



Coordination of Urban and Rural Teachers' Team Construction: A Study of Sichuan Province of China

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Supported by Sichuan Finance Department and Sichuan Technology and Science Department Soft Science Project: Study on the Path of Coordinating Urban and Rural Education Development in Sichuan (No.2009ZR0117).

Received 28 January 2014; accepted 7 April 2014
 Published online 18 April 2014

Abstract

Balancing urban and rural education to promote coordinated development of regional education is the main task and basic requirement of the further reform and development of China's current educational cause. As for Sichuan province, an area with very obvious differences between urban and rural areas in China, in the process of promoting the coordinated development of urban and rural education, it should actively respond to all kinds of challenges from urban to rural teachers' team construction, and should take various countermeasures by combining the regional characteristics and the requirements of educational development to realize the balanced allocation of urban and rural teacher resources and coordinated development of education.

Key words: Balancing urban and rural education; Teachers' team construction; Coordinated development; Countermeasures

GUO Ying, JIANG Dan, ZHOU Shuxi (2014). Coordination of Urban and Rural Teachers' Team Construction: A Study of Sichuan Province of China. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 10(3), 33-36. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/4486> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/4486>

INTRODUCTION

Balancing urban and rural education and promoting coordinated development of regional education is the main task and the basic requirement of the further reform and development of China's current educational cause. The basic aim of coordinated educational development between urban and rural areas is to take a comprehensive research and overall plan on urban and rural educational development according to the requirements of the scientific development concept. Through the institutional arrangements and policy adjustment, the allocation of educational resources is optimized, and the gap between urban and rural education is narrowed to realize the equality of education in terms of policies, resources sharing and complementary development, promoting the harmonious development of urban and rural education and realizing educational equality (Li, 2009). The main task of the coordination of urban and rural education reform includes overall arrangement of education idea, education management system, education investment, education layout, and construction of teachers' team, etc. Among all of the mentioned educational reforms, teachers' team construction is a top priority, which is directly related to the quality and level of urban and rural education reform. The gap between the urban and rural education is explicitly reflected in the "hardware", but the main reason that made urban and rural education different and rural education lagged behind is still "software", especially the quality of teachers' team (Qiu, 2006). Therefore, as for Sichuan province, an area with very obvious differences between urban and rural areas in China, in the process of promoting the coordinated development of urban and rural education, it should stick to the fundamentality, that is urban and rural teachers' team construction to realize the balanced allocation of urban and rural teacher resources.

1. THE CHALLENGES OF COORDINATING URBAN AND RURAL TEACHERS' TEAM CONSTRUCTION IN SICHUAN

Objectively speaking, with the development of economy and culture, as well as the implementation of various policies, in recent years, teacher's team construction of all kinds school in Sichuan has achieved remarkable achievement and made positive contributions to Sichuan's economic and social development. But from the perspective of the coordinated development, urban and rural schools in terms of teachers' team construction also face serious challenges.

1.1 Insufficient Number of Teachers & Personnel Quality Needs to Be Promoted

In recent years, education development in Sichuan is speeding up, the scale of various schools is expanding unceasingly, the number of students in school is rapidly increasing, and the number of teachers also has increased year by year. But because of the restriction of the authorized size of teaching staff, funds and other factors, the increase in teachers' scale relatively lagged behind, so within a certain range there is still a problem of insufficient number of teachers. By 2012, though there are more than 700,000 full-time teachers in all levels and kinds of schools, student/teacher ratio is somehow unreasonable. Statistics show that among 31 provinces, cities and autonomous regions all around the country, except that in universities and colleges student/teacher ratio is relatively good, middle and primary schools in most areas of Sichuan have higher student/teacher ratio than the national average (National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 2013).

The situation of shortage of teachers in rural primary school and junior high school is common. Due to fewer students, small classes, and the existing authorized quotas of teaching staff, it is difficult to guarantee the normal teaching need, and open all the curriculums as "syllabus" regulated. Even in relatively developed small and medium-sized counties around Chengdu, such as Qing Baijiang, Du Jiangyan, Shuang Liu, Pixian county and so on, there are also phenomena of shortage of teachers (Wang & Lu, 2009). Especially in recent years, many ethnic minority areas and the village and town schools set up a large number of boarding schools in order to solve the problems of study and management of the left-behind children, however, limited by the factors such as authorized teaching staff size, it's hard to equip boarding schools with necessary life management teachers. Faculty shortage has seriously restricted the healthy development of rural education in certain degree and affected the coordinated development of urban and rural education.

