

A Study on Burnout and Job Satisfaction of Rural Primary School Teachers in China

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Abstract: Rural primary school teachers, as the practitioners of rural education, are a key part of rural education development and rural revitalization. The current situation of rural primary school education is the relative lack of educational resources, the long-term absence of family education, the need to improve comprehensive literacy, the lack of social support, and the need for an incentive mechanism. In order to solve this problem, we should build a training platform, enhance home-school collaboration, improve psychological quality, provide sufficient social support and improve incentive mechanisms to stimulate the vitality of rural primary school teachers.

Keywords: rural primary school teachers; burnout; job satisfaction; research

1. The problem

Rural primary school teachers are the main force behind rural basic education, and they are related to the future of rural primary education[1-2]. Rural teachers directly educate the vast number of rural children. They suffer from great responsibility and work very hard. By the end of August 2018, there were 6.97 million children left behind in rural areas across the country and the current group of primary school teachers in rural areas in China, with high work pressure, a more pronounced state of burnout, and low job satisfaction, is a problem that needs to be given high priority and more joined into the research team[3].

However, the research on teacher burnout and job satisfaction in China has been carried out for decades, but the current research is mainly focused on different types of teachers in primary and secondary schools and universities. The research on rural primary school teachers is relatively weak, which is contrary to the important role of rural primary school teachers.

2. Analysis of the current situation of burnout and job satisfaction among rural primary school teachers

2.1 Relative lack of educational resources.

Educational resources in rural schools are relatively scarce. Rural teachers are busy with day-to-day management and teaching, and training resources and opportunities are scarce, making it difficult for them to achieve self-improvement. Rural children are young and physically and mentally immature, and parents have low parenting standards, which require more time and effort from rural teachers. It is difficult to tap into the professional teacher training team from within the existing team of rural teachers to deliver in-house training [4]. The allocation of information resources in rural schools is incomplete; rural teachers do not have a firm grasp of information technology, their overall literacy is not sufficiently enhanced, specialist training is infrequent, and effective links between external quality resources and the immediate needs of rural education development are difficult to form. Training is often integrated with school business studies,

2.2 Long-term absence of family education.

Many rural children are left behind. Parents have low educational qualifications and find it difficult to find well-paid jobs in their hometowns. Moreover, the rural pension system is not sound, and rural

families have a clear sense of economic crisis. The elderly in rural areas have no pensions and cannot meet their basic needs without working, so "living to old age and working to old age" is a true reflection of many rural families. In order to provide for their families, students' parents choose to leave their hometowns and work in the field for long periods of time to support their families. Some parents choose to work as farmers at home, with their faces to the ground and their backs to the sky, earning a meager income from the sale of agricultural products every year and barely making ends meet for the family. This is in stark contrast to the "absence" of family education, which is unable to meet the needs of students' development." In rural areas, it is difficult to form a positive interaction between home and school [5].

2.3 Comprehensive literacy needs to be improved.

After returning to the countryside to teach, rural primary school teachers often find it difficult to adapt to the "simple" and humble school conditions and teaching environment. Faced with the dichotomy between urban and rural education in China, urban schools can provide better teaching conditions, and it is difficult to balance them. At the same time, they feel powerless in the face of parents who are not very well educated, and have negative feelings when they have to complete various school chores, resulting in anxiety and depression. At the same time, rural education is rooted in Chinese farming culture, coupled with a vernacular culture, and has different characteristics from the urban education system, which places high demands on rural teachers to be excellent rural educators. At the same time, there are long-standing vacancies in the staffing of psychology teachers in rural primary schools. As a result, it is difficult for teachers to seek timely and effective help when they are psychologically confused, and it is difficult to regulate their negative emotions. Many rural primary school teachers leave for urban schools or education and training institutions or choose to leave education to work in other fields.

2.4 Insufficient social support.

From the grassroots level, Chinese society is vernacular [6]. Rural education and rural teachers, too, should be vernacular in nature, and both should be rooted in the "soil" of the countryside in the process of development, drawing on the nutrients of vernacular resources to achieve sustainable development. Rural communities and local societies play an irreplaceable role in the development of rural education and the growth of rural teachers and can provide teachers with more space, resources, and opportunities for growth. Rural teachers play an important role in revitalizing the countryside by passing on and transforming local culture and nurturing local talent. However, social work in China's rural areas is still in the development stage, and the intervention of social forces is insufficient. This mainly stems from the fact that there are not enough social work institutions in China, and their work is only formal, not sufficiently integrated with the reality of China's rural areas, and not precise enough to grasp vernacular elements. Rural society, which does not have a clear understanding of the new trends in the development of rural education, has also not fully realized its own role change. Under the guidance of the rural revitalization strategy, they are still in the teething stage, and rural resources have not yet fully integrated with the growth of rural teachers and are unable to play the role of rural resources in the development process of rural teachers.

