

Teacher Development Dilemma and Solution Ideas in Contemporary Chinese Rural Small-Scale Schools

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Abstract: Small rural schools are an important part of compulsory education and an inevitable form of rural education development. As urbanization accelerates, the movement of rural students to urban schools has led to a drastic reduction in the number and size of rural schools and a serious loss of quality teachers. Currently, rural teachers in China are facing problems such as disconnected interpersonal networks, weakened discourse power, and limited professional development. In order to promote the development of rural education, it is necessary to prioritize the professional development of teachers in small-scale rural schools, innovate the rural teacher training model, focus on the training of native and generalist teachers, and establish inter-school teaching and research teams to achieve the sharing of educational resources. Simultaneously, it is crucial to pay attention to the spiritual needs of rural teachers, enhance the professional identity of young teachers in small-scale rural schools, raise their comprehensive treatment level and reduce the burden of non-teaching tasks, so as to promote the professional development of teachers in small-scale rural schools.

Keywords: Rural Education; Small-scale Schools; Teacher Development.

1. Introduction

Small rural schools are an important element in the development of rural education, usually referring to rural schools with fewer than 100 students, which operate on a small scale, invest little in resources and generally have a low level of education. Promoting the development of small-scale rural schools in the new era is of great significance in enhancing the vitality of rural education and upgrading the overall level of education.

In September 2012, the Opinions of the State Council on Further Advancing the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education pointed out that further advancing the balanced development of compulsory education, focusing on raising the level of rural and weak schools, raising the overall quality of compulsory education, and striving to realize the goal of enrolling all school-age children and adolescents in high-quality schools are of great practical and far-reaching historical significance for promoting educational equity and further improving the quality of the nation [1]. As China's urbanization process accelerates, the rural population, including school-age children, is rapidly gathering to urban schools, resulting in the phenomenon of crowded towns and empty villages, and the problem of regional structural imbalance in primary and secondary education is very prominent. High-quality educational resources are concentrated to urban areas in a gradient, the siphoning phenomenon of urban schools to excellent teachers and high-quality students brings great impact to the development of rural schools, the differences between urban and rural areas and schools are expanding, and the realization of the high-quality and balanced development of compulsory education is facing new challenges.

2. Analysis and Attribution of Teacher Development Dilemmas in Small-Scale Rural Schools

2.1. Rapid Downsizing of Schools

The first is the drastic change in the size of schools, which creates obstacles to the development of rural schools. China's rural elementary school have plummeted from 140,000 in 2013 to 89,000 in 2019, and rural junior high schools have decreased from 18,000 in 2013 to 14,000[2]. Changes in the number and size of rural schools are due, on the one hand, to the influx of rural pupils to urban areas, where a large number of rural pupils have been enrolled in various ways in the wave of urbanization, and on the other hand, to the abolition and merger of rural schools. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, in order to make full use of educational resources, many village schools across the country underwent a layout restructuring, with the vast majority of rural areas reducing the number of schools and increasing the size of town-level schools. Township schools were expanded. In the last decade, these large-scale schools have been downsized again to medium or small-scale schools as the influx of students to urban areas has continued.

2.2. Shortage and Loss of Teachers in Schools

The disadvantage of teacher resource allocation is the biggest problem facing the development of rural schools and a key challenge to the quality and balanced development of schools. Currently, there are three main problems in the allocation of resources for teachers in rural China: first, the structural contradiction in teacher qualifications. Rural schools often feel that there is a shortage of teachers; this shortage is not a lack of teaching positions, but is caused by the aging of teachers, the imbalance of teachers between subjects, and the lack of outstanding teachers. In response to the reality of small class sizes in rural schools, many places have tilted their policies in terms of teacher staffing in accordance with small-class allocation programs, but it is still

difficult to solve the problems of aging teachers and teacher turnover. Second, the heavy teaching load. Remote rural areas have fewer employment opportunities, school-age children follow their parents to the big cities, and the exodus of students is one of the most prominent manifestations of the development of rural education. Rural schools are getting smaller and smaller, and the number of teachers is decreasing, but the teaching tasks of the teachers are increasing. In this situation, the schools are very strict in evaluating the teaching of the teachers, and the teachers' bodies and minds are in a state of tension every day. Third, the loss of good teachers. The quality of teachers is key to improving the quality of teaching in rural schools in order to meet the people's demand for quality education and to keep rural education from becoming a shortcoming in China's future development of education. Therefore, national and local efforts hope to promote the professional development of rural teachers through various forms such as education grouping, education cooperation community, and rural teacher enhancement program, to improve the business ability of rural teachers and enhance the soft power of rural school development[3]. At the same time, attempts are made to retain talents by improving the treatment of rural teachers and tilting the policies on economic income, appraisal of posts and merits. However, due to many reasons such as family, life and development environment, many excellent young teachers and outstanding principals still take the rural schools as a transfer station and springboard to the urban areas, and the teacher strength of rural schools is still relatively weak.

