

The Enlightenment of Tao Xingzhi Thought on Rural Teacher Education on the Development of a Contingent of Preschool Teachers

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Abstract: Despite great workloads, rural preschool teachers have relatively low salary and social status, lacking opportunities for professional development. Moreover, their number is small and quality is low. The theory and practice of Tao Xingzhi thought on rural teacher education provide an important solution for solving the problem of salary, cultivation and training of preschool teachers in rural areas.

1. Introduction

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and the Poverty Alleviation Office of State Council issued the *Implementation Plan for Poverty Alleviation in Seriously Impoverished Areas through Education (2018-2020)*, which put forward further requirements for the development and improvement of preschool education in rural areas as including “improving the service network for preschool education in rural areas, helping children from poor rural families access preschool education nearby, and liberating the rural labor force.” It further demanded to strengthen the development of a contingent of preschool teachers: “implementing the standards for the allocation of teaching and administrative staff in kindergartens, ensuring that they are fully staffed, and intensifying training for rural kindergarten teachers, especially those transferred from primary schools.” One of the goals of the *Action Plan for the Revitalization of Teacher Education (2018-2022)* issued by the Ministry of Education together with other four ministries is to “improve the supply of teaching staff and promote the equitable development of education”, which also stressed the “Strengthening the training of teachers in the central and western regions and rural areas, with the focus on providing teachers for targeted poverty alleviation for education in remote, poor and ethnic minority areas”. The quality of preschool education in rural areas depends on the quality of preschool teachers there. However, currently the flow and loss of rural preschool teachers have become increasingly serious, which is mainly caused by insufficient career appeal, and left the rural preschool teachers in the status quo of “hard to get in and hard to stay long”.^[1]

First of all, the work intensity of rural preschool teachers is large, but their salary and social status are low, and lack of professional development opportunities. It is difficult to retain excellent teachers and fresh graduates. Rural kindergarten teachers work much more intensively than urban kindergartens, with an average working time of 120-124.8 hours per week^[2]. Long hours and heavy workloads are almost the norm. due to the shortage of rural kindergarten teachers, the number of children in each teacher is far higher than that of urban kindergarten teachers. A study found that 56.7% of rural kindergarten teachers and children ratio concentrated in the range of 1:10-1:16, it is far below the 1:7-1:9 stipulated in the *Standards for the Staffing of Kindergarten*.^[3] However, rural preschool teachers work hard and earn little. Most rural preschool teachers are not staffed. Among the non-enrolled teachers, there are even quite a few teachers who have not signed labor contracts with kindergartens^[4]. Rural preschool teachers who are not in-system and have not signed labor contracts with kindergartens, are not only unable to achieve “equal pay for equal work”, but also do not have social insurance. Poor treatment and low security make rural kindergarten teachers not only face survival problems, but some scholars believe that work is tiring and pay is low will lead to

a sense of return imbalance, which is very easy to produce job burnout or intention to resign^[5]. Influenced by geographical environment, economic and social environment, rural kindergarten teachers are difficult to obtain good opportunities for development. Low salaries and poor social security lead to bad results, that not only do normal students not sign contracts with village kindergartens, but also some outstanding teachers who originally worked in rural kindergartens to move to urban kindergartens or leave the preschool education industry.

Secondly, rural kindergarten teachers have inherent problems of quantity and quality. The employment target of college and university normal students who graduate from pre-school education major is mainly urban kindergartens. At present, there are only urban curriculum resources for normal students majoring in preschool education, no curriculum specifically for rural kindergarten teachers. We can only rely on transferring teachers and recruiting teachers to solve the shortage of rural kindergarten teachers, because most rural kindergarten teachers are not in the system^[6]. The transferred kindergarten teachers are basically primary and secondary school teachers, and have not received the training of professional knowledge and skills of preschool education major. In addition, the rural kindergarten teachers also include a large number of rural kindergarten teachers with high school or below qualifications^[7]. The problem of in-service training of rural kindergarten teachers is very serious. The national and local governments support the post-job training of rural preschool teachers through policies at all levels, but the training contents and methods neglect the level and needs of rural preschool teachers^[4]. How to train rural kindergarten teachers is an urgent problem to be solved in the development of rural preschool education and the construction of a new era of rural kindergarten teachers.

2. Theory and practice of Tao Xingzhi thought on rural teacher education

In 1923, Tao Xingzhi, Yan Yangchu and Zhu Qihui organized the preparatory meeting of the Chinese Civilian Education Promotion Association in Shanghai. Tao Xingzhi thought on rural teacher education started from the civilian education thought, and began to develop the practice of rural teacher education through Xiaozhuang experimental rural normal school founded by himself. As early as 1921, Tao Xingzhi had already realized the importance of rural education. At that time, normal schools in China were generally located in cities, and the courses taught by normal students were also aimed at urban schools. As Tao Xingzhi said: "nowadays, normal schools are located in cities, even in teaching methods, they also attach great importance to cities and despise townships."^[8] Tao Xingzhi believes that how to develop rural education, how to let rural children receive the same education will be a new trend of teacher education. Since then, Tao Xingzhi further pointed out that the fundamental reason for the lack of rural teachers is that the normal students do not have the intention of rooting in rural education. As Tao Xingzhi said: "Most normal schools are located in cities, and the curriculum training of normal students is mainly aimed at urban schools rather than rural schools. The normal students are used to the happy life in the city, and they were determined not to work in village schools. So the village teachers are always in short supply"^[9]. Before 1927, Tao Xingzhi thought on rural teacher education was in the theoretical inquiry stage, and in the early days of civilian education movement, Tao Xingzhi deeply realized that China's national conditions were "Education based on Agriculture", and 80% of the people lived in the countryside, so we must go to the countryside for develop rural education.^[10] Tao Xingzhi realized that if we want to develop rural education, we must first develop rural normal schools. As Tao Xingzhi said: "Rural normal schools have the mission of training rural teachers and transforming rural life."^[11] Therefore, Tao Xingzhi and his friend Zhao Shuyu co-founded Xiaozhuang Experimental Rural Normal School. Tao Xingzhi sent an invitation to the students with full patriotism. Tao Xingzhi said to normal students: "Teachers and students in normal schools share social responsibilities with farmers, and we must open the new school and recruit student in war, just as the farmer cultivates in war"^[12]. Tao xingzhi began to carry out the practice of rural teacher education, It was called "the teacher education movement to the countryside."

