



## The Tibetan Education Model in Sichuan Province

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### Abstract

**Background and Aims** This doctoral dissertation investigated the development of Tibetan education in China, focusing on the educational model in Sichuan Province. The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of bilingual education, the boarding school system, and vocational education in Tibetan areas, while addressing their cultural, social, and economic implications. The research included assessing the implementation of national ethnic education policies, identifying challenges in Tibetan education, and proposing recommendations for improvement.

**Methodology:** The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining educational anthropology with quantitative analysis. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed among students, teachers, and parents, as well as in-depth interviews with four Tibetan education experts and representatives from a prominent educational group in Sichuan. The research process involved fieldwork, including participant observation and ethnographic interviews, to capture the cultural and social dimensions of Tibetan education.

**Results:** The findings revealed that bilingual education has been instrumental in preserving Tibetan language and culture, although disparities in resource allocation persist. 2. The boarding school system effectively serves nomadic populations, but raises concerns about cultural detachment. Vocational education was found to align with local economic needs, yet it requires further development to enhance its impact. 3. The study concludes that a culturally sensitive approach, strengthened teacher training, and increased investment are essential for improving Tibetan education.

**Conclusion:** The research highlights that while educational programs promote Tibetan culture and economic needs, problems like cultural estrangement and inequity still exist. Long-term improvement requires a system that is better funded, more professionally supported, and culturally aware.

**Keywords:** Tibetan Education; Bilingual Education; Boarding School System; Vocational Education; Educational Anthropology; Sichuan Province

### Introduction

Incorporate traditional Tibetan cultural elements into the curriculum, such as language instruction, Buddhist philosophy, and Tibetan art forms like thangka painting and sand



mandala creation. The significance of exploring and researching the development of Tibetan education in China is of great significance to the development of a country and the revitalization of a nation. (Johnson & Chhetri, 2000) Since 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State (Backer, 2009) Council have successively issued "China Education Modernization 2035" (Zhu, 2019). and "Implementation Plan for Accelerating the Modernization of Education (2018-2022)". (Peng & Chenhui, 2025) This means that with the support of education modernization, national modernization, and ethnic education modernization, the modernization of ethnic regions promotes the stable development of ethnic education and society, which has become a feasible way for ethnic education at present. (Liang, & Li, 2025) On October 16, 2022, the 20th National Congress of the CPC was held in Beijing. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China is a very important meeting held at a critical moment when the whole party and people of all ethnic groups embark on a new journey of building a socialist modern country in an all-round way and march towards the second-century goal (Rudenko & Yevdokymova, 2022).

In terms of education, the report of the 20th National Congress specifically pointed out that in the new era, we must implement the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education, strengthen the support of modern construction talents, promote educational reform and development, provide satisfactory education for the people, and build an educational powerhouse.

The 20th National Congress of the CPC pointed out the direction for the education development of the new era, providing the fundamental follow-up, in-depth study to grasp the party's twenty great education spirit, the new era of education development (Ogunniran, 2020).

development, scientific and technological progress, and the inheritance of ethnic cultural heritage. (Liu, 2022) Therefore, it is of certain theoretical and practical significance to comprehensively study the history, current situation, and modernization of modern education in Tibet from the perspective of culture. (Zelcer-Lavid, 2018) Tibetan education has a long history. In the past, Tibetan education mainly focused on temple education, while modern education began to sprout in the Republic of China period, starting after the founding of the People's Republic of China. (Choedup, 2017) The Tibetans are distributed in different administrative regions of China. Sichuan province has two Tibetan autonomous prefectures, which interact significantly more with other nationalities than in other regions (Dirks et al. 1994).

In this context, how to correctly understand the educational significance of Tibetan traditional culture; (Klieger, & Klieger, 1986) how to objectively evaluate the history and role of Buddhist temple education in Tibet; how to understand the basic relationship between modern education and national education, school education and temple education; (Tinley,



& Naga, 1993) how to face different cultures to promote the further development of Tibetan education, economy, and society, directly related to the further realization of education modernization and the development direction of cultural education in Tibet (Bass, 1998).

