

For students under non-policy-care, including of those who chose “non-direct-rise to junior high school”, 73.33 percent chose to register in the next round of lottery, while 26.67% chose not to register.

Why did 26.67 percent choose not to register? The main reasons were as follows. “Private Schools that can be registered in the next round are even worse than the public schools in teaching level” (62.5%), “The school fees are too high” (25%), and “The schools are too far from home” (12.5%). Even though they had low satisfaction with the public junior high school, they chose not to register for private junior high school in the next round. At first glance, this may seem contradictory. But after further interviews, we found an explanation for the apparent contradiction. According to the respondents, from the experience of previous years, the number of registrations for good private schools would be far greater than the number of enrollments stipulated. The teaching level is generally low in schools with which it is possible to register in the next round. Choosing to register is just hoping that good schools are not yet full. Choosing not to register is no longer looking forward to opportunities.

*The impact of the new policy on the initial plan for junior high school*

Has the implementation of the new policy affected the respondents’ initial plans for junior high school? The overall attitude of the respondents was like this: “Somewhat influential” (32.88%), “Slightly influential” (28.77%), “Very influential” (15.07%), “No effect” (12.33%), and “Extremely influential” (10.96%).

Taking the feedback of the urban area separately produces these results: “Slightly influential” (50%), “Somewhat influential” (25%), “No effect” (12.5%), and “Extremely influential” (12.5%). The rural respondents’ feedback was as follows: “Somewhat influential” (33.85%), “Slightly influential” (26.15%), “Very influential” (16.92%), “No effect” (12.31%), and “Extremely influential” (10.77%).

There were differences between urban and rural responses to the question of whether the new policy affects the initial junior high planning. This was consistent with the previous non-policy-care students’ satisfaction with

the public junior high. The attitude of rural respondents to the satisfaction of public junior high was overall negative, so the answer to these two questions would also make it more likely that the initial junior high planning was affected. The attitude towards this impact would also be more negative.

Concerning how to solve this problem and let the kids enter their ideal junior high, 57.14 percent of respondents chose “no plan, no solution” and 5.71 percent chose to buy school district housing.

*Analysis of Understanding and Satisfaction with New Policies*

The survey results showed that the degree of familiarity of the respondents with the new policy was as follows: “Slightly familiar” (49.57%), “Somewhat familiar” (23.93%), “Not at all familiar” (19.66%), “Moderately familiar” (3.42%), and “Extremely familiar” (3.42%).

Among these, the urban respondents’ choices were as follows: “Slightly familiar” (57.89%), followed by “Somewhat familiar” (21.05%), “Not at all familiar” (10.53%), “Moderately familiar” (5.26%), and “Extremely familiar” (5.26%). The rural respondents’ choices were as follows: “Slightly familiar” (47.96%), followed by “Somewhat familiar” (24.49%), “Not at all familiar” (21.43%), “Moderately familiar” (3.06%), and “Extremely familiar” (3.06%).

We can see that as regards the degree of familiarity with policy, both urban and rural respondents showed a certain consistency. The highest proportion of choice was “Slightly familiar”. An analysis of the educational level of the respondents in urban and rural areas shows that 28 percent of the respondents in rural areas were graduates of junior high school or below, 33 percent had high school/vocational/technical secondary school/technical school education, 19 percent had junior college degrees, and 20 percent had bachelor’s degrees. Among the urban respondents, junior college accounted for 36.84 percent, high school/vocational high school/technical secondary school/technical school accounted for 10.53 percent, 47.37 percent had bachelor’s degrees, and postgraduate degrees and above accounted for 5.26 percent. Therefore, the overall educational level of urban respondents is higher than the rural respondents. But regarding the familiarity with the new policy, urban and rural respondents showed a high degree of consistency. In other words, there was no trend that urban parents understand more about the new policy because of subjective factors such as the difference in respondents’ educational level.

This also reminds us that since it has nothing to do with the subjective factors of the recipient, is it related to the objective factors, such as policy's public relations efforts and the methods employed in the public relations campaigns?

