



## An Exploration on the Development of National Education in Inner Mongolia

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**Abstract:** Education is a cornerstone of national rejuvenation and social progress. Inner Mongolia locates in the north of China and it serves the guardian position in the map of China. The prosperity and stability of the region will have direct and profound impact to the neighboring regions as well as the county. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the education system of Inner Mongolia has insisted on strengthening the foundation, maintaining integrity and innovation, and has promoted the historic leapfrog development from scale to quality of education at all levels. Inner Mongolia is the birthplace of China's system of regional ethnic autonomy and has a glorious tradition of ethnic unity. Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region holds the main line of casting the consciousness of the Chinese nation's community, and combines the cultivation and practice of socialist core values with the education of national unity and progress. The paper is to answer the following questions: What is National Education of Inner Mongolia? What are the guiding principles of national education of Inner Mongolia? What achievement has Inner Mongolia has made in the past ten years? What measures has the government adopted to promote national education in Inner Mongolia? With the brief introduction of Inner Mongolia and its education situation, the paper first introduced the concept of nation and national education before discussing the development of national education of Inner Mongolia. The main body of the study discusses the answers to the above questions with the data released by the government department, hoping to give insights to the readers a good understanding of national education in Inner Mongolia, China.

**Keywords:** national education, Inner Mongolia, schools, university, government

### Introduction

As the third biggest province in China, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (shorten as Inner Mongolia) lies in northern China, bordering Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning and Hebei in the northeast, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Ningxia in the south, Gansu in the southwest, and Russia and Mongolia in the north, spanning the northeast, north and northwest regions. The border of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region stretches for 4,200 kilometers, with a total area of more than 1.18 million square kilometers. More than half of its land is covered by grasslands and forests<sup>[1]</sup>. There are more than 25 million people from 55 national groups including Mongolian, Han, Manchu and Hui living here. It is the earliest province whose majority is Mongolian. Inner Mongolia is the birthplace of China's ethnic regional autonomy system.



Figure 1: Map of Inner Mongolia (marked red)

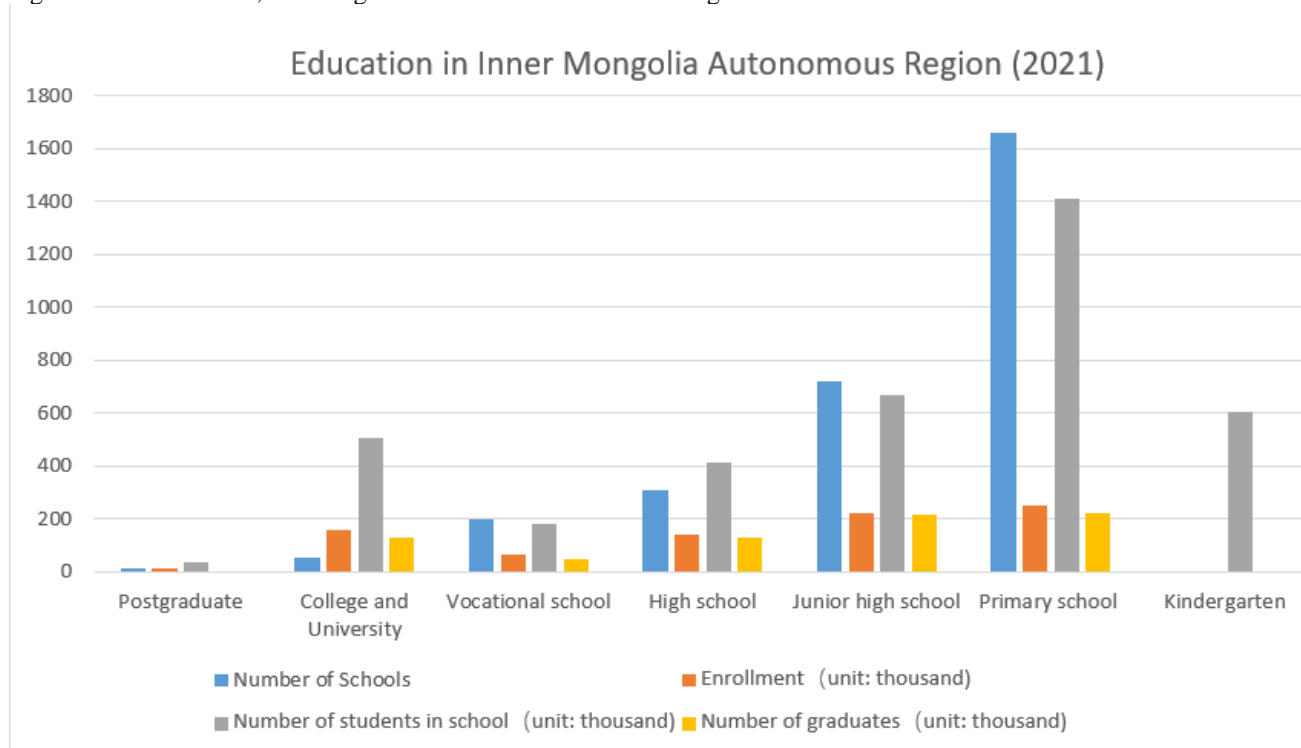
After years of hard work, national education in Inner Mongolia has formed a comprehensive system from pre-school education to higher education, with a well-designed structure and distinctive national characteristics. The proportion of ethnic minority