2.5 The incentive mechanism needs to be sound.

The development of rural teachers has long been a cause for concern, with low salaries and difficulties in maintaining the livelihoods of families. Nothing can provide teachers with a healthy growth path and space; the lack of human, financial, and material resources makes it difficult to improve teachers' comprehensive literacy; rural schools also lag behind in policies and "discounts" of education policies. These circumstances make the living spaces of rural teachers even narrower. The incentive mechanism of rural schools is not sound enough, the office environment is not ideal, and the handling of interpersonal relationships is not appropriate. There is no good unity or collaboration between teachers. Rural schools still have a lot of room for improvement in terms of wages. The voice of rural teachers is hard to hear. It is difficult for the competent authorities at a higher level to be aware of the team of rural primary school teachers. In short, in recent years, a series of rural teacher support plans and incentive programs have been introduced. However, due to the constraints of actual conditions, the implementation of rural schools is not ideal enough to increase its implementation.

3. Strategies for coping with burnout and job satisfaction among rural primary school teachers

The working conditions of rural teachers determine the quality of rural education development. Therefore, we should concentrate our efforts and integrate our resources to achieve a change in the working conditions of rural teachers, so as to meet the needs of rural education development in the new era with full enthusiasm for their work.

3.1 Build a training platform.

In order to alleviate the plight of insufficient rural teachers and a lack of educational resources, we need to increase training for rural primary school teacher groups and make full use of existing technology and policy dividends to build a rural teacher training platform. At present, there are two major problems in the training of rural teachers in China: "insufficient quantity" and "low quality". We need to focus our resources on innovative training models, making full use of both online and offline training methods, to 'break through' the problems of upgrading teachers' teaching skills, reshaping core literacy, iterating on educational concepts, and optimizing curriculum design. Firstly, through online and offline courses, seminars, and distance training, the digital divide in education is narrowed, and information technology is used to share educational resources and build educational platforms, which also enhances the flexibility and relevance of training. Rural teachers can break through the constraints and limitations of time and space in their own free time. They can combine their weaknesses in literacy or skills to achieve breakthroughs and targeted learning on a case-by-case basis, developing a personalized training plan. Through online seminar forums, we can assist rural teachers in achieving cross-school, cross-regional, and cross-subject cooperation. This will enhance collaboration in teacher development, integrate strengths, and improve communication. As a result, the leading role of renowned teachers and guides can be fully utilized, new educational messages can be delivered, and new educational ideas can be shared. Additionally, this approach facilitates timely access to educational resources and information, reducing the disparity in educational resources between urban and rural areas resulting from the dual development of urban and rural areas. Through the online format, it can strengthen the supervision and guidance of master teachers for frontline educators in rural areas, solve the difficulties and dilemmas encountered in their work in a timely and effective manner, and realize the twinning of professional development of teachers and improvement of teachers' quality.

3.2 Enhance home-school collaboration.

As the primary place of education, the family has an irreplaceable and important role to play. School care should complement family education, using their respective strengths to help rural children grow and succeed. In rural areas of China, rural families have a single source of economic income, relying mainly on farming, which is too meager to sustain a family's normal livelihood needs. Many parents choose to work outside their home country, and the spatial distance across the region provides a ray of hope for the family's survival needs. However, the choice of parents to leave their hometowns to work and earn a living has also created a risk of weakening the parent-child relationship.

The lack of parents has become a pain in the heart of every left-behind child, and it is difficult for children to talk about and solve their problems in the first place. They choose to remain silent and bear negative messages in silence. The maintenance of parent-child relationships in rural families is difficult and prone to many disconnections. The likelihood of children being susceptible to peer impressions increases and also minimizes the negative impact on children of intergenerational upbringing and the tendency of elders to appear spoiled, among other states. Therefore, family education should never be absent, and communication and collaboration between home and school should be constantly strengthened. Parents who work in their hometowns can communicate more offline with village teachers to follow up on the overall state of their children in a timely manner, escort the growth of students, and prevent deviation from the normal track. For parents who have difficulty communicating offline, they can strengthen online communication with teachers to share information about their students, so as to ensure that there are no blind spots in the growth of rural children and that problems such as confusion, learning difficulties, and growing pains are solved in a timely manner, so as to ensure that rural children grow up with the care and concern of their home schools.