As for the resources from which the respondents gained a better understanding of the new policy, the data showed that, respondents chose “Parent exchange groups” (47.41%), “Ask experienced friends” (42.24%), “Government website and service hall” (34.48%), “School staff” (23.28%), and “Others” (18.10%).

In answer to the question “Are you satisfied with the implementation of the new education policy in Yueqing city”, the overall survey results showed that the responses were “Neutral” (41.88%), “Satisfied” (20.51%), “Very dissatisfied” (15.38%), “Slightly dissatisfied” (13.68%), and “Very satisfied” (8.55%).

Among these, 63.16% of urban respondents chose “Neutral”, followed by “Very satisfied” (21.05%), “Satisfied” (10.53%), “Slightly dissatisfied” (5.26%) and “Very dissatisfied” (0%). Among the rural respondents, 37.76% chose “Neutral”, followed by “Satisfied” (22.45%), followed by “Very dissatisfied” (18.37%), “Slightly dissatisfied” (15.31%) and “Very satisfied” (6.12%). Comparing the urban and rural data, we found that rural respondents' satisfaction with the new policy was far lower than the urban (See Figure 4).

Based on the above analysis, we could speculate that the satisfaction with the rural public junior high had greatly affected the rural respondents' satisfaction with the new policy.

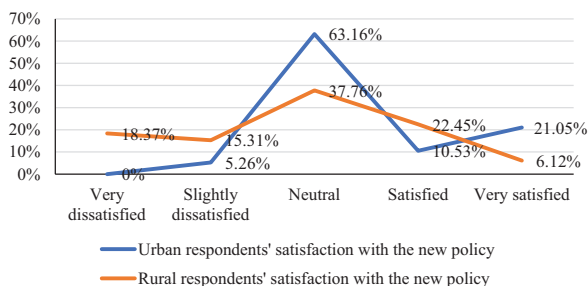
In the answer to the question “Has the new policy disrupted your initial education planning for kids”, the overall results showed that, “Somewhat influential” (35.59%) was the largest proportion. Comparing urban and rural data, it was found that rural respondents had the highest rates of “Somewhat influential” (35.35%) towards the new policy, while urban respondents appeared to be

more optimistic, with the highest rates of “Slightly influential” (42.11%).

To sum up, the satisfaction levels of urban and rural respondents with public primary schools showed a unified trend, which tended to be positive. However, this positive attitude changed when facing public junior high. The urban respondents had both positive and negative attitudes as regards their satisfaction with the public junior high, while the rural respondents' attitudes toward their satisfaction with the public junior high school were negative, and the percentage of “Very dissatisfied” ranked first. Rural respondents were more active in applying for private primary schools. Despite their low satisfaction with the public junior high schools, rural respondents chose not to register for private junior high in the next round. This seems contradictory, but it is caused by a feeling of helplessness or futility. This is mainly because the teaching level of the schools at which the students have a realistic chance of registering in the next round is inferior.

Regarding the influencing factors of school choices, whether it is from kindergarten to primary school or from primary school to junior high school, the most influential objective factor affecting both students under policy-care and non-policy-care was “Teacher resources and teaching level”.

As for the resources respondents utilized to better understand the new policy, the data showed that they were more likely to avail themselves of “Parent exchange groups” and “Ask experienced friends”, followed by “Government website and hall”. With respect to their degree of familiarity with policy, both urban and rural respondents showed a certain consistency. The highest proportion of choice was “Slightly familiar”. There was no trend that urban parents understand more about the new policy because of subjective factors such as the difference in respondents' educational levels. For rural respondents, satisfaction with rural public primary schools was positive, while satisfaction with rural public junior high schools was overwhelmingly negative, and this also greatly affected rural respondents' satisfaction with the implementation of the new policy. Comparing the urban and rural data, it is found that for satisfaction with the new policy, the rural respondents' satisfaction was far lower than that of the urban respondents.