As a part of the Chinese nation, the modern education of the Tibetan (Nima, 1997) people mainly relies on the policies and input of the Chinese government in the education of ethnic minorities. It is also worth studying how Tibetan educators play a special role in formulating and implementing Tibetan education policies (Postiglione, 2008).

Due to the backwardness of basic education in minority areas, it is more difficult for students in minority areas to go to universities. In order to make up for this practical problem, the state has adopted a series of policies. In the college entrance examination, ethnic minority students can be encouraged to attend universities through policies such as lower scores and preparatory courses. I passed the minority preparatory examination to enter Sichuan Agricultural University to read an undergraduate course. In order to encourage ethnic minority students to study for a master's degree, the state has formulated a program for training the high-level backbone talents of ethnic minorities, which makes enrollment lives according to different schools and different regions every year. It was through this plan that I was admitted to Southwest University for Nationalities and completed my master's studies.

My learning experience is also a common learning experience for most Tibetan students of my age. The Tibetan population is widely distributed, and the population is large and sparse. According to the characteristics of different regions, the state adopts some differentiated education policies, such as allowing Tibetan students to study in mainland cities in the Tibet Autonomous Region and "9+3" free vocational education in Tibet-related areas in Sichuan. Sichuan Province's Tibetan areas offer a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural richness. Here are some ideas and tips for exploring this region.

### Research Objectives

1. To study education in the Tibetan area of Sichuan Province.
2. To develop an effective educational model for Tibetan areas in Sichuan Province, China
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of the educational model in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan Province, China.

This particular study is designed to elucidate and underscore the significance of several pivotal elements that play a crucial role in the evolution and advancement of educational practices within the Tibetan context. These key components encompass the realm of ethnic minority education, the traditional practices of Tibetan temple education, the strategic implementation of bilingual education, the structured environment of boarding education,





and the practical approach of vocational education. The research methodology employed in this study is multifaceted, incorporating the analytical tools and perspectives of educational anthropology, complemented by in-depth expert interviews. These methods are meticulously chosen to dissect and understand the intricate logical relationships that exist between these various aspects of Tibetan educational development. By doing so, the study aims to provide a comprehensive overview that not only highlights the individual importance of each component but also reveals how they collectively contribute to the broader educational landscape in

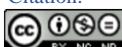
## Literature Review

In terms of education, the report of the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress specifically pointed out that in the new era, we must implement the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education, strengthen the support of modern construction talents, promote educational reform and development, provide satisfactory education for the people, and build an educational powerhouse. The relevant research results of Sandora (2025), pedagogy, anthropology, and educational anthropology provide me with valuable ideas and a basis. Therefore, in the general research of Tibetan education, attention should be paid to both the empirical study of the theories and methods of ethnology and the educational research of Tibetan education; in general, it is necessary to review and summarize the literature research from the following aspects: Research on Tibetan education.

For the Tibetan people, ethnic education has become an important support for social development, scientific and technological progress, and the inheritance of ethnic cultural heritage. Therefore, it is of certain theoretical and practical significance to comprehensively study the history, current situation, and modernization of modern education in Tibet from the perspective of culture. Tibetan education has a long history. In the past, Tibetan education mainly focused on temple education, while modern education began to sprout in the Republic of China period, starting after the founding of the People's Republic of China. The Tibetans are distributed in different administrative regions of China. Sichuan province has two Tibetan autonomous prefectures, which interact significantly more with other nationalities than in other regions.

## Research on the development of Tibetan education

The research on Tibetan education from a macro perspective includes the development of Tibetan traditional education and the cultural performance (Shi, W., & Nicolas, 2023), and the educational process in the change of Tibetan education. The characteristics of the existing studies are summarized in the following aspects: Most of the first-hand documents on the study of traditional Tibetan education are Tibetan language



materials and historical materials, which are mainly scattered in geographical and historical documents in Tibetan areas, temple records of major monasteries, religious and legal history, and related biographies of eminent monks. For example, recorded the development of Buddhism and the education of Tibetan Buddhism, the interpretation and provisions of the teaching content of the temple in the related works of Tibetan Buddhism, and the works written by Coleman (Coleman, 2016).