In the view of the development of Sichuan, school teachers' educational level in different schools has large ascension in recent years, but according to the relevant national requirements, the gap still exists. The situation that teachers reach educational standard compared with other provinces across the country is less optimistic. Teachers in colleges and universities in Sichuan, for example, with master's degree and above only close to 60%. From the point of professional quality, some teachers' teaching idea is renewed slowly, teaching method innovation is not enough and knowledge structure is unreasonable. They don't know much about the development of emerging disciplines and the humanistic knowledge. They are not familiar enough with the latest development and forefront knowledge of the lesson that they are teaching. They especially lack practical knowledge and are difficult to adapt themselves to educational development and the needs of the new curriculum reform. Some young teachers have insufficient professional consideration and weak scientific research consciousness. Some teachers' ethics level needs improving, having not set up socialist core values, making inadequate efforts in teaching, and having lower-level academic quality.

1.2 The Allocation of Teacher Resources Is Not Reasonable With Serious Loss of Rural Teachers

Influenced by the difference of urban and rural life as well as economic conditions, uneven geographical distribution of teachers around the province causes serious conflict. Investigation shows that from the quantity in rural poor areas and ethnic minority areas (areas in Ganzi, Aba, Liangshan Prefectures), there's a serious shortage of teachers of some subjects, and teachers of math, physics, chemistry, music, painting, sports, computer, English and other subjects are seriously inadequate (Tu & Tang, 2009); From the quality, teachers in cities are also better than that from countryside, teachers with high academic degree and rich teaching experience are mainly concentrated in the city. Teachers with a bachelor's degree in rural middle schools can account for more than 50%, but that with a master's degree are extremely rare. The phenomenon that large amount of probation teachers' quality are not high in minority regions is relatively common; From the age structure, rural teachers' aging situation is far more than that in city. Teachers' ageing phenomenon is not only on the age, also on educational idea, knowledge structure, educational method and thinking agility. Even though at present there's certain policy inclination, rural schools still have little attraction for graduates and excellent teachers. Loss of backbone forces shows a net outflow of teachers and severe instability of teachers' group. Even in the outer suburbs of Chengdu and Mianyang with relatively good education condition, due to the remote position, can't attract talented teachers, either, which are hard to ensure the teaching quality (Qiu, 2006).

1.3 Teachers' Exchange and Management System Need Improving, While the Evaluation of Teachers' Training Work Remains to Be Strengthened

At present, teachers' management system and personnel mechanism of Sichuan province are similar to most areas of the country. The management of the teachers still stays on the level of position setting, personnel allocation and so on, which is not suitable for the need of education reform and development under the new situation. Rural teachers' team construction is facing sharp conflicts, such as the policy excess, structural vacancy. At the same time, after the implementation of performance salary, urban and rural school teachers' incentive projects and competition mechanism also need to be further improved. In addition, the system of urban and rural teachers exchange has not yet formed, the scope of which is not big enough, and benefit compensation mechanism to promote the rational flow of urban and rural teachers has not really established.

It should be noted that in recent years, focusing on training of backbone teachers and rural teachers, through "three plans", namely "the backbone teachers' development plan", "rural teachers' professional development plan" and "teachers' degree improvement plan", Sichuan province adopted many measures including centralized training, long-distance training, sending teachers to the countryside, field replacement and school-based research and training, etc. to carry out trainings of all teaching staff in primary and secondary schools, which has provided the basic education reform and development with strong talent supports; Especially in ethnic minority areas and the earthquake stricken areas, series of teachers' education and teaching ability training project enhanced the level of teaching staff in these weak areas and to a certain extent, balanced education development. But fundamentally, inadequate training funds, the lack of training mode innovation, insufficient learning autonomy of some teachers (especially rural teachers) and how to further combine training contents and teachers are still the main problems in the current teacher training. At the same time, empirical evaluation of training performance of various kinds of teachers in-service is not enough including national training programs, so the corresponding evaluation should also be strengthened.

2. COUNTERMEASURES FOR COORDINATING URBAN AND RURAL TEACHERS' TEAM CONSTRUCTION IN SICHUAN

To coordinating urban and rural teachers' team construction in Sichuan we must properly handle the balanced development relationship between urban teachers' team construction and the rural teachers'

team construction, must consider the rural teachers' team construction as a top priority, and through various measures, deepen the system reform in order to promote the construction of urban and rural teachers' teams.

