

《Minority students rely on university for better future》

NANNING - Ya Qiaoli has been waiting eagerly for her university admission letter, at her home in a mountainous village in south China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, ever since she was told that she has been admitted to Guangxi University of Nationalities.

For her, the letter is crucial. It means she can spend the next four years in Nanning, the regional capital, studying finance.

Ya scored 549 points out of 750 points in June's national college entrance exam, better known as the gaokao. The points guarantee university acceptance, yet they are not enough for her to apply for a good major.

"I was able to choose either a good university or a good major only after I got the bonus points for ethnic minorities," Ya said.

As a Zhuang ethnic student, Ya got 10 bonus points, according to a national policy that allows ethnic minority students to gain as many as 20 bonus gaokao points.

The policy helps ethnic minority students, many from remote and impoverished areas with poor educational standards, to reduce their disadvantage in the exam.

Ya studies in the only high school in Fengshan county, her hometown. Located in Hechi city, it is a national-level poverty-stricken county. Among a total of 1,133 students who took gaokao this year, about 60 percent were ethnic minority students, mainly from the Zhuang and Yao ethnic groups. According to the policy, Zhuang students can get 10 bonus points and Yao students can get 20.

When the recruitment was finished, 97.7 percent of students were admitted to universities or junior colleges.

"The figures increased obviously compared with 10 years ago, as a result of both improved education quality and favorable policies," said Luo Yingyang, deputy principal of Fengshan County High School.

In Leye county, a national-level poverty-stricken county in Baise city of Guangxi, more than 20 percent of all 789 students taking the gaokao this year were admitted to universities, with most of the rest admitted to vocational colleges.

Huang Bingzhong, principal of Leye County High School, said that for many students whose families are poor, university entrance could guarantee that they would be lifted out of poverty.

"Sending a child to university or college is the best way for a family to get out of the mountains," Huang said.

China sees education as a key method in its poverty alleviation efforts, so it has launched favorable gaokao policies for students from rural and poor areas.

In April, the Ministry of Education announced that top-level universities would enroll 63,000 students from a number of underdeveloped regions in 2017, about 3,000 more than in 2016. Recruiting of poor students into provincial-level colleges is expected to grow by 10 percent this year.

Under these requirement, in Guangxi, a total of 2,507 students have been recruited by 154 universities, 300 more than in 2016.

Guangxi has the most number of ethnic minority people in China, and it is also one of the least developed regions, with 28 national-level poverty-stricken counties, in which 11 are ethnic minority autonomous counties.

With the number of school-age children growing, many poor counties face a shortage of competent teachers, funds and schools.

Principal Luo said the school was designed to accommodate a maximum of 2,200 students, but currently there are nearly 3,500 students. The school lacks not only classrooms but new facilities.

Low salaries also makes it hard for teachers to stay.

"Every year, several teachers resign, and it is very difficult for us to hire new ones," he said.

Leye County High School has cooperated with other higher qualified schools so that students can have lessons given by teachers of these schools online. Yet more methods are hoped to be launched.

More funding is needed to improve the educational conditions such as buildings and facilities in poor areas, said Ya Qiming, an official of education in Donglan county, another national-level poverty-stricken county in Hechi.

"Teachers' salaries and welfare should also be improved so that they would like to stay in these areas," he said.