3.3 Promote comprehensive literacy.

Education is not an easy task, and rural education is even harder. Rural primary school teachers

should constantly improve their overall personal literacy to meet the challenges of their work. One is to improve one's psychological literacy, improve one's psychological resistance to stress, be able to deal with real problems with a positive and optimistic attitude, and have an indomitable spirit when encountering difficulties. Everything is guided by "no student left behind", everything is aimed at personal growth and development, coupling the personal development of students with the development of teachers themselves, forming a virtuous cycle of development mechanisms; Second, we must continue to improve our professionalism, enhance our teaching and parenting skills, our ability to manage student work, our ability to communicate with families and schools, our ability to cooperate with the community and other departments, and our ability to integrate resources, so that we can do a better job in education; Third, to enhance information literacy, since China has entered the information and intelligent society, rural primary school teachers should take advantage of the situation and enhance their personal mastery and application of information and intelligent tools, and better apply intelligent technology to their teaching work; Artificial intelligence cannot replace the role of teachers, but plays a supporting role as a quality teaching tool to promote quality, upgrade teaching work, and improve efficiency; Fourthly, to enhance personal educational sentiments, rural primary school teachers have special characteristics different from those of urban teachers. The nurturing of the native soil, the inculcation of the native culture, and the simplicity of the rural people will all give rural education a different color, and rural children also have different personalities and characteristics. Rural teachers should take into account the realities of rural children and refine local teaching materials that are "easy to understand" and "enjoyable", so as to enhance the relevance of education and highlight the modernity and localization of rural education.

3.4 Improve social support.

The social support system is very important in the growth of rural teachers, and the development of rural education should establish a support system that is led by the people's government at the county level, with the active participation of rural primary schools and widespread social concern [7]. It aims to promote and enhance the professional development of rural primary school teachers. The social support system is an exogenous force that promotes the development and perfection of rural teachers. Its role is to improve and purify the external environment, seek more external resources, achieve an improved living environment for rural teachers, create a purer working atmosphere for rural teachers, and gradually awaken teachers' intrinsic local feelings and education from their identification with local culture and their attachment to the power of growth. This will gradually awaken teachers' intrinsic sense of the countryside and education, establish an internal link between education and the countryside, and return to the core of education. Social support is not only a matter for rural schools; it also requires the support and assistance of the vernacular community, other social organizations, and government departments. It also requires a shift in resources—human, material, and financial to provide rural schools with the resources and platforms needed for normal teaching work. Firstly, the development of the rural economy should be combined with rural characteristics in order to consolidate the economic foundation for the advancement of rural education and ensure sufficient material security. Secondly, the training of rural teachers should be enhanced by engaging external experts to provide training sessions and address teachers' inquiries. Thirdly, the significance of family education should be promoted through societal efforts to elevate the awareness of parents of rural children, thereby enhancing their comprehension and support for school initiatives. Fourthly, the injection of funds from some caring members of the community can help poor rural students to complete their studies.

3.5 Sound incentive mechanism.

Incentive mechanisms, which should be based on the intrinsic needs and external demands of rural teachers, can help rural teachers achieve self-growth, improve their comprehensive literacy, enhance their professionalism, tap into their inner vitality, awaken their educational emotions, and draw energy from their vitality, thus enhancing their professional self-confidence and sense of belonging to their profession. Only by improving the incentive mechanism for rural teachers' work, meeting the real needs of teachers, and meeting the needs of practical situations can we stimulate the vitality of the teaching force and help revitalize rural education and rural culture. Considering the current challenges faced by rural education and rural teachers, it is important to acknowledge that rural teachers also serve as pillars of their own families. They bear the weighty responsibility of raising children and supporting elderly family members, making it challenging to strike a balance between their personal and professional lives. This struggle gradually erodes their motivation, leading to increased burnout and diminished job satisfaction. Consequently, many rural teachers become part of the group who choose to leave or resign

from their positions. Therefore, it is important that rural teachers are not allowed to "do their best" in their work, but are "chilled" in their treatment. Secondly, we must solve the problem of the difficulty of assessing the titles of rural teachers. For teachers who have been working on the front lines of rural education for a long time, they should be given a policy tilt in the assessment of their titles, given certain incentives, and given priority consideration in the identification of their titles. Thirdly, we should fully explore the intrinsic educational sentiments of rural teachers, and encourage more teachers to return to the countryside and cultivate the cause of rural education in a practical way, under the premise that external conditions are provided and adequately safeguarded, while giving full consideration to the families and lives of rural teachers and giving them humanistic care; In the arrangement and selection of jobs, the actual situation of their families should be fully taken into account, and work units for couples should be arranged nearby, so as to awaken the inner emotional identity of rural teachers by making them feel emotions, moving them with emotions and touching them with emotions, thereby enhancing their work performance and the effectiveness of their education.

In short, when education thrives, the country thrives, and when education is strong, the country is strong. We must continue to tap the inner potential of rural teachers, stimulate vitality, reduce burnout, enhance job satisfaction, cultivate sentiment, develop skills, and help rural teachers build their careers on the stage of rural revitalization.

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