

A Survey about Teachers' "Economic Income and Sense of Happiness" of the Sichuan Tibetan Elementary School:

Take Ma Erkang County As An Example

UNE ENQUÊTE SUR LES "REVENUS ÉCONOMIQUES ET LE SENTIMENT DE BONHEUR " DES ENSEIGNANTS DANS L'ÉCOLE PRIMAIRE TIBÉTAINE DU SICHUAN:

PRENDRE MA ERKANG COMME EXEMPLE

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Abstract: The investigation mainly adopts questionnaires and interviews to inquire 120 teachers from Ma Erkang Elementary School in Sichuan Province. The results indicate that the countryside teachers' income is universally lower than that of urban teachers (teachers from the urban area). Teachers' sense of happiness of both rural and urban areas is, in general, not optimistic. Countryside teachers' satisfaction of economic income and sense of happiness is slightly higher than that of urban teachers. Economic income is one of the factors that affect the sense of happiness, yet it is not the most important one.

Key words: elementary school teachers; economic income; sense of happiness

Résumé: L'enquête utilise principalement des questionnaires et des entretiens pour enqu 120 enseignants de l'école élémentaire Ma Erkang dans la province du Sichuan. Les résultats indiquent que les revenus des enseignants dans la campagne sont généralement inférieurs à ceux des enseignants urbains (les enseignants dans les zones urbaines). En général, le sentiment de bonheur des enseignants de zones rurales et urbaines n'est pas optimiste. La satisfaction de revenus économiques et le sentiment de bonheur des enseignants dans la campagne sont légèrement supérieure à celle des enseignants en milieu urbain. Les revenus économiques est l'un des facteurs qui influent sur le sentiment de bonheur, mais ce n'est pas le facteur le plus important.

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Mots-Clés: enseignants de l'école primaire; revenus économiques; sentiment de bonheur

A few days ago, we chose Ma Erkang County, the political, economic and cultural center of Aba Zang Qiang Autonomous Prefecture as a case study. 60 teachers from each of the 3 urban primary schools and 5 countryside schools were selected as targets and given 120 questionnaires (all were filled out and brought back), and we interviewed some of them to find out their "economic income and sense of happiness".

1. CONTENT AND RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

1.1 The basic situation of the respondents

Teachers in the tested area are mostly of the Zang nationality, and are comprised of 41.7% urban elementary school teachers and 70% countryside elementary school teachers. The initial degrees obtained by the urban teachers were mainly secondary normal school or junior college. Later many of them received junior college degrees or bachelors' degrees by taking correspondence courses. The same thing happened in the countryside area. Urban teachers are mainly of senior elementary school level and basic elementary school level, comprised of about 50% and 37%, respectively. Countryside teachers, however, mainly consist of basic elementary school level, taking about 75%, with less at the senior levels.

Teachers' work experience ranges from 3 to 25 years. They usually have heavy tasks to do with an average of 6-15 classes every week for urban teachers and 11-15 classes for countryside teachers. Work pressure is greatly felt by all teachers. Not only are there 45% of urban teachers who claim "great pressure", but also 48.3% feel "extreme great pressure". Meanwhile, 91.7% of the countryside teachers have "great pressure". By comparison, it seems that the working pressure of the former one is greater.

1.2 The economic situation of the respondents

Teachers' economic income (including salary, bonus, allowance, etc.). (See the results in table 1).

Table 1 Teachers' income

Respondents Content, result		The number of urban teachers (%)	The number of countryside teachers (%)	Respondents Content, result		The number of urban teachers (%)	The number of countryside teachers (%)
Month salary (Yuan)	Below 500	0 (0)	0 (0)	Month bonus (Yuan)	Below 50	52 (86.7)	54 (90.0)
	500-800	14 (23.3)	16 (26.7)		50-100	4 (6.7)	4 (6.7)