At the same time, on the basis of the compilation and summary of these Tibetan historical materials, the academic community (Travers, 2020). has made a detailed account of the history and social development of Tibetan education, such as The General History of Tibet. These research results, together with the Tibetan materials, provide a reference for the macro-research of Tibetan education (Hasmath & Hsu, 2007).

Simultaneously, while engaging in the process of compiling and summarizing these historical documents about Tibet, the scholarly community has undertaken a meticulous examination and documentation of the historical trajectory and societal evolution of educational practices within Tibetan culture. (Ghosh, 1996) This comprehensive effort has culminated in the creation of authoritative texts such as "The General History of Tibet" by Qingyin and Shufen, published in the year 2002. These scholarly contributions, enriched by the inclusion of Tibetan source materials, offer invaluable insights and serve as a foundational reference for those conducting macro-level research into the educational landscape of Tibet. Furthermore, these academic endeavors have not only chronicled the development of educational systems in Tibet but have also shed light on the unique challenges and triumphs that have characterized the educational journey in the region. The narrative extends beyond mere historical documentation; it encompasses the sociocultural influences, the interplay of traditional values with modern educational paradigms, and the impact of policy decisions on the accessibility and quality of education for the Tibetan populace. This holistic approach to understanding Tibet's educational history has been instrumental in shaping contemporary educational policies and practices, ensuring they are more attuned to the specific needs and aspirations of the Tibetan people. As a result, the body of knowledge on Tibetan education continues to grow, offering a richer, more nuanced understanding of its past, present, and potential future directions.

Second, the macro-research of Tibetan education has gradually become a research hotspot after the reform and opening up. From the perspective of time, after the reform and opening up, the macro-research of Tibetan education began the process of specialization and systematization. With the steady development of education and the further deepening of ethnic education research, the relevant achievements in traditional Tibetan education and the modern changes in Tibetan education have appeared. The research achievements in the

early stages of reform and opening up focus on the summary and analysis of the achievements of Tibetan traditional education.

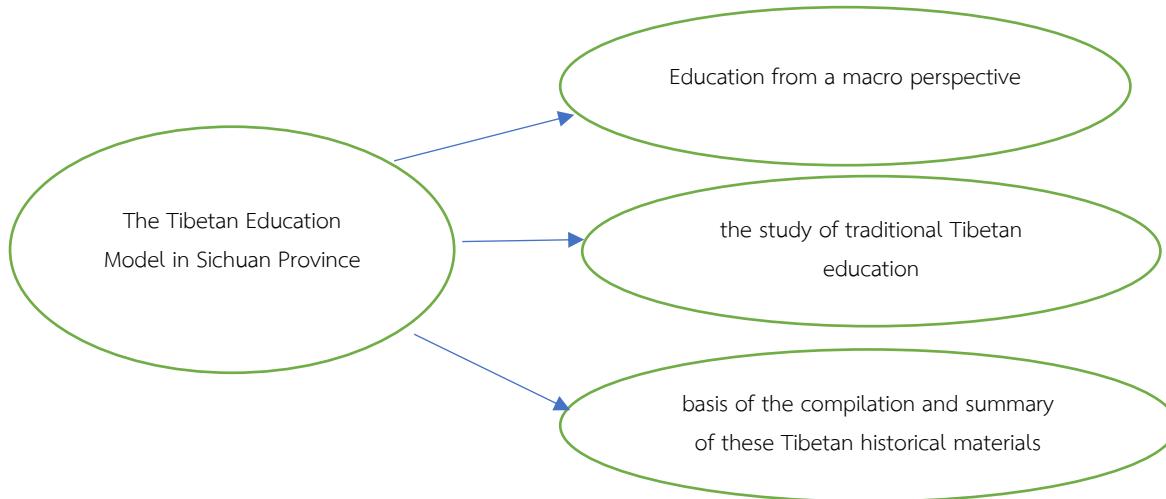
### Research on Tibetan bilingual education