students in each school exceeds the basic requirement of education department, and all major educational indicators meet the needs of the society. The scale and level of minority education have greatly improved since the founding of the region. National education in Inner Mongolia has played an important role in the new era and new journey in building a beautiful Inner Mongolia and a great China Dream.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, the party committee and government of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region studied and implemented the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's series of important speeches while insisted on taking education as the basic work for unity and development in ethnic areas. The local government offered sufficient support on national education. In career development planning, priority is given to planning national education, investing in financial funds to ensure national education, and prioritizing national education in the allocation of public resources. The scale and level of education of minorities have reached a new height due to the rapid growth of the national education system.

Data from education department of Inner Mongolia shows the current education achievement. As of the end of 2021, there are 11 postgraduate universities in the region, with 13,000 enrollments (including part-time students) and 34,000 graduate students (including part-time students), an increase of 5.9% over the previous year. There are 54 colleges and universities, with 158,000 students enrolled, 507,000 students and 130,000 graduates. There are 200 secondary vocational education schools, with an enrollment of 67,000 students, 179,000 students and 49,000 graduates. The number of high schools reached 307, with 411,000 students and 132,000 graduates. There are 719 junior high schools, with 220,000 students enrolled, 666,000 students and 217,000 graduates. The number of primary schools reached 1,661, with an enrollment of 249,000, 1.409 million students and 221,000 graduates. 604,000 children are studying in kindergartens (Figure 2). The gross enrollment rate of junior high school was 96.5%, and the gross enrollment rate of senior high school was 92.4%.



**Figure 2, Education in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (2021)**

## Literature Review

### 1. nation

Nation in Chinese is called Min Zu, which was recorded by Xiao Zixian in his book "*Book of Southern Qi - Gaoyi Biography*" in the Liang Dynasty of the Southern Dynasties (479-502 AD)<sup>[2]</sup>. It was written, "The national identity of young men and women in the Central Plains has not changed completely. However, they do not wear hats, open their legs, and lean on their sides (sitting posture). In life, they use foreign etiquette everywhere". The meaning of the word "ethnic" is similar to that of "nation" used in modern times. In addition, the "nationality" in Li Quan's "Taibai Yinjing" in the Tang Dynasty is also used as a word, but its meaning is the people.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, a German philosopher, argued that each distinct linguistic group was an independent nation that had its own life and should control its own life. In addition to language, other scholars of 20<sup>th</sup> century have added many new objective criteria to the formation of national groups, such as common area, blood, ethnic group, religion, or common belief<sup>[3]</sup>.

In modern times, the Japanese used the term nation to refer to people or ethnic group, and the term was introduced to China. However, since the term nation became popular, its application has produced a variety of meanings. There is also a certain degree of commonality or similarity between these different levels of meaning, and it is used to refer to community of people in which people are related to each other by a series of characteristics that enable them to interact with other different types of human communities. In other words, the term nation originally referred to a connected group of people, either by occupation or by blood and relationships.

For some scholars, the essence of a nation is subjective consciousness rather than any objectively shared qualities, whether political, cultural, or biological. Hugh Seton-Watson put it this way, "A nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one."<sup>[4]</sup>

In China, the definition of a nation is taken from Friedrich Engels's book *"The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State"*. Its definition is as follows: A nation is a stable community of people formed in a certain historical development stage. Nations have common characteristics in terms of historical origin, production methods, language, culture, customs, and psychological identity<sup>[5]</sup>. Religion plays an important role in the formation and development of some ethnic groups.