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Respondents Content, result		The number of urban teachers (%)	The number of countryside teachers (%)	Respondents Content, result		The number of urban teachers (%)	The number of countryside teachers (%)
Month salary (Yuan)	800-1200	14 (23.3)	23 (38.3)	Month bonus (Yuan)	100-200	1 (1.7)	2 (3.3)
	Above 1200	32 (53.3)	21 (35.0)		200-400	0 (0)	0 (0)
Month class allowances (Yuan)	Below 50	58 (96.7)	59 (98.3)		400-800	1 (1.7)	0 (0)
	50-100	2 (3.3)	1 (1.7)		Above 800	2 (3.3)	0 (0)
				Term awards (Yuan)	Below 50	37 (61.7)	45 (75.0)
					50-100	7 (11.7)	11 (18.3)
Holiday bonus (Yuan)	Below 50	32 (53.3)	52 (86.7)		100-200	10 (16.7)	4 (6.7)
	50-100	16 (26.7)	7 (11.7)		200-300	3 (5.0)	0 (0)
	100-200	3 (5.0)	0 (0)		Above 300	3 (5.0)	0 (0)
	200-400	2 (3.3)	1 (1.7)	Year bonus (Yuan)	Below 50	24 (40.0)	53 (88.3)
	400-800	6 (10.0)	0 (0)		50-100	4 (6.7)	4 (6.7)
	Above 800	1 (1.7)	0 (0)		100-200	17 (28.3)	3 (5.0)
Other Allowances (Yuan)	Below 50	53 (88.3)	59 (98.3)		200-400	2 (3.3)	0 (0)
	50-100	1 (1.7)	1 (1.7)		400-800	10 (16.7)	0 (0)
	100-200	5 (8.3)	0 (0)		Above 800	3 (5.0)	0 (0)
	200-400	1 (1.7)	0 (0)				
	Above 400	0 (0)	0 (0)				

1.3 satisfaction of economic income (See the results in table 2)

Table 2 Teacher's satisfaction about their income

Respondents Content, result		The number of urban teachers (%)	The number of countryside teachers (%)
The degree of satisfaction	very satisfactory	0 (0)	0 (0)
	satisfactory	3 (5.0)	3 (5.0)
	It's ok	8 (13.3)	32 (53.3)
	dissatisfactory	16 (26.7)	20 (33.3)
	Very dissatisfactory	33 (55.0)	5 (8.3)

1.4 Self-evaluation of sense of happiness (See the results in table 3)

Table3: Result of the teachers' self-evaluation of sense of happiness

Content, result		Respondents	The number of urban teachers (%)	The number of countryside teachers (%)
The scores	Below 59		4 (6.7)	0 (0)
	60-69		28 (46.7)	1 (1.7)
	70-79		14 (23.3)	19 (31.7)
	80-89		10 (16.7)	31 (51.7)
	90-100		4 (6.7)	9 (15.0)

2. RESULTS AND THINKING

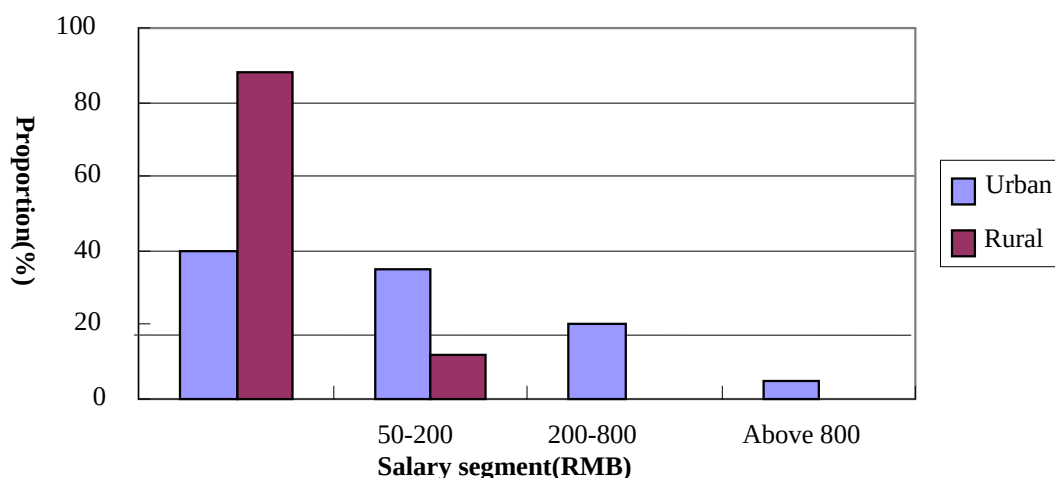
Firstly, salary is the teachers' main source of income. According to the survey, the elementary schools, no matter whether in the city or in the countryside, the teachers are paid their salary on time based on the relevant regulations. The difference of the salary mainly depended on the difference of teaching experience and educational titles. All of their salaries are above 500RMB, while the urban teachers' proportion of high salary (above 1200RMB) is larger than the countryside teachers, whose salary is mostly concentrated between 500-1200RMB. (See the results in fig.1).