3. Strategies on the construction of teaching stuff of rural areas

Since the founding of New China, great progress has been made in the development of rural education. However, the gap between urban and rural areas still exists. Tao Xingzhi thought on rural teacher education are still of reference and enlightenment significance to the development of rural education in the new era and the training and training of rural preschool teachers in the new era.

The first is the issue of salary and treatment for rural kindergarten teachers. Tao Xingzhi has proposed the following solutions to the problem of low salary and salary for teachers:

(1) Responding to high prices by raising wages; (2) Change ten month salary to full salary; (3) Change the way salaries are paid; (4) No late wages; (5) Provide teachers with further education opportunities during the holidays;(6)Meeting teachers' spiritual and cultural needs includes providing books;(7) Comply with the contract; (8)Buy social security for teachers; (9) Provide free medical service for teachers; (10) Organize teachers to make progress together.^[13]

In a word, Tao Xingzhi's Suggestion on improving teachers' salary include increasing teachers' income, giving teachers various social insurance, providing teachers with various training opportunities, and paying attention to teachers' spiritual needs. Rural kindergarten teachers often have the problem of “unequal pay for equal work”, and It's hard to get into the system. Many rural kindergarten teachers are not only underpaid but also uninsured. Rural early childhood teachers have a high workload leading to high pressure, easy to produce job burnout, but the degree of social recognition of their occupation is not high. The low salary and low social status are the primary reasons for the flow and loss of rural kindergarten teachers. Rural kindergarten teachers either increase their income through part-time work, or strive to become urban kindergarten teachers, or they are determined to switch to another job. These are not conducive to the development of rural preschool education, and are not conducive to the professional development of rural preschool teachers. In order to solve this problem and increase the income of teachers, we can improve the various treatments of rural kindergarten teachers according to the principle of benefit compensation.^[14] Through the implementation of “equal pay for equal work” and social insurance compensation rural preschool teachers because of the geographical environment, economic environment and social environment brought by the adverse plight.

Secondly, the training of rural preschool teachers. Tao Xingzhi thought on rural teacher education include “life is education”, “society is school” and “integration of teaching and Practice”. Tao xingzhi explains what “life” is, and “life” includes five meanings, “the healthy life style”, “the laboring life style”, “the scientific life style”, “the artistic life style”, “transforming the life of society” and “to live a planned life”. In Tao Xingzhi's view, education must be closely integrated with life, and Course knowledge must come from life. Knowledge is used to transform life, so we must be educated in rural life. “Society is School” means “schools and the natural environment should be integrated.”^[15] What is the meaning of the concept of “integration of teaching and Practice”? As Tao Xingzhi said: “Learn as you do and teach as you learn; The method of teaching should be based on the method of learning, and use practice to guide your learning methods.”^[16] “integration of teaching and Practice “ is a very important teaching method for students of village normal school. Tao Xingzhi thought on rural teacher education is a complete education and teaching system that including education purpose, education content and teaching method. The most important part of Tao Xingzhi thought on rural teacher education is the teaching method. In the contemporary, “Integration of teaching and practice” has enlightenment significance to rural normal education, because it's integrated into the rural social environment. Directional training is a way to solve the shortage of quantity and quality of rural preschool teachers .One scholar proposed to adopt the way of directional training, that is to say, students from rural areas, and when they graduate, they have to work in rural schools.^[17] Normal schools are set up in cities, so normal students are used to living in cities. After graduation, normal students are unwilling to live in the countryside or work in rural schools As Tao Xingzhi pointed out: “teachers created in cities are reluctant to serve in the countryside.”^[18] How to resolve this contradiction? Tao xingzhi once pointed out: “we should establish a preschool normal school and reform it so that it can train new rural preschool teachers.”^[19] We can consider the restoration and construction of a number of Secondary Normal

Schools to solve the shortage of teachers in rural areas.^[1] In fact, compared with colleges and universities, the normal students of secondary normal schools have very clear employment objectives and can accept employment arrangements for targeted rural kindergartens. In addition, secondary preschool normal schools may be located in small towns, because normal school students to village kindergarten as internship and practice unit. As Tao Xingzhi said: "flexible rural normal schools cultivate fresh normal students."^[20]

Finally, how to train rural preschool teachers. Tao xingzhi attaches great importance to teachers' further study and training, "Teachers should gather together and study regularly