**Figure 4** Satisfaction with the implementation of new compulsory education policy in Yueqing

## Discussion

The above survey results highlight a problem that satisfaction with public primary schools was positive, while satisfaction with public junior high schools was overwhelmingly negative. Regardless of being a primary school or junior high school, the most important factor affecting parents' school choices was "Teacher resources and teaching level". So, what is the level of junior high school education? Why does it cause the public to be so worried?

According to the official government document "Notice on the Implementation Measures for the Distribution and Enrollment of Directional Students in Yueqing Middle School in 2022" (General Education Division of Yueqing City Education Bureau, 2022), Wenzhou school-running level is divided into three levels, including Level-1, Level-2 and Level-3. Level-1 represents the highest level. In this document, there are ten public junior high schools rated as Level-1, eleven public junior high schools are rated as level-2, and twenty-two public junior high schools belong to level-3. In other words, except for the Yuecheng Public Boarding Middle School, which is not rated, among the remaining forty-three public junior high schools, 23.26 percent are rated at Level-1, 25.58 percent at Level-2, and 51.16 percent at Level-3. Thus, more than half of the city's junior high schools are rated as Level-3. There are also big differences between urban and rural districts. Take Liushi and Hongqiao School District as examples, both of which are at strong economic levels. Liushi School District has a total of thirteen public junior high schools, of which three are level-1 (23.08%), three are level-2 (23.08%), and seven are level-3 (53.85%). In Hongqiao School District, there are twelve junior high schools, of which three are level-1 (25%), five are level-2 (41.67%) and four are level-3 (33.33%). While Dajing School District, which is at the lowest economic level among the rural school districts, has a total of five public junior high schools, one of which is rated as level-1, and the remaining four are all at level-3. That means level-3 schools account for up to 80 percent in Dajing school district. The weaker the economy, the higher the proportion of such bad schools. In further interviews, some respondents said that junior high school is a particularly critical period in children's learning careers. At such an important stage, if the kids are unable to enter a good school, experience poor public teaching levels and a lackluster learning atmosphere, this will severely impair kids' learning potential. However, it is too expensive for many parents to purchase

housing in a good school district. As a result, their kids' fate can only be decided by the lottery, which creates a strong sense of helplessness.

Although the integration of urban and rural areas in Yueqing City has achieved great success in the economic field, and Yueqing was the first city to successfully pass the assessment of a basically balanced development of compulsory education at the provincial and national levels, (Yueqing City Federation of Social Sciences, 2022), there are still imbalances in the allocation of educational resources.

The problem of fairness in the personal sense is different from that in the national and social sense (Liu, 2002). With the imbalance of educational resources, in the view of many individuals, the new policy limits the opportunities for rural children to go to good schools in urban areas, and the cost of school district housing is once again highlighted.

"The equilibrium of compulsory education includes resource equilibrium and psychological equilibrium. That is, school-age children do not doubt about fairness because of the gap in the allocation of compulsory schools" (Sun, 2021).

The starting point of the new policy is to promote educational equality. But in the early years of implementation of the policy, the question arises of how to prevent rural children from becoming "victims", so that they can enjoy equal and homogeneous compulsory education. How do we adopt more effective policies to divert good educational resources to the rural areas in order to achieve resource balance, and then to achieve psychological balance? These are the keys to the popularity of the new policy.

The other problem is that, regarding the degree of familiarity with policy, both urban and rural respondents showed a certain consistency. There was no evidence that urban parents understand more about the new policy because of subjective factors, such as the difference in respondents' educational levels. Therefore, since it has nothing to do with the subjective factors of the recipients, it should be related to the objective factors, such as the policy's public relations efforts and the methods of public relations used.

As for the resources parents use to better understand the new policy, respondents are more likely to utilize "Parent exchange groups" and "Ask experienced friends", followed by "Government website and hall". No doubt, this is related to our traditional way of learning new things. "The pattern of Chinese culture can be summarized as a way of thinking and a way of life in which people imitate, compare and depend on each other

psychologically, emotionally and in terms of values, as well as a sense of security in the interdependent relationship between people and the environment” (Fang, 2013). In such a “relationship-based” model of culture, if there are experienced friends around, we are more likely to ask friends first.

