

The Dilemma and Optimization Strategies of Teacher Allocation in Urban and Rural Compulsory Education

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Abstract: Compulsory education is the foundation of national education. The high-quality and balanced development of compulsory education in urban and rural areas affects the overall layout of compulsory education in China. The allocation of teachers for compulsory education in urban and rural areas is an important component of compulsory education resources in urban and rural areas and the key to balanced development of education. At present, however, there are still predicaments such as the imbalance in the structure and quality of teachers allocated in urban and rural compulsory education. In response to these realities, it is necessary to continuously optimize the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education through strategies such as building a “precise” teacher allocation mechanism, creating a “sustainable” path for improving the quality of teachers, and improving a “long-term” teacher guarantee and support system.

Keywords: Compulsory education in urban and rural areas, teacher allocation, optimization strategies

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Compulsory education is the foundation of national education. Premier Li Qiang mentioned in the government work report in 2025: “Strengthen the standardization of compulsory education schools and promote the high-quality and balanced development of compulsory education.”^[1] China's Compulsory Education Law was adopted and implemented in 1986, and nine-year compulsory education was basically popularized in 2000. The law was revised in 2006 and has been revised twice in 2015 and 2018. The revisions and amendments to the law mainly emphasize that balanced development of compulsory education is the value pursuit of China's education development. Article 6 of the Compulsory Education Law stipulates: “The State Council and local people's governments at or above the county level shall rationally allocate educational resources, promote balanced development of compulsory education, and improve the conditions of weak schools.”^[2] The law clearly states that the way to promote balanced development of compulsory education lies in the rational allocation of educational resources, and the allocation of teacher resources is an important component of educational resources and the key to balanced development of education. The importance of compulsory education in urban and rural areas in our country is increasingly prominent, and the balanced development of compulsory education in urban and rural areas is particularly important. We must pay close attention to a series of problems in the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education. Only by thoroughly analyzing the real predicaments that affect the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education in China and the corresponding causes, and in combination with the requirements of current laws, regulations and policies, on this basis, efforts should be made to find optimization strategies for the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education, and efforts should be made to solve the problem of unbalanced allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education, so as to further promote the high-quality and balanced development of urban and rural compulsory education.

1. Practical difficulties in the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education

With the country's increasing emphasis on the fair, just, high-quality and balanced development of compulsory education in urban and rural areas and the introduction of relevant policies to promote the improvement of the

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allocation of teachers in compulsory education in urban and rural areas, the actual situation remains quite serious. The real difficulties in the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education are mainly reflected in two aspects: the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education is unbalanced in structure; The allocation of teachers for compulsory education in urban and rural areas is unbalanced in quality. The imbalance in the structure of teaching staff is mainly reflected in the imbalance in the proportion of educational qualifications and disciplines. The imbalance in the quality of teacher allocation is reflected in the differences in professional identity and professional competence of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education. Through extensive literature reading, field investigation and visits, the author has summarized the real problems existing in the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education.

1.1 The allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education is unbalanced in structure

1.1.1 Imbalance in the educational attainment ratio of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education

Overall, urban teachers have significantly better educational qualifications than rural teachers. Teachers' educational qualifications are classified into five levels: high school or secondary vocational school, junior college, bachelor's degree, master's degree, and doctorate. Article 11 of the Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China clearly stipulates the corresponding educational qualifications required to obtain a teacher qualification: "To obtain a primary school teacher qualification, one must have graduated from a secondary normal school or above; To obtain the qualifications of a junior high school teacher or a junior vocational school teacher of culture or professional courses, one must have a college degree or above from a higher normal college or other university. It was found through visits and investigations, as well as by reviewing relevant materials, that the educational qualifications of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education were basically qualified. But teachers in urban compulsory education have higher educational qualifications than those in rural compulsory education. This is because since the 10th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has entered a new era and has higher requirements for the quality of compulsory education students. Correspondingly, the educational qualifications required for teachers undertaking compulsory education work have been raised as a whole, and thus the educational qualifications of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education have been raised accordingly. It has been found through research that the number of rural teachers with postgraduate degrees is particularly small, while the number of urban teachers with postgraduate degrees is gradually increasing. In 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and The State Council issued the "Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of the Construction of the Teaching Staff in the New Era" which further proposed: "Primary school teachers' educational qualifications should be raised to bachelor's degree in non-teacher education and bachelor's degree in teacher education, and junior high school teachers' educational qualifications should be raised to bachelor's degree."^[3] Therefore, at present, the basic educational attainment of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education is mainly a bachelor's degree. Most of them are obtained through later adult education, self-study for a bachelor's degree, correspondence education, etc. These informal bachelor's degrees have relatively low value, which in turn affects teaching effectiveness and teaching quality.

