

The Dilemma and Solution of the Development of Chinese Rural Kindergartens in the New Era

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Abstract: Under the background of the new era, although the development of rural kindergartens in China is faced with many difficulties, it also contains unlimited possibilities and opportunities. Based on this, this paper deeply explores the dilemma and solution of the development of China's rural kindergartens under the background of the new era, aiming to promote the sustainable development of rural early childhood education through the joint efforts of the government, society, schools, and other aspects.

Keywords: New era background; Rural kindergarten; Solution and dilemma

Online publication: April 28, 2025

1. Introduction

As the pace of urban-rural integration accelerates, the development of rural kindergartens has drawn significant attention. High-quality early childhood education in rural areas plays a crucial role in children's early growth. However, rural kindergartens currently encounter challenges such as insufficient teaching staff and unevenly distributed educational resources. Firstly, rural kindergartens often struggle with outdated facilities and resource shortages. Many of these institutions have poorly designed layouts, inadequate lighting and ventilation, and limited outdoor activity spaces, making it difficult to meet children's basic activity requirements. Outdated teaching equipment, a lack of instructional aids, and stale teaching materials further restrict curriculum diversity, failing to effectively engage children's interest in learning. Secondly, the teaching workforce in rural kindergartens is underqualified and understaffed. The teacher-to-student ratio imbalance is prevalent. Some teachers, transferred from primary schools or hired on a temporary basis, lack specialized training in early childhood education. As a result, they tend to adopt elementary school-style teaching methods, have limited access to professional development opportunities, and face constraints in enhancing their teaching skills. Rural parents tend to place less emphasis on early childhood education, and the communication channels between families and kindergartens remain underdeveloped. Additionally, parental involvement in educational activities

occurs infrequently, and the dissemination of scientifically informed parenting practices remains inadequate. The State Council has issued a policy directive aimed at further enhancing rural education, emphasizing that improving rural education and effectively managing rural schools are crucial matters. These efforts directly impact the well-being of over 800 million farmers and address the learning requirements of the broader rural population. Furthermore, they play a pivotal role in elevating the quality of the workforce, facilitating the transition of traditional agriculture into modern agriculture, and resolving fundamental agricultural, rural, and farmer-related issues ^[1]. Early childhood education should align with national development strategies as guided by relevant policies, thereby fostering the holistic growth of young children more effectively.

2. The development dilemma of rural kindergartens in China in the new era

2.1. Weak teachers and shortage of professional preschool education talents

The competence of teachers represents one of the key factors influencing the growth of rural kindergartens. Given the relatively underdeveloped economy in rural regions, living standards and work environments tend to be challenging, with transportation often being insufficiently convenient. As a result, numerous skilled kindergarten teachers are hesitant to take positions in rural areas. This reluctance leads to a shortage of educators with progressive ideas in rural settings, thereby affecting the overall quality of rural kindergarten teachers. Additionally, many kindergarten teachers lack a solid foundation in early childhood education theory and training, relying instead on past educational experiences without developing a holistic understanding of early childhood education principles. In some cases, their activity selections fail to effectively stimulate children's cognitive development, further impacting the quality of education in rural kindergartens. Moreover, rural kindergarten teachers typically receive lower salaries compared to their urban counterparts, who earn an average of 3000–4000. Rural kindergarten wages are even lower, discouraging many individuals from pursuing careers in rural education. Consequently, this creates a negative cycle, hindering positive development in rural kindergarten education ^[2].

2.2. Uneven allocation of educational resources, teaching quality, and conditions

Rural kindergartens typically have fairly basic educational resources, which struggle to fulfill the diverse developmental requirements of young children. In some cases, these institutions lack essential amenities such as libraries, musical instruments, and sports equipment. Even when such facilities do exist, they are often neglected, leading to damaged books and broken instruments that remain unreplaced over time. This issue is particularly prevalent in rural settings ^[3]. As urbanization progresses, an increasing number of rural families opt to enroll their children in city schools for improved educational opportunities. Consequently, rural kindergartens experience declining student enrollment, exacerbating their survival challenges. Moreover, this trend deprives rural children of vital early education experiences. Generally, rural households place limited emphasis on preschool education, with many parents lacking the knowledge and skills necessary to create a supportive home learning environment. This deficiency in parental involvement further undermines the effectiveness of rural kindergarten education, placing rural children at a disadvantage from the outset of their academic journey ^[4].