Figure 1: Comparison between countryside teachers and urban teachers' salary



The teachers rarely have external incomes such as bonus, allowance and so on, especially for the teachers from the rural areas. In several surveys of the external incomes which are above 50RMB, taking the year-end bonus as an example, the urban teachers' proportion is above 50% (36 people, nearly 60%), while the countryside teachers' proportion is below 11.7% (7 people). That is really a large difference. (See the results in fig. 2).

Figure 2: Comparison between countryside teachers and urban teachers' year bonus



Secondly, the teachers' satisfaction level about their income is quite low, even to the extent that nobody feels "very satisfactory" about it. The urban teachers' proportion of "very dissatisfactory" reaches 55%, in addition to the 26.7% of "not satisfactory". About 81.7% of them feel dissatisfied about their income. On the other hand, 53.3% of the countryside teachers whose income is absolutely lower than the urban teachers feel that their income is "OK".

The reasons are as follows: to begin with, although the teachers are paid on time by the financial department, compared with the civil servants, they are doing more work (most of them work more than 8 hours), yet their income is much lower than the civil servants. Besides, the civil servants received their "sunshine wage" in 2006, while the teachers' salary did not improve, which considerably dampened the teachers' enthusiasm. As for the countryside teachers, who feel their salary is "OK", apart from their reluctance, it also has something to do with their self-evaluation of sense of happiness.

Thirdly, in the self-evaluation of sense of happiness, the countryside teachers generally give higher scores than the urban teachers. Not one teacher's score is below 59. About 51.7% of them have their scores between 80 and 89, and 15% of them between 90 and 100, which in total takes 66.7%. In contrast, urban teachers generally have lower scores. For example, 6.7% of them have scores "below 59", and even more, 46.7% of them have scores "between 60 and 69" and 23.3% of them have scores "between 70 and 79", which in total comprises 70%.

The reason might be that the sense of happiness depends not only on the economic income (including the absolute income and relative income), but also several intangible factors. The choice on "the reasons of their happiness" made by the teachers can be ordered in the following way. According to the number of teachers who made their choice, the choices made by urban teachers are ordered in this way: smoothness in work, health, rise in income, harmony of family, good interpersonal relationships. While the countryside teachers' choices are as following: harmony in family, health, smoothness in work, good interpersonal relationships, and finally rise in income. This result explains to a full extent the difference in self-evaluation of sense of happiness between urban teachers and countryside teachers, and partly accounts for the difference in satisfaction of economic income between them.

3. SUMMARY

The investigation shows that the economic income of teachers from Ma Erkang County is rather low. It is

incredible to offer most teachers only the so-called “dead salary” income to make them to do the job with a greater feeling of satisfaction so as to make them to devote themselves due to a sense of happiness, especially nowadays when bonuses and allowances and other forms of incomes are supposed to be higher than the basic salary. Although the fact that teachers’ income especially that of rural teachers is not only the problem in a backward area of western China often confronts, but also a problem of the whole country or even an international one. There are still some countries which have solved this problem effectively or never have had such a problem. Take the neighboring country of South Korea for example, in which a teacher is “the most respected and noble profession”, and their salary is much higher than that of people from other professions. Moreover, they can enjoy “attractive pensions”.

In addition, as “social beings”, teachers tend to have various and multi-level needs which include material needs, spiritual needs as well as emotional needs, the satisfaction of which will comprehensively decide the degree of their sense of happiness. The fact that countryside teachers enjoy a higher level sense of happiness than urban teachers does not necessarily mean that “everything is just fine”. On the contrary, it causes us to be alert and think; how to improve the living standards of the countryside teachers and their levels of sense of happiness. At the same time is of quite importance because the biggest “victims” of their “numbness” and “slowness” will not be themselves but the countryside compulsory education which should be shown more attention and those children who are stuck in it for a long time.

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