2.3. Ineffective Training of Rural Teachers

In-service training for teachers is an important way to adapt to the development of society and education and to improve teachers' teaching ability. Teachers in small-scale rural schools mainly focus on academic seminars and short-term training, which lacks effectiveness [4]. This phenomenon is caused by the following factors: first, the content of the training is mostly based on abstract theories and lacks relevance. Part of the training experts have profound theoretical knowledge, but they lack of front-line teaching experience, do not understand the real needs of teachers in rural small-scale schools, the training content of the theory of indoctrination. This theory and practice does not match the training, can not rural teachers professional development needs. Second, the training objectives are imprecise and lack effectiveness. Because the training party in the design of the objectives, not in-depth understanding of the actual needs of rural small-scale school teachers, always in accordance with a fixed training model to design the training objectives, so that the participating teachers can not apply the knowledge gained in the front-line teaching activities. Third, the training form is monotonous and lacks diversity. At the present stage, most of the training is short-term and centralized, lacking consistency, coupled with the lack of communication and interaction between trainers and participants in classroom teaching, greatly reducing the satisfaction of teachers in rural small-scale schools with the overall effectiveness of the training as well as the initiative to participate in the training of enthusiasm.

2.4. Loss of Capital for the Professional Development of Rural Teachers

Currently, teachers in small-scale rural schools in China are generally faced with the dilemma of facing the loss of social

capital, decision-making capital and human capital.

Rural teachers' interpersonal networks are disconnected. Influenced by the limitations of rural economic and living conditions and the need for long-term personal career development, it is difficult for teachers in small-sized schools to create a post identity. Most of the outstanding rural teachers are teachers on rotational assignments or in support of the teaching profession, and the proportion of those who will move to towns and cities to teach during the expiration of their service period or even before it is completed is growing year by year. In addition, there are also rural teachers who choose to take the civil service examination or resign to go into business. This ultimately leads to instability in the rural teaching force and higher turnover of serving teachers. Although teachers tend to work with a high degree of passion when they first enter the profession, due to the limitations of various conditions, there will be a reduction in the requirements for professional development, coupled with the low social status of rural teachers who do not receive due respect, despite the national policy favoring a certain degree of improvement in wages and salaries, but live a "migratory bird" life shuttling between the county towns and the countryside, consuming more and more of the countryside. life, spending more money and time traveling to work in rural schools far away. It is difficult for them to devote themselves to education in a calm and peaceful manner, leading to low enthusiasm and motivation of teachers, some of whom come to the countryside to teach only as a springboard to prepare for their transfer within a few years. This has weakened intrinsic motivation and constrained the building and development of the teaching force in small rural schools.

The erosion of rural teachers' discourse power. In small-scale rural schools, teachers are placed in a weak position in terms of decision-making capital. First, compared with public officials, rural teachers have "no power and no influence" and are unable to participate in social governance and public affairs in villages. Second, negative media coverage of teachers has triggered social denunciation of the profession, bringing invisible pressure on teachers' work. The harshness of teachers' code of conduct, which ignores the characteristics of the profession, intensifies teachers' negative emotional experience of the education profession, which is not conducive to teachers' high-quality teaching reflection, but rather promotes teachers' tendency to "inactivity" [5].

The professional development of rural teachers is limited. There is a close relationship between whether teachers in small-scale rural schools take the initiative to improve their professional competence and whether they are willing to take root in rural education. The hardship of the external environment can influence the development of teachers' professionalism in a subtle way [6]. Firstly, the heavy work schedule squeezes teachers' individual learning time. Secondly, difficult workloads can weaken teachers' professional beliefs. Due to the influence of geographic remoteness, it is difficult for small-scale rural schools to provide teachers with the necessary training and exchange opportunities at the level of external support. This results in limited space for teachers' professional growth and narrow channels for human capital accumulation, which ultimately leads to the dissolution of teachers' sense of self-efficacy, backward teaching mode and content, loss of collective honor, and insufficient sense of professional pride.

