

How to Retain Rural Preschool Teachers?

Yuhua Luo, Suojun Yuan, Longjun Zhou

Jiangsu Second Normal University, Nanjing 211200, Jiangsu, China

*“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”
–William Butler Yeats*

AS a result of the accelerated urbanization and the improved remunerations of urban teachers, a large number of rural teachers have been pursuing employment in urban areas, resulting in a severe shortage of rural teaching staff. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in developing countries. Disadvantages in rural school working and living situations such as low pay, poor living conditions, heavy workloads, limited professional development has made teacher recruitment and retention extremely challenging tasks. The unbalanced urban-rural distribution of teachers, especially high-quality teachers, have become barriers to rural education development and further exacerbated the disadvantaged situations of rural students.

Due to the exclusion of preschool education from China’s compulsory education and a lack of professional identity among rural preschool teachers (Yu & Liang, 2008), the turnover rate of rural kindergarten teachers has been worse than that of rural primary and secondary educators. In order to alleviate the economic burden of farmers, rural kindergartens typically charge low fees. They are mainly funded by donations of various sources or by its founder(s). On the one hand, due to the high kid-teacher ratios, a rural kindergarten teacher often has multiple roles to play, including the head of the kindergarten, teacher, child-care worker, and even cook. Their workloads are

© 2022 Insights Publisher. All rights reserved.



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (<http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed by the Insights Publisher.

far more intense than those of their urban counterparts. On the other hand, the salary of a rural kindergarten teacher is even lower than the average income of local farmers, and most of them are not entitled to medical insurance, endowment insurance and other welfare benefits. As a consequence, they have difficulty maintaining a decent life. Furthermore, few rural preschool teachers are accorded with the Bianzhi (a system of publicly funded posts in China) membership, which make them feel excluded from the current education system.

How to revitalize rural education and encourage high-competence rural teachers to devote themselves to education has become a global concern. Governments around the world have implemented a series of strategies to ensure supply of qualified teachers for rural educational institutions including rural kindergartens. For example, in 2013, China initiated the National Teacher Training Program which was open to kindergarten, primary and secondary school teachers all over the country. The program provides teachers with training in various aspects such as basic educational theory, teaching methodology and class management. In the following three years, about 10,000 principals and teachers from rural kindergartens received this nation-level training. More recently, China's Ministry of Education introduced a professional ranking system for preschool education to evaluate teachers' qualifications and ability and tie their salaries to their professional rankings (Wang et al., 2020). In Bangladesh, the government not only increased training expenditures for rural preschool education, but also encouraged rural teachers in pilot kindergartens to experiment new educational methods (Opel, 2009). Such initiatives help improve rural preschool teachers' working conditions and increase retention rate of rural kindergarten teachers in developing countries.

Boosting rural preschool teacher supply necessitates more pertinent research from academia. *Factors Influencing the Turnover Intention of Rural Preschool Teachers in the Context of Rural Revitalization: An Analysis Based on a Moderated Mediation Model* in this issue examined the status quo of preschool teacher turnover in China's rural areas and identified the impact of work stress on rural preschool teachers' turnover intention via the mediating effect of job apathy. The moderator role of Bianzhi membership was emphasized. This study recommended that a series of reforms should be carried out to restrict the workload of rural preschool teachers to a reasonable level, increase their salaries and compensation, create a teacher-friendly environment, and allocate adequate Bianzhi memberships to rural kindergartens with the aim of lowering the turnover rate and promoting the supply of rural preschool teachers (Wang et al., 2022).

References

- Fan, X. Z. (2015). Fundamental issues of rural education development. *Journal of Central China Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 2015(5):146-154.
- Opel, A., Ameer, S. S., & Aboud, F. E. (2009). The effect of preschool dialogic reading on vocabulary among rural Bangladeshi children. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 48(1):12-20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2009.02.008>
- Wang, L., Dang, R., Bai, Y., Zhang, S., Liu, B., Zheng, L., Yang, N., & Song, C. (2020). Teacher qualifications and development outcomes of preschool children in rural China. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 53:355-369. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.05.015>
- Wang, T., Li, M., Liu, S., & Zhang, X. (2022). Factors influencing the turnover intention of rural preschool teachers in the context of rural revitalization: An analysis based on a moderated mediation model. *Best Evidence in Chinese Education*, 11(2):1523-1527. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15354/bece.22.ab005>
- Yu, D. Q., & Liang, H. M. (2008). Major issues of rural preschool staffing in China and countermeasures. *Studies in Preschool Education*, 2008(2):13-16.

Correspondence to:

Longjun Zhou, Ph.D.
Jiangsu Second Normal University
Nanjing 211200
Jiangsu
China
E-mail: 294437034@qq.com

About the Authors:

Yuhua Luo
E-mail: luoyuh@126.com
&
Suojun Yuan
E-mail: lukesj64@126.com
Jiangsu Second Normal University
Nanjing 211200
Jiangsu
China.

Conflict of Interests: None.

Doi: 10.15354/bece.22.co012