Tibetan education is accompanied by the implementation of bilingual education through the establishment of modern schools. At the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), there were few exchanges between ethnic groups. At this time, fewer people used Chinese in ethnic minority areas, and Chinese had not been popularized throughout the country. On February 6, 1956, the State Council issued the Instructions on the Promotion of Putonghua, officially determining the standard of Putonghua and promoting it to the whole country. The Chinese ethnic minorities all need to face the problem of bilingual education in their ethnic education. With the intensification of Globalization, world culture and economic development rely more and more heavily on Chinese and English, and bilingual education in the Kangba and Ando dialects, which are non-Lhasa speakers, is also facing increasing challenges. Through the investigation of the use of Danba County and the status quo of Tibetan-Chinese bilingual education in Kangba dialect areas, Chinese and English, and analyzing the existing problems, this paper believes that the effective implementation of bilingual education not only requires school education to make some adjustments on the existing basis but also needs the cooperation of the community. Once the school and the community form educational interactions, bilingual education will achieve twice the result with half the effort (Badennima, 2010).

Educational anthropology. From the above summarized research results, it can be found that both the overall research of Tibetan education and the research of Tibetan Buddhist temple education generally focus on the diachronic research of Tibetan education. This study also needs to be based on the specific social situation in the specific research, from the perspective of culture analysis of the theory and practice of education, and pay more attention to the research method of field work and ethnography writing, in the community situation through field investigation on the Tibetan education, thus needs to draw on national pedagogy related achievements and reference.

In the vast majority of ethnological works within the field of anthropology, one will invariably come across content that is closely related to education. This is because education can be meticulously analyzed and examined as a form of local knowledge within the broader context of cultural research. When we endeavor to understand educational issues through the lens of cultural research, it becomes evident that the concepts of pedagogy and education as they pertain to ethnology can vary significantly depending on the specific subject background and the initial perspective from which the research is undertaken.

## Concept of framework



**Figure 1** Concept of framework

## Research Methodology

Overview of the study methods. The present study mainly uses the following research methods: Field Investigation Method In order to obtain first-hand information, the field investigation method was used in this study. Case Analysis Method Quantitative Analysis Method.

## Research result

The People's Republic of China established the ethnic education policy. Initial stage (1949-1965) In the field of education, the state tried to explore how to combine the educational heritage of the Republic of China, the educational experience of the border area of the Communist Party, and the educational model of the Soviet Union, which became the core task of the educational circle of New China in the 1950s. The distribution of educational rights has become an important issue to be solved in the New China. Therefore, the country first explores ways to realize the equal educational rights of people of all ethnic groups at the institutional level. In 1949, Article 53 of the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference stipulated that "the people's government should help the people of all ethnic minorities to develop their political, economic, cultural, and educational undertakings." In September 1951, the first National Conference on Ethnic Education was held grandly, which clearly pointed out that the education of ethnic minorities was an indispensable part of the educational construction of new China. In 1952, the Decision of the Administrative Council of the Central People's Government on the Establishment of Administrative Institutions for Ethnic Education was promulgated, which stipulated: "The educational administrative institutions for ethnic education shall be established within the

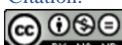


central people's government, and the relevant local educational administrative departments at various levels or special persons shall be assigned to be in charge of the education of ethnic minorities." In accordance with the requirements of this document, the "Department of Ethnic Education" was set up in the Ministry of Education of the Central People's Government, laying a solid foundation for ensuring the distribution and implementation of the educational rights of ethnic minorities.

During this period, the main goal of minority education was to train minority cadres. In 1950, the Implementation Plan for Cultivating Cadres of Ethnic Minorities clearly stated that "to encourage and help minority students to receive various higher education, all minority students who are admitted to institutions of higher learning (including minority institutions of higher learning) enjoy treatment at public expense." In 1951, the Decision of the Central People's Government on Ethnic Affairs also stressed that the training of ethnic minority cadres is the main task of the ethnic college and requires regular reporting to the government council.