2.1 Strengthen Ethics Construction

Teachers' professional ethics construction is the priority and the core of teachers' team construction project, and is also the important content of balancing urban and rural education development in Sichuan. In the process of the construction and development of urban and rural schools, setting up of socialist core values and improvement of teachers' professional ethics should be emphasized. Combined with the relevant requirements from *The National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan Outline (2010-2020)*, *Primary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Standard (Trial)* which is newly promulgated by Ministry of Education, and *Teachers' Professional Ethics Code of Conduct of Sichuan*, teachers' ethics and teachers' team construction should be integrated, carefully planned, deployed together and strictly implemented. For many rural teachers in Sichuan, on the one hand, through a variety of measures to retain them, such as institutional guarantee, interest compensation and so on, more important is to strengthen ethics construction, making them come from heart within the "rural" (that is, strong sense of identity of the rural education and positive emotional experience), improving their professional sense of well-being, helping them aspire to their rural education career, so the stability of the rural school teachers is ensured.

2.2 Perfect the Insurance Mechanism

It should be said that in recent years the rapid development of economy and culture of Sichuan province is well known. While economic conditions improve, the provincial finance can sustainably increase input in urban and rural schools and teachers' wage payment proportion (especially teachers in rural areas and minority areas), and gradually establish a reasonable sharing mechanism of teachers' wages at all levels of the government to ensure a steady rise of rural teachers' income (Yu, Zhang, & Li, 2007). At the same time, from the perspective of combining theory and practice, we should continue scientific exploration on performance salary system implementation and establishment of a long-term effective fund guaranteeing mechanism for teachers' team construction; Under the premise of realizing equal pay for equal work among urban and rural teachers, further improve the rural teachers' special post allowance system. The more remote and weaker school teachers, their allowance should be higher. In addition, we should establish teachers flow interests compensation mechanism across cities and states around the province, especially between urban and rural areas within one county, to make inflow areas somehow compensate the outflow areas.

2.3 Update the Management System

Related management departments should adjust the standard of authorized size of teaching staff by the scientific and moderate principles, changing authorized size of teaching staff according to the student-teacher ratios and source of students, population distribution, traffic conditions and so on, and the teacher resources allocation tilts to rural and ethnic minority areas. Sichuan is a big agricultural province, teaching places in rural and ethnic minority areas are dispersed, and the number of boarders and left-behind students is large, so student-teacher ratios of rural schools and faculty size standard may be above elementary and middle schools in cities. Meanwhile, as for the lack of senior professional positions the rural primary and middle schools, appropriately improving appointment indicators of professional positions in rural primary and secondary schools can motivate teachers to work whole-heartedly; Establish and gradually improve the service period system of primary and secondary school teachers and their regular communication and exchange system, and carry out the regulation that should urban primary and secondary school teachers in principle have teaching experience in rural primary and secondary schools they are allowed to a higher professional technical position. Encourage teachers in cities and towns to communicate with countryside schools on the basis of unchanged post establishment, wages and other relations, and town center elementary school teachers exchange with village school teachers, gradually realizing institutionalized teacher communication periodically. Through teachers' communication system human resources and teaching resources reasonable allocation can be promoted between urban and rural schools (Wang & Fang, 2005).

2.4 Carry out the "Pluralistic Modes of Teaching Assistance"

We should actively explore different ways to support rural school teachers achieve professional development and to promote the balanced development of the urban and rural education. For example, all regions organize backbone teachers of provincial, city and county levels and send them to teach in the countryside schools, and establish assessment and supervision mechanism for these teachers; Advocate urban schools with higher school-running level to establish a long-term stable counterpart support relationship with rural schools, or build school community with rural schools (such as the school-running mode of Chengdu Paotongshu Primary School Group), to share teacher resources of high quality; Select and send rural teachers into urban schools to study and research, which makes them update their ideas faster and improves their professional quality. At the same time, speed up the design of local normal universities free normal education policy, expand rural teacher ad hoc post program in a planned way, encourage teachers colleges to establish education practice bases in rural schools, and explore effective ways of practice teaching assistance.

2.5 Strengthen Teacher Training

On the basis of intensive training, comprehensively improve the urban and rural teacher professional quality in the whole province. With the demand of new curriculum reform on teachers, according to the "twelfth five-year" teacher training plan of Sichuan province, take a variety of ways and methods to help urban and rural teachers master the modern education theory, change education philosophy, update their knowledge structure and improve professional ability. Especially pay attention to improve urban and rural teachers' quality of modern information technology and consciousness and ability of education practice innovation.

It's important to emphasize, according to the regional characteristics of Sichuan, depending only on concentrated on-the-spot training is difficult to satisfy the needs of rural and mountainous teacher continuing education. We shall establish and perfect the provincial teacher education network alliance as the carrier of modern teacher training system and make full use of modern network technology, sharing high quality teaching and information resources, building "regional teacher learning community and resource center" by teacher training institutions in counties as the main body; We should attach great importance to the training of trainers, improve the training teachers' quality, strengthen the teacher training performance evaluation at the same time, and pay attention to improve the training effectiveness and pertinence.

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