However, the responsibilities of government departments in the promotion of new policy cannot be ignored. In addition to the written policy statements on the website of the Education Bureau and relevant news networks, is it possible to make the publicity of the new policy more accessible and understandable in a form that people expect? For example, considering the popularity of TikTok and WeChat in recent years, why not make use of these platforms, and change the formal written text of the policy into colloquial short videos that better reflect how modern people communicate? Using TikTok short videos for the teaching of fraud prevention by police has been successful. Therefore, it is suggested that the public relations efforts of the new policy by the Education Bureau can follow this example. This is also a good starting point for the government to improve people's satisfaction with the new policy.

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## Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper took Yueqing City, which is located in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, as a case, representing the Yangtze River Delta where the economic urban-rural integration is relatively balanced, to examine the practical problems faced by the third-tier cities along the southeast coast after the implementation of the new policy of “Simultaneous enrollment of public and private schools” for compulsory education, so as to provide data reference for the Yueqing municipal government to take further measures and deepen reform in the future. The questionnaire survey was adopted as the main method and interviews were used as a supplement. The results showed that: (1) The most important objective factor affecting people's choice of schools was “Teacher resources and teaching level”. Regarding the satisfaction of public primary schools, the attitudes of urban and rural respondents both showed a positive trend. However, there were obvious differences in satisfaction between urban and rural areas towards public junior high schools. Rural respondents showed a negative attitude to public junior high schools, and the satisfaction with the new policy in rural areas was also far lower than in urban areas; (2) To achieve a better understanding of the new policy, both urban and rural people's first choice

was “Parent exchange groups” and “Ask experienced friends”, but not “Government's website and service hall”. Based on these results, this paper suggests that the government can utilize platforms such as TikTok and WeChat, and use colloquial language to strengthen the publicity of the new policy.

As for the first problem, it is actually the problem of unbalanced high-quality educational resources in junior high schools which leads to psychological imbalance. This requires the government's long-term planning and efforts. What the Yueqing City Education Bureau should do after the implementation of the new policy is to adopt incentive exchange policies and strengthen inter-school teacher exchanges, promote urban excellent teachers to teach in rural schools, give rural teachers the opportunity to flow to urban areas so as to achieve a comprehensive and substantial improvement in the quality of teachers, accelerate the balance of high-quality educational resources, and truly let all children enjoy equal and homogeneous compulsory education. But how to make the reform more efficient and speed up the reform is what parents most expect, especially rural parents.

The result found in this article provides a data reference for the Yueqing municipal government to take further measures and deepen reform in the future. At the same time, it also provides a perspective for future generations. That is, in the coastal cities with relatively balanced development of urban-rural integration, the objective existence of the urban-rural gap still affects the balance of educational resources. Hopefully, more researchers can conduct on-the-spot investigations on the issue of whether this situation also exists in other coastal prefecture-level cities. Perhaps the research can then move up from a specific prefecture-level city to multiple prefecture-level cities, from a regional problem to a universal problem in multiple regions, to rise from a point to surface. Finally, it would be useful to promote the idea that local governments can learn from each other and formulate local policies from a more macro perspective.

Because this paper is only from the perspective of parents, we focus more on finding the problems. As for how the government should combine the actual situations, conduct multi-faceted and multi-level comprehensive analysis, and construct long-term mechanisms, so as to expand the coverage of high-quality resources and achieve balanced education resources, this is yet to be solved, and it is a subject that can be studied further.

Education is a major concern for all countries in the world. In the process of education reform, it would be useful to determine whether other countries with

urban-rural gaps also face the problem of unbalanced educational resources, and what effective policies have been adopted. This is a topic that can be compared internationally and discussed in depth. It is expected that scholars can deepen the discussion of this issue cross-regionally and trans-nationally.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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