## 2. National education

National education In China is often referred to as "ethnic education", "minority education". This study will use the term national education to refer to the above connotations. What do scholars define national education? First, a clear definition of national education is the premise of constructing the theoretical system of this study. Currently, there are 11 articles on CNKI devoted to the "concept of national education". In Wang Xihong's "The Proposition and Significance of the Duality Theory of Ethnic Minority Education", he summarized it in a broad sense as "the theory of national liberation education" with five examinations.<sup>[6]</sup> In a narrow sense, since the founding of the People's Republic of China, there have been as many as 26 theories about the concept of national education in various documents. Wang Jian summarized it into 6 theories including "national education theory" in "Ethnic Pedagogy"<sup>[7]</sup>, and Teng Xing summarized it into 5 theories in "Discipline Development and Discipline Construction of Chinese Educational Anthropology"<sup>[8]</sup>. Due to the similar literature resources, the scholars' explanations of national education tend to be same with each other. After reviewing foreign literature, it can be summarized that the classification of national education is composed of ethnic minority traditional education, the modern education of ethnic minorities, vocational education of ethnic minorities and adult education of ethnic minorities. Some views argue that: First, the traditional education of ethnic minorities is the promotion of individual traditional education implemented by ethnic minorities with a small population in a multi-ethnic country under a certain social and cultural background. Second, the modern education of ethnic minorities is a social activity that promotes individual socialization in a multi-ethnic country for ethnic groups with a small population under a certain social and cultural background. Third, vocational education of ethnic minorities can be divided into secondary vocational and technical education for ethnic minorities and higher vocational and technical education. Fourth, adult education for ethnic minorities can be divided into primary adult education for ethnic minorities and higher adult education.

### **The Development of National Education Research**

Since the 1990s, national education research in China has been expanding. Horizontally, it involves ethnic preschool education, ethnic basic education, ethnic higher education, ethnic vocational education, and ethnic adult education; vertically, it involves national education general theory, national education management, national education history, national education psychology, and national education theory. A number of major scientific research achievements have been made in the aspects of education, foreign nationality education, nationality education curriculum and subject construction, nationality education teachers and minority girls' education. In addition, academic papers and monographs on regional studies and micro-research on national education have also been published. At present, China's national education research has gradually become the focus of attention at home and abroad, and the exchanges and cooperation between Chinese scholars and the international community are becoming more frequent. In terms of research nature, like ordinary educational research, national education research also includes quantitative research and qualitative research, and at the same time, it focuses attention to basic research and applied research. In terms of research methods, there is an interdisciplinary and diversified trend. Wang Jian stated,

“National education, as both field of multidisciplinary comprehensive research and interdisciplinary subject, can learn from the adjacent ethnology, education, cultural anthropology, religion, etc. It is flexible to use its research methods in the discipline”<sup>[9]</sup>.

### National Education in Inner Mongolia

Education is a cornerstone of national rejuvenation and social progress. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the education system of Inner Mongolia has insisted on strengthening the foundation, maintaining integrity and innovation, and has promoted the historic leapfrog development from scale to quality of education at all levels. Inner Mongolia is the birthplace of China's system of regional ethnic autonomy and has a glorious tradition of ethnic unity. Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region holds the main line of casting the consciousness of the Chinese nation's community, and combines the cultivation and practice of socialist core values with the education of national unity and progress. Ethnic minorities are inseparable from the Han nationality, and the ideas of ethnic minorities are inseparable from each other. Inner Mongolia is constantly improving the bilingual education system, comprehensively strengthening the national standard language education, ensuring that minority students master and use the national standard language and writing, while respecting and guaranteeing the freedom of ethnic minorities to use and develop their own languages. At the same time, Inner Mongolia advocates and encourages all ethnic groups to learn languages from each other, and promotes exchanges and integration of various ethnic groups. In November 2016, Inner Mongolia officially promulgated and implemented the "Regulations on Ethnic Education of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region", and the development of ethnic education is guaranteed by the legal system<sup>[10]</sup>. The 10th Party Congress of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region proposed to give priority to the development of ethnic education and maintain the advanced level of ethnic education in China. At present, the proportion of ethnic minority students in each school stage in Inner Mongolia exceeds the proportion of the population, and the main educational indicators are higher than the average level of the whole region. The scale and level of minority education have reached a record high. In 2019, the government of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region issued the "Implementation Opinions on Comprehensively and Deeply Carrying Out the Work of National Unity and Progress to Consolidate the Consciousness of the Chinese Nation Community" and the implementation plan of the education system to strengthen the education of national unity and progress in schools at all levels and types in the region<sup>[11]</sup>.