2.3. Imperfect development mechanism of urban and rural kindergartens with few opportunities for cooperation and exchange

A significant disparity exists in the distribution of educational resources between urban and rural kindergartens. To draw in more children, urban kindergartens leverage abundant educational resources and a high-quality

learning environment to attract both teachers and students. In contrast, rural kindergartens operate within limited boundaries due to smaller populations, fewer births in rural regions, and parental underemphasis on early childhood education. Essentially, they do not upgrade their educational materials or refine their teaching approaches. Moreover, because of the geographical distance between certain areas and urban centers, there are limited chances for collaboration and exchange between urban and rural kindergartens. This restricts rural kindergartens from adopting best practices and methodologies from top-performing institutions and receiving adequate support from their urban counterparts. Despite the government's increasing focus on rural education policies in recent years, quality educational resources remain predominantly concentrated in urban areas. Consequently, rural early childhood education suffers from a lack of practical activities, making it challenging for children to engage in external learning experiences ^[5].

3. The development solution of rural kindergartens in China in the new era

3.1. Training and introducing teachers

3.1.1. Strengthening the training of rural kindergarten teachers

In the Chinese education system, rural kindergarten education constitutes a critical component of foundational learning, and its quality significantly influences the holistic development of children in rural areas. To begin with, rural kindergartens can collaborate with experts to provide preschool teachers with insights into contemporary educational philosophies, instructional strategies, curriculum planning and execution, as well as multidimensional foundational knowledge such as music, art, and dance. Through this approach, educators not only acquire knowledge about teaching methodologies and content but also gain a deeper understanding of children's preferences through interactions with these experts, thereby fostering child growth ^[6]. Secondly, given the rapid advancement of internet technology, preschool teachers can leverage online resources for self-directed learning. They can document their uncertainties, enhance their overall competence by consulting literature, and engage in discussions with fellow rural educators. Moreover, teachers can apply the learned teaching techniques (such as case studies, classroom observations, group discussions, and micro-teaching) in their instruction to assess their effectiveness and make ongoing adjustments to any impractical aspects ^[7]. Lastly, kindergartens can develop a systematic evaluation framework to periodically assess teacher training outcomes. Teachers who demonstrate exceptional classroom performance can receive recognition through honorary titles and financial incentives. This encourages other educators to emulate their peers and remain committed to continuous learning, ultimately driving the advancement of rural kindergartens ^[8].

3.1.2. Introducing urban quality teachers through temporary posts in urban and rural areas

To address the imbalance in educational resource distribution between urban and rural areas, one potential solution is to implement temporary postings for high-quality teachers between these regions. This approach aims to enhance the quality of rural kindergarten education. Temporary postings involve selecting rural kindergarten teachers to undergo a period of learning at top-tier urban kindergartens. During this time, these teachers are exposed to the management styles and operational mechanisms of urban kindergartens, enabling them to acquire valuable experiences that can improve their teaching skills and administrative capabilities. Upon completing their training, rural teachers will be evaluated by urban kindergarten educators to help them better understand their own progress and learning outcomes ^[9]. To encourage and sustain the participation of skilled urban teachers in temporary rural assignments, the government could offer incentives such as housing and transportation allowances. These benefits would ensure smooth and effective work conditions in rural

settings, thereby infusing fresh energy and motivation into rural kindergarten education ^[10].

3.2. Integrating and optimizing educational resources

3.2.1. Establishing dedicated funds for the development of rural kindergartens

For an extended period, rural kindergartens have faced challenges such as underdeveloped hardware facilities due to factors like isolated geographic locations and sluggish economic growth. These conditions make it difficult to fulfill the requirements necessary for quality early childhood education. To address this, the government could establish dedicated funds to provide robust financial backing for rural kindergartens while encouraging private sector investments. This would enable these institutions to establish essential amenities similar to those found in urban areas, such as laboratories where children can conduct experiments on their own, activity rooms allowing them to play independently, and sports equipment enabling interactive games with peers. Such measures are crucial for promoting the holistic development of children. Additionally, governmental oversight is vital to ensure that the infrastructure installed in rural kindergartens remains functional. Without proper supervision, basic facilities may fall into disrepair and become unusable after a short period. Regular monitoring and maintenance can prevent this issue, ensuring that these resources continue to benefit children effectively over time ^[11]. In addition, rural teachers can also carry out practical education for children based on local characteristics, which not only enables children to communicate and exchange with other children, but also enables children to have a comprehensive understanding of the history and customs of their hometown.