1.1.2 There is an imbalance in the proportion of subjects among teachers in urban and rural compulsory education

The disparity in the subject structure of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education remains significant, especially the unreasonable subject structure of teachers in rural compulsory education. The task of rural compulsory education teachers is still dominated by the main subjects. Rural compulsory education schools generally lack secondary subject teachers, such as information technology, music, physical education, and art teachers. The proportion of such secondary subject teachers is small and the number is also small. In order to promote the all-round development of students, rural compulsory education schools must be equipped with both minor and major subject teachers for each grade. However, due to the tight funds of local education departments, the establishment is

limited and it is impossible to recruit all kinds of minor subject teachers. Therefore, teachers in rural compulsory education schools need to teach multiple subjects, and these minor subjects have little connection with the subjects they originally teach. In contrast, urban compulsory education is more well-structured in terms of subject allocation, with a higher number of associate subject teachers than rural ones. The problem of the imbalance in the proportion of subjects among teachers in urban and rural compulsory education is still serious and efforts need to be made to find solutions.

1.2 Unbalanced allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education

1.2.1 There are differences in professional identity among teachers in urban and rural compulsory education

A comparison between urban and rural compulsory education teachers reveals that the majority of urban compulsory education teachers have a higher recognition of the social status and professionalism of their profession, believing that urban areas have more abundant educational resources and better teaching conditions, and can gain valuable experience through channels such as professional title promotion, teaching and research activities, and teaching competitions to achieve personal growth. Some teachers also gain a sense of achievement from their work results, such as the high school and college entrance examination admission rates and students' excellent competition results, and the rate of teacher burnout is relatively low. Rural compulsory education teachers have a higher rate of burnout due to the actual problems in their schools. First of all, the shortage of teachers in rural compulsory education schools leads to a situation where one person takes on multiple roles such as teaching, administration, and logistics, resulting in a sense of powerlessness towards teaching effectiveness and the belief that it is difficult to change the existing educational and teaching predicament by individual efforts alone. Secondly, the phenomenon of teaching across grades and disciplines is widespread in rural compulsory education schools, but each teacher has limited energy. "Multitasking" can lead to "picking up sesame seeds and losing watermelons", making it difficult to achieve the desired teaching quality or effect. Finally, there are some development bottlenecks for teachers in rural compulsory education, such as insufficient training resources, narrow career advancement channels, and restricted self-actualization, which leads to a "low sense of achievement". The different views of compulsory education teachers on professional identity, whether in urban or rural areas, should be taken seriously.

1.2.2 There are differences in professional competence between urban and rural compulsory education teachers

Teacher professional quality refers to the continuous learning and research of teachers throughout the entire process, including the pre-employment training stage, teaching stage and in-service training, to develop their professional connotations and gradually reach a mature professional state. ^[4]This article defines teacher professional competence as three aspects: professional concept, professional knowledge, and professional ability. There are obvious differences in professional competence among compulsory education teachers in urban and rural areas. First, from the perspective of professional concepts, urban compulsory education teachers' teaching concepts are more inclined to cultivate students' all-round development, focus on the cultivation of students' core literacy, and emphasize students' individualized development and the development of multiple abilities. Rural compulsory education teachers focus on "basic attainment" as the orientation, giving priority to ensuring students' mastery of basic subject knowledge, and paying particular attention to the implementation of contents such as examinations and college admissions. Secondly, from the perspective of professional knowledge, urban compulsory education teachers are more likely to be exposed to the latest developments in subjects and continuously update their knowledge structure through channels such as teaching and research activities, academic journals, and quality lectures. Rural compulsory education teachers are relatively lagging behind in updating their subject knowledge, relying more on teaching AIDS and less actively integrating content from emerging fields. Due to the lack of training resources, there is a shallow understanding of subject adjustments in the curriculum reform. Finally, in terms of professional competence, urban compulsory education teachers are good at using diverse teaching models in the classroom and

focusing on guiding emergent problems in the classroom. Rural compulsory education teachers, due to the limited number of students, need to simplify their teaching designs to meet the actual needs. The teaching designs focus on the systematic imparting of basic knowledge and have limited room for innovation.

2.Strategies for Optimizing the allocation of teachers in Urban and Rural Compulsory Education

2.1 Build a “precise” teacher allocation mechanism

2.1.1 Policy-driven academic advancement system, striving to ensure a balanced academic structure

Urban compulsory education is better than rural compulsory education in terms of teachers, students and facilities. Therefore, for the improvement of the academic qualifications of rural compulsory education teachers, it can be carried out through multiple aspects. First, set up a special educational attainment improvement program. Establish a “Rural Compulsory Education Teachers' Academic Enhancement Program” with provincial finance coordinating the special program funds, specifically supporting rural compulsory education teachers with an associate degree to enhance their academic qualifications to a bachelor's degree through adult education, the Open University of China, correspondence bachelor's degree and other means and channels. For example, Jiangxi Province has specifically introduced the “Rural Teachers' Education Enhancement Program”, which selects around 2,000 teachers each year to participate in the education enhancement program free of tuition fees, and upon successful completion of the courses and graduation, they will be awarded a National Open University degree certificate. Secondly, social forces are encouraged to participate. Encourage enterprises and public welfare organizations to support the improvement of rural compulsory education teachers' academic qualifications through means such as donation and sponsorship, and encourage the implementation of “public welfare + education” projects.

