

A Study on the Guarantee Mechanism for the Professional Development of Rural Elementary School Teachers in the Context of Rural Revitalization: Based on Contiguous Poverty-stricken Guangxi Border Areas

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Abstract: Due to the lack of professional development time and awareness, well-directed training content, respect for teachers and value for education, the professional development of rural border elementary school teachers is a problem that needs to be solved urgently. The study suggests that the teaching faculty should be complemented and strengthened, the contents of teacher training should be “localized,” the internal drive of teachers should be stimulated, the respect for teachers and education should be promoted, thus improving the overall quality of the teaching faculty and promoting the balanced development of compulsory education.

Keywords: Rural border elementary school; Teachers professional development; High-quality development

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1. Introduction

In October 2017, the rural revitalization strategy was put forward at the 19th Party Congress. The revitalization of the countryside is one of the key factors of national revitalization. Guangxi is the only province and region in China that is connected to ASEAN by land and sea. Ethnic education in border areas has an irreplaceable role in the implementation of its construction, as well as in the realization of the “Great Revival of the Chinese Nation” and the strategy of precise poverty alleviation. However, due to the influence of many factors such as history and environment, the lack of professional development of teachers in Guangxi’s rural border elementary schools are a common problem.

In recent years, there has been considerable research on the professional development of rural elementary school teachers. According to Xu Lili and Gao Kuifang, the atmosphere of school teaching and research is weak, teachers’ professional growth is not sufficiently motivated and teachers’ participation is not high ^[1]. Qian Fang believes that there is a lack of internal drive for professional development and a lack of vernacular sentiment. Pre-service education and post-service training in rural areas are far from vernacular culture ^[2]. Zhao Xinliang and Liu Shengnan argues that rural teachers should be guided to learn

on their own, stimulate their intrinsic development motivation, and implement differentiated support policies for rural teachers of different generations [3]. Wu Xianyong thinks that the key to solve the problem of inefficient teaching in ethnic minority areas lies in the correct guiding ideology of teaching, changing the concept of teaching according to the teaching rules and enhancing teaching awareness [4].

However, existing research findings have paid little attention to the specificities and differences in the professional development of rural border elementary school teachers. This paper intends to analyze the reasons affecting the professional development of teachers in rural border elementary schools in terms of border ethnic characteristics, geographical location and other factors, and propose corresponding guarantee mechanisms.

2. The current situation of teacher’s professional development in Guangxi rural border elementary schools

2.1. Current status of teacher’s professional development

2.1.1. Lack of time for professional development

The workload of teachers in rural border elementary schools is relatively high in terms of the number of hours they work each day. Rural border elementary teachers are in a state of overload. **Table 1** shows that 60% of the 350 teachers work more than 8 hours a day and most of the teachers have more than 20 lessons per week, some of them have as many as 24 lessons. The education administration regulates the standard of weekly lessons for elementary school teachers to 15-18. This shows that teachers in rural border elementary schools are seriously overloaded with weekly long teaching hours.

Table 1. Daily working hours of elementary school teachers in Guangxi rural border areas

Validity	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
4 hours	2	.6	.6	.6
4-6 hours	8	2.3	2.3	2.9
6-8 hours	130	37.1	37.1	40.0
More than 8 hours	210	60.0	60.0	100.0
In total	350	100.0	100.0	

2.1.2. Poorly targeted training contents

According to teachers’ feedback on their participation in training, teachers in rural border elementary schools believe that the current training contents lack pertinence and is not in line with the actual situation of their schools. **Table 2** shows that 35.7%, 27.1% and 37% of teachers in Guangxi rural border elementary schools are satisfied, dissatisfied and indifferent respectively in terms of their satisfaction in participating in training. It can be seen that only 35.7% teachers are satisfied with the current training contents, which is less than 40%.

Table 2. Satisfaction of teacher training contents in Guangxi rural border elementary schools

Validity	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Satisfying	125	35.7	35.7	35.7
Unsatisfying	95	27.1	27.1	62.9
Indifferent	130	37.1	37.1	100.0
In total	350	100.0	100.0	

2.1.3. Weak professional development awareness

Teachers' awareness of professional development in rural border elementary schools is weak. **Table 3** shows that among the 350 teachers surveyed, 237 teachers think that they don't need professional development, accounting for 67.8% of the sample, while 113 teachers believe that they need professional development, accounting for only 32.2% of the sample. It shows that the weak awareness of professional development is a common problem among teachers in rural elementary schools at the border.

Table 3. Teacher's awareness of professional development in Guangxi rural border elementary schools

Validity	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Unnecessary	237	67.8	67.8	67.8
Necessary	113	32.2	32.2	100.0
In total	350	100.0	100.0	

2.2. Factors affecting teachers' professional development

2.2.1. The contradiction between work and study and the difficulty of securing time for teachers' professional development

In addition to their teaching duties, teachers in Guangxi rural border elementary schools have to undertake other non-teaching tasks.