3.2.2. Using modern information technology to share high-quality education resources remotely

Kindergarten teachers can also download teaching courseware, video materials, electronic books, and other contents in the cloud platform of kindergarten education resources, so as to realize the effective use of educational resources and enrich their teaching content and improve their teaching effect. For example, teachers can let children watch the teaching activities in senior kindergartens through live broadcasting; or use the game teaching method to let more children participate in it, so as to better stimulate children's learning interest. In addition, the platform has also established a good teacher communication mechanism, so that all preschool teachers can participate in one of the problems, which can not only promote the communication and exchange of all teachers, but also explore a variety of teaching strategies and teaching methods, to help rural preschool teachers have a comprehensive understanding of early childhood education opportunities, so that children grow up in a more equitable environment ^[12].

3.3. Providing mechanism building and policy support

3.3.1. Establishing a long-term mechanism for the coordinated development of urban and rural kindergartens

The coordinated development mechanism of urban and rural kindergartens should cover the following aspects: First, establish a one-to-one urban and rural kindergartens pair assistance system, encourage high-quality urban kindergartens to establish long-term and stable cooperative relations with rural kindergartens, and help rural kindergartens develop better. The government establishes the support mechanism of the regional alliance, so that teachers in different regions can cooperate and exchange, and carry out better targeted development. In addition, assistance from different regions can also be exchanged after a certain period of time, so that rural kindergarten teachers can understand different education methods. Second, rural kindergarten teachers can communicate and exchange with urban kindergarten teachers for a project, so as to form a project form with more local characteristics and certain advanced concepts, so as to better promote the growth of teachers ^[13].

Thirdly, kindergartens can invite the government, social organizations, and educational institutions to regularly evaluate the teaching methods of rural teachers, so as to constantly adjust the training plan for teachers and better improve their professional skills.

3.3.2. Promulgating relevant policies

It is important to increase financial support and establish clear policy directions to encourage a greater number of talented individuals to participate in early childhood education. This will help minimize the turnover of teachers in rural kindergartens, thereby addressing critical issues in rural early education such as insufficient funding and a lack of qualified teachers. By doing so, it can invigorate the rural education system and offer children in rural areas more equitable and higher-quality educational opportunities. Crucially, this approach will provide a strong foundation for the sustained development of rural regions, disrupt the cycle of poverty, and drive the economic transformation and comprehensive social progress in rural communities ^[14].

3.3.3. Family and community involvement

The family serves as the initial learning environment for children's development. Consequently, kindergartens should foster an effective communication system with parents via regular parent-teacher conferences, open days for parents, and other initiatives. This enables kindergartens to share scientific educational philosophies and methods with parents, helping them adopt appropriate parenting practices and ensuring children receive optimal education at home. In this process, parents may also develop innovative educational strategies, which they can discuss with teachers, allowing educators to refine their own teaching approaches. Additionally, the government can encourage businesses to support rural children's education by establishing educational funds and providing subsidies for underprivileged students. This can motivate more teachers to get involved, creating a positive feedback loop. Furthermore, media and public opinion can contribute to rural early childhood education by promoting it through coverage and reports, thereby increasing its visibility and attracting additional talent and resources to the field of rural early childhood education ^[15].

4. Conclusion

For the problems of weak teachers and unequal distribution of educational resources, only continuous innovation and deepening reform can open up a bright road for rural early childhood education. On the road ahead, we should continue to uphold the concept of people-oriented education, pay attention to the all-round development of rural children, and provide them with more abundant and diversified educational resources and growth opportunities.

Funding

Self-funded project of the 14th Five-Year Plan of Education Science in Shandong Province "A Study on Cooperative Quality Improvement Management Mechanism of Kindergartens with Integration of Towns and Villages" (2023ZC637)

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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