Inner Mongolia Education Statistic( Every 100,000 people)

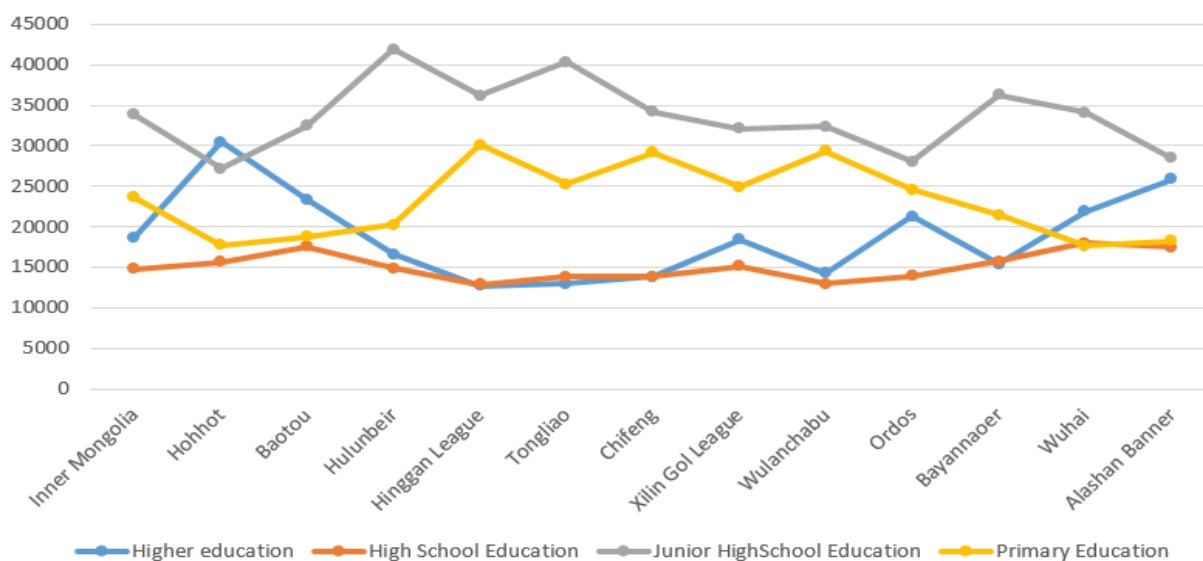


Figure 3, Inner Mongolia Education Statistic (Every 100,000 people) of year 2020

From kindergarten to high school education, and then to higher education, after 70 years of development, national education in Inner Mongolia made productive progress. Figure 3, Inner Mongolia Education Statistic. Today, in Mongolian, pre-school Mongolian-Chinese bilingual education is universal and independent primary and secondary schools for ethnic minorities account for 17.51% of the total number of schools in the region. 24 colleges and universities in the region have opened 104 Mongolian-Chinese bilingual majors and ethnic preparatory classes, and the number of students in the region accounts for

9.65% of the total number of college students in the region. In the past ten years, various types of education at all levels in Inner Mongolia have developed rapidly, and the popularity has reached or exceeded the national average. From 2019 to 2022, the enrollment rate of kindergartens in Inner Mongolia reached 90.27%, an increase of 18.55% over 2012; the consolidation rate of nine-year compulsory education was 96.59%, an increase of 3.9% over 2012; the gross enrollment rate of senior high school reached 92.42%; The gross enrollment rate of education reached 58.35%, an increase of 26.13% over 2012<sup>[12]</sup>. In the past ten years, more than 1.18 million college graduates have received higher education in the region. The rapid development of education has played an important role in improving the comprehensive quality of the labor force.

Inner Mongolia adheres to the policy of "giving priority to national education". Financial capital investment and public resource allocation priority were given to national education to ensure its quality growth. "Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region National Education Regulations" released in 2016 provides solid guarantee to the funding for ethnic minority students, improvement of school conditions for ethnic schools, staff training, employment of Mongolian-taught university graduates, and training of high-level ethnic minorities.

Inner Mongolia government provides sufficient financial support to the national education. Since 2003, the regional finance department arranged special funds for national education, which has gradually increased from 2 million RMB per year to the current 60 million RMB. In higher education, based on the "award, loan, aid, subsidy, reduction, work-study and green channel for freshmen admission" policy, the government adopted many ways to help college and university students to receive higher education. Since 2000, Mongolian-taught high school students who are accepted by colleges and universities in the region can enjoy a 20% tuition reduction policy with the financial aid program offered by the government. For primary and middle school education, the government offers free tuition, free textbooks and boarding and accommodation aid to students. Starting from the autumn semester of 2007, the government offered 1,080 RMB per person per school year for primary school students and 1,350 RMB per person for junior high school students for the living allowance of boarding students in Mongolian-Chinese bilingual compulsory education schools. In terms of teaching facility upgrading, 500 RMB was invested to complete the standardization construction project of 40 ethnic schools and ethnic language schools.