3. Practical Ideas for Promoting Teacher Building in Rural Small-Scale Schools

3.1. Reform of the Rural Teacher Training System to Ensure a Scientific and Rational School Teaching Force

The development of small-scale schools in rural China has always been a shortcoming in improving the quality of rural education. Teachers in rural schools are the core and key to guaranteeing the quality of rural education, and the problem of the loss of rural teachers is a complex and systematic one; one cannot be satisfied with the support of various teaching policies and neglect to promote the professional development of rural teachers. To this end, we need to innovate in the training of rural teachers: on the one hand, we should adhere to the model of local training of teachers. Local teachers are rooted in the local culture and habits of life in the countryside, which has a stronger regional identity and identity of the countryside, only to enhance the main consciousness of small-scale school teachers in rural education, so that they can have a sense of well-being and belonging in the process of teaching and educating; on the other hand, we must adhere to the cultivation of general-purpose teachers[7]. Therefore, the professional development of rural small-scale school teachers, in addition to changing the concept of the previous dependence on the development of urban teachers, the local education authorities should ensure the smooth implementation of the relevant policies; affirm the dedication of rural small-scale school teachers in education; and clarify the professional needs of rural small-scale school teachers[8].

3.2. Focusing on the Intrinsic Needs of Individual Teachers and Groups to Promote Teachers' Professional Development

While we focus most of our attention on meeting the external needs of rural teachers, it is also important to recognize the importance of the spiritual dimension, which is the need for their emotions and belonging to be satisfied. For the internal development of teachers, their self-identification is far more motivating than external coercive constraints. Therefore, the solution to the problem of rural small-scale school teachers must not only stay on the surface, from the internal search for change is the right way to solve the current problem. In the face of the current predicament, rural schools should reanalyze and reposition themselves, and continuously adjust the development direction according to their actual needs and characteristics, which is an inevitable choice to get out of the dangerous situation[9]. On the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen emotional belonging and protect the resources of rural teachers to prevent further loss; on the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen self-identification, which is the driving force for the continuous development of teachers. The basic attribute of sociality determines that human beings need to be recognized and respected, and the spiritual dignity of rural teachers should be effectively maintained. On the level of respect and identity, rural teachers value not only the love and love from the family, but also part of the social concept of the value judgment transmitted to the teacher. Rural teachers are regarded as a lower status profession in the cognitive field of most people in the society, because of the

lack of awareness of the teaching profession and the prejudice of the concept of the countryside. As administrators in the region, they should understand that funding is only a medium, and the key to improving the overall level of rural education lies in respecting the personality and emotions of rural teachers[10]. In addition, for rural teachers, the fundamental conditions that make them happy to teach and teach by heart is that the teachers themselves form the recognition of the in-service environment, to obtain the satisfaction of self-worth can be realized. In order for rural teachers to fulfill their responsibilities and duties in teaching, the inner professional ethics of teachers is decisive[11]. But this kind of professional conduct is not determined by external factors, but an emotion, is active to identify, accept and practice self-consciousness. Positive emotions are essential for rural teachers to develop professional self-awareness. For rural teachers, teaching results are the most intuitive manifestation of the realization of their goals. Rural teachers are recognized for their teaching results, which means that their self-worth can be realized, which will allow teachers to form a strong inner confidence and drive. This inner force will prompt teachers to be full of self-consciousness and motivation on the way to improve their professionalism[12].

3.3. Building Inter-School Teaching and Research Teams for Rural Education Resource Sharing

Due to the relatively remote geographical location, small teaching scale and other factors, rural small-scale schools need to coordinate and cooperate in teaching resources, establish teaching and research team relationship between rural small-scale schools and urban elementary school, promote the cooperation of teaching and research between schools, and build up the teaching and research alliance of rural small-scale schools, so that teachers in rural small-scale schools can exchange teaching experience and jointly research and develop teaching materials, thus maximizing the benefits of teaching and research activities [13]. In order to optimize the effect of teaching and research, the rural teaching and research team should fully carry out a demand analysis according to the actual needs of teachers' professional development, formulate the theme of teaching and research activities and implementation plans, according to the differences between each school to provide accurate assistance.

4. Conclusion

Rural small-scale schools should be based on the actual situation of rural education development, adhere to the problem-oriented, precise measures to crack the problem of weak teachers, and promote the improvement of the overall quality of rural basic education teachers. From the teachers, schools, the government and education administration and management departments and other perspectives, on the one hand, we should continue to increase the policy support for small-scale rural schools and financial support, to provide more training opportunities for teachers and self-improvement platform; on the other hand, we should continue to tap the intrinsic motivation of the teachers, and take more measures to stimulate teachers' enthusiasm for work and enthusiasm for the rural basic education to cultivate a strong professional competence, the concept of education On the other hand, we should continue to tap the intrinsic motivation

of teachers and take many measures to stimulate their enthusiasm and enthusiasm, so as to cultivate a high-level teacher team with strong professional ability and advanced educational philosophy for rural basic education.

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