Firstly, due to the lack of authorized strength, the number of teachers in rural border elementary schools is insufficient, especially in village elementary schools or teaching centers where a package class management often exists. The border areas are relatively backward, most young and strong laborers go out to work, there are more left-behind children and most families live in the mountains. In order to facilitate the management and cultivation of the students, rural border elementary schools generally implement boarding system. Whereas the schools are basically not equipped with logistical staff, the teachers have to carry on both educational and logistical support duties in the whole day ^[5]. Secondly, there is a high rate of teacher vacancies. Teachers are the direct producers of educational products and the teacher problem is the educational problem ^[6]. Thirdly, compared with mainland schools, border schools represent the image of the country and are the focus of national attention, so the number of inspections is high and the workload for teachers is heavy. It is seen that teachers in rural border elementary schools have a lot of work to do and their work takes up far more time than the national eight-hour limit, making it difficult for them to improve their professional development.

2.2.2. The lack of "localized" teacher training contents makes teachers' professional development less effective

The increase of "localized" knowledge in the training contents is conducive to the construction of a rural teaching team with ethnic characteristics, and to maintaining the consistency of family education and school education ^[7]. Firstly, although there are many opportunities for school teachers to go out for learning, they basically go to counties to attend trainings and there is a lack of practical ability trainings. Moreover, the training contents lack "localized" knowledge. The trainers are not familiar with the regional environment and they do not understand the local history and culture or the humanistic values, resulting in a mismatch between the training contents and the actual schools and failure of achieving the ideal effects. Sometimes the teacher trainings are just formalistic for teachers.

2.2.3. The lack of motivation for self-development and autonomy for professional learning

Consciousness is not only a product of long-term accumulation of the material world, but also a subjective

image of the functions of the human brain and the material world ^[8]. Rural border elementary schools are an important part of basic education in ethnic areas, and the professional development of these teachers not only directly affects the overall quality of basic education in border areas, but also involves major issues such as national unity and border stability ^[9]. Due to the influence of external environment and subjective factors, teachers in rural border elementary schools are generally lack of motivation for self-development. Firstly, with the establishment of ASEAN Free Trade Area, people took advantage of the location and national preferential policies to engage in border trade business, resulting in the prevalence of the idea that business is more important than study in the society. Secondly, in order to make up the shortage of teachers during the special period of the 20th century, there were many villager-funded teachers made great contributions to the local education. However, due to the influence of the local culture and the unique school culture of the border village elementary schools, these teachers were generally lack of autonomy for professional learning and stayed sluggish.

3. Guarantee mechanisms for professional development of teachers in rural elementary schools in the Guangxi border region

3.1. Complement and strengthen teaching faculty to alleviate the contradiction between work and study

The contradiction between work and study has always been an important factor limiting the professional development of teachers. Firstly, in order to complement and strengthen the teaching faculty in border rural elementary schools, the state and local governments should give more authorized and talented personnel support. Secondly, special incentives or subsidies should be given to local teachers in rural border elementary schools, and more preferential policies should be formulated to stabilize the teaching faculty. Local teachers are familiar with the culture, customs and ethnic policies of their hometowns, which are conducive to the communication with students' parents. Thirdly, we should focus on replenishing teachers of subjects in short supply in rural elementary schools to effectively make up for the shortage of teachers. Fourthly, a reasonable employee turnover approval mechanism should be established by the education bureau, who can conduct a centralized annual approval to the flow of the county's rural elementary school teachers.

3.2. Increase the “localized” contents of teacher training to improve the learning effect

According to the actual training needs of elementary school teachers in border villages, the “localization” of training contents is highlighted. Firstly, “school-based” training should be carried out. Some teachers who are unable to go out and attend online training due to school or work conditions can conduct school-based training based on their own school. They are familiar with the rural culture, the local language, and the humanity circumstance, which are helpful for communication and exchange. The teachers can use school resources to create a good training atmosphere and effectively promote their own professional development. Secondly, the “cooperative teaching” mode, or the “urban & rural “mode, is carried out with the help of the Internet. With excellent teachers in urban areas playing the leading role in the second classroom of rural border schools, high-quality teaching resources can be provided in the form of remote live streaming or recording.

3.3. Stimulate teachers' own internal drive to improve learning motivation

The professional development of teachers ultimately depends on the teachers themselves. Firstly, it is important to tap into typical examples, and widely publicize the border entrenched role models. On annual festivals, especially on Teachers' Day, local government should condole and honor teachers who settle down in rural border elementary schools with long service, so as to motivate teachers to lay the roots in

rural border schools. Secondly, schools should set up interactive learning groups with young teachers for older teachers, and organize regular discussions and exchanges between teachers in a mutual learning way. Young teachers can bring new teaching ideas and modern teaching techniques to older teachers, and older teachers can share their good teaching and management experiences with younger teachers to stimulate each other's learning interests.

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