Teachers are the foundation and source of education. In 2017, with the strong support of the Ministry of Education, the six subordinate normal colleges and universities decided to accept a total of 455 students for the training of bilingual teachers in Inner Mongolia from 2017 to 2021 free of charge, and 320 of them have been accepted. In the past three years, more than 20,000 teachers have received training in national primary and secondary schools and kindergartens, and the group of key teachers has been further formed.

The cultivation of high-level ethnic minorities in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region has achieved remarkable progress. Inner Mongolia focuses on strengthening the construction of key disciplines and majors with national characteristics in regional colleges and universities, and focuses on cultivating research-oriented, innovative, and application-oriented national talents and high-quality talents with both Mongolian and Chinese skills. The "High-level Key Talents Program for Ethnic Minorities" was put forward and implemented. At present, there are 6,041 postgraduate students and 1,409 doctoral students studying in the "High-level Key Talents Program for Ethnic Minorities"; there are more than 120,000 ethnic minority undergraduate and junior college students studying in colleges and universities in Inner Mongolia, including 35,000 who have received bilingual education; More than 10,000 ethnic minority undergraduates are studying in state-affiliated universities and inland universities in Inner Mongolia.

In the past ten years, Inner Mongolia's national educational reform and development guarantee capacity has been significantly enhanced. Inner Mongolia has long regarded the construction of the teaching staff as a key task. The government has strengthened the construction of the teaching staff by implementing special programs such as "the Rural Teacher Support Program", the "Excellent Teacher Program", and the "Special Post Program". The number of full-time teachers in Inner Mongolia has increased from 273,000 to 307,000. The qualification rate of full-time primary school teachers has reached 100%, the qualification rate of junior high school teachers has reached 99.99%, and the qualification rate of senior high school teachers has reached 98.92%. In 2021, the investment in education reached 86.1 billion yuan, an increase of 35.7 billion RMB over 2011, with an average annual growth of 5.5%. The investment of education funds provides an important guarantee for promoting the high-quality development of education.

The national education system of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region follows strategic needs of the country and the autonomous region. Morality-Strengthening Education for Cultivating Talents has been the guiding principle of the education cause of Inner Mongolia. The region aims to cultivate talents and scholars for the future of the region and country. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region adhere to the principles of "cultivating people for the party and nation while constructing an education system for the all-round development of moral,

intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor development. Many effective measures have been taken to optimize the discipline layout and professional setting of national higher education institutions and vocational schools; to improve the dynamic adjustment mechanism of majors with industrial development. In 2021, Inner Mongolia colleges and universities added 258 new majors and canceled 206. The seventh national census data shows that in 2020, the number of people with university education per 100,000 people in Inner Mongolia is 18,688, an increase of 8,480 people or 83.07% over 2010<sup>[13]</sup>. Vocational education trains nearly 120,000 technical and technical talents at different levels and 220,000 urban and rural workers annually, providing strong talent support for the country and region. The colleges and universities in Inner Mongolia are active in promoting scientific and technological innovation and the transformation of research. They carry out the "Science and Technology to Revitalize Mongolia" campaign, and international and domestic educational exchanges and cooperation kept expanding. Since the "Thirteenth Five-Year Plan", colleges and universities in Inner Mongolia have received a total of 5.711 billion RMB in science and technology investment funds, and they have undertaken and participated in more than 60,000 scientific research projects of various types at all levels. National education of Inner Mongolia has become an important essence in supporting local science and technology, economic and social development.

## Conclusion

As the foundation and future of a country, education should be given top priority. Inner Mongolia locates in the north of China and it serves the guardian position in the map of China. The prosperity and stability of the region will have direct and profound impact to the neighboring regions as well as the county. As the birthplace of China's regional ethnic autonomy system, Inner Mongolia has a glorious tradition of ethnic unity. Since the establishment of the autonomous region, the government implemented the party's ethnic education policy, and regards the development of ethnic education as an important task related to the common unity, progress, and common prosperity of all ethnic groups. National education of Inner Mongolia has achieved sustained, rapid and healthy development and has become a major feature and highlight of the model autonomous region. Practice has proved that successful national education is of great significance to the growth of ethnic students and the prosperity and development of Inner Mongolia traditional culture. At the same time, it is of great significance to implement the ethnic policies of the party and the state, and to consolidate and develop socialist ethnic relations of equality, unity, mutual assistance and harmony. In addition, it will help the autonomous region realize the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation.

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