2.1.2 Combine targeted training with flexible teaching support to strive for a balanced proportion of subjects

On the one hand, we insist on implementing the “free normal student” program, starting from the source of teacher training, to specifically train teachers of all subjects for urban and rural compulsory education, requiring them to return to their hometowns to teach for 5 to 8 years after graduation, and providing appropriate allowances and subsidies after taking up their posts, so that teachers of all subjects are willing and willing to continue teaching in rural areas. On the other hand, the local flexible teaching program is implemented. Through the joint introduction of the teaching program by the local Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance, urban teachers with love are attracted to teach in rural schools. In particular, it is linked to professional title evaluation, providing a series of subsidies such as housing subsidies, teaching subsidies, and medical security to fill the shortage of teachers in various subjects in rural compulsory education.

2.2 Create a “sustainable” path for improving the quality of teachers

2.2.1 Strengthen incentives for professional identity of teachers in rural compulsory education

Incentives for the professional identity of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education can focus on multiple aspects. On the one hand, improve honor incentives, establish a national-level “Rural Compulsory Education Contribution Award”, confer the title of “People's Educator” on teachers who have been rooted in rural areas for 20 years or more, and increase elderly care service subsidy policies. On the other hand, we will foster a strong sense of local culture and encourage teachers to work hard in rural education. We will select outstanding rural compulsory education teachers from all over the country and produce a documentary called “Teachers Rooted in Rural Areas”, which will be broadcast on various platforms to show the touching stories of rural compulsory education teachers to the whole society, gain social attention, and attract more public welfare organizations or talents to serve or teach in rural areas.

2.2.2 Carry out professional training courses for rural compulsory education teachers

How to enhance the professional concepts, professional knowledge and professional capabilities of rural

teachers can be achieved through three aspects. First, in terms of professional concepts, empower rural compulsory education teachers' professional concepts with digital technology, build digital teacher development centers, deliver high-quality online course resources to rural areas through technologies such as 5G networks and artificial intelligence, provide customized training programs, and track the improvement of rural compulsory education teachers' professional concepts from time to time. [5] Secondly, in terms of professional knowledge, organize teacher workshops, seminars, teaching demonstrations and other activities, and enhance the professional knowledge of rural compulsory education teachers in teaching and classroom management through "one-on-one" guidance by outstanding rural teachers. Finally, in terms of professional competence, implement the mentorship program, assign local backbone teachers as mentors to newly recruited rural compulsory education teachers, and impart various experiences in rural compulsory education teaching to new teachers.

2.3 Improve the "long-term" teacher support system

2.3.1 Rural compulsory teachers are subject to targeted special economic compensation

On the one hand, adjust the proportion of financial contributions between the central and local governments. It is suggested that teachers' salaries be included in the scope of responsibility borne by the central, provincial and municipal governments. Establish a special fund for improving the academic qualifications of rural compulsory education teachers, and the central, provincial and municipal governments share the tuition fees for teachers' training in proportion. On the other hand, a separate "rural teacher salary account" is set up, with precise subsidies based on a four-dimensional model of years gradient, head teacher coefficient, remote area index, and performance star rating to ensure a 25% - 50% increase in income compared to urban teachers of the same rank. At the same time, a "honor + promotion" green channel is established to make the rural teaching platform a career stage that everyone aspires to.

2.3.2 Pay attention to the actual needs of rural compulsory education teachers

To meet the actual needs of village and township compulsory education teachers, a dedicated "15-minute education service circle" has been created. This education circle includes a series of supporting facilities conducive to the physical and mental development of rural compulsory education teachers, such as township teacher apartments, gyms, small libraries + self-study rooms, psychological counseling rooms, and supporting shuttle buses. In Qianqi, Xing'an League, Inner Mongolia, this plan has already been implemented, providing teachers with "move-in ready" apartment dormitories and dedicated commuting vehicles, saving living costs for rural compulsory education teachers while enhancing their professional happiness.

3. Conclusion

Compulsory education is the top priority of education work, for a better tomorrow for rural children, for improving the quality of compulsory education teaching in urban and rural areas, for the continuous optimization of the allocation of compulsory education teachers in urban and rural areas. Under the leadership of the Party and the state, we will offer advice on the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education, optimize the allocation of teachers in urban and rural compulsory education, and enable teachers and students in urban and rural areas to share the same blue sky.

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