In 1956, the second National Conference on Ethnic Minority Education was held, which further clarified the goal of ethnic minority education, that is, to narrow the gap between the education of ethnic minorities and the Han nationality. To achieve this goal, the 1956 "Matters on the Priority Admission of Ethnic Minority Students" proposed: "There should be special care given to ethnic minority students. As long as their subject scores meet the minimum admission criteria and their Chinese level is estimated to be able to understand the lecture, they will be given priority. "Under the guidance of this policy, by 1959, the number of ethnic minority students in colleges and universities nationwide had reached 16,000, up 27 times from the previous period. To further increase the opportunities for higher education for ethnic minorities, the 1962 Notice of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China on the Priority Admission of Ethnic Minority Students clearly proposed the enrollment method of "ethnic minority students with the same achievement and priority admission. "According to statistics, the number of ethnic minority students in institutions of higher learning nationwide increased from 2,100 in 1951 to 28,700, or more than thirteen times, in 1962. With the deepening and implementation of the education policy, the education cause in minority areas has made remarkable progress.

In 1964, the state further strengthened its support for the education of ethnic minorities and issued the Instructions on Strengthening Education in Ethnic Minority Areas, emphasizing the important role of education in promoting the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas. The directive clearly calls for the promotion of Putonghua and for respect and protection of the spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities to ensure that ethnic minority students can master the common language and develop the language culture of the nation.





**Development Period (1966-1990)** During the "Cultural Revolution, the education policies of ethnic minorities formulated in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China were seriously affected, and the educational administrative institutions and schools of ethnic minorities, as well as the protection of the education rights of ethnic minorities, were all impacted. During this period, the minority higher education deviated from the direction of the Party's ethnic education policy, which led to the obstruction of the minority higher education. According to relevant statistics, China's higher education for ethnic minorities was hit hard during this period, with only the Central Institute for Nationalities and the Guangxi Institute for Nationalities being retained nationwide and the remaining eight colleges for nationalities being abolished or suspended. This not only has a destructive impact on the scale and speed of the development of minority higher education but also has a profound impact on the country's training and reserve of talents in minority areas, thus frustrating the economic and social development of minority areas due to the stagnation of education.

### **Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation**

**Background:** In today's globalization and diversity, ethnic bilingual education is not only an important means to maintain cultural diversity but also a key way to promote educational equity and improve the quality of education. With the increasing attention paid to the education of ethnic minorities, ethnic bilingual education plays an irreplaceable role in promoting ethnic unity, enhancing ethnic cultural confidence, and improving the comprehensive quality of ethnic minority students. Especially in remote areas and ethnic minority areas, bilingual education has become a bridge connecting tradition and modernity, local and the world, opening a broader vision and more development opportunities for ethnic minority students. **Significance:** In-depth study of ethnic bilingual education can not only help us to better understand the nature and laws of bilingual education, but also provide theoretical support and practical guidance for solving the specific problems in the practice of bilingual education. Through the systematic analysis of the implementation status, effectiveness, and challenges of bilingual education, we can find the existing problems and deficiencies, and then put forward targeted improvement measures and suggestions. This is of great significance for promoting the sustainable development of ethnic bilingual education, improving the educational quality of ethnic minority students, and promoting ethnic unity and social progress.

### **Suggest and research further**

Finally, we will leverage advancements in technology, such as online learning platforms and virtual reality, to create immersive and interactive learning experiences. These



innovations will not only make education more accessible to a wider audience but also prepare students for the increasingly digitalized workplaces of the future.

Our vision for the future of ethnic vocational education is one of continuous improvement, inclusivity, and innovation. By implementing these comprehensive policy suggestions and future outlooks, we aim to create a dynamic and responsive vocational education system that empowers students, meets the needs of industry, and contributes to the overall progress and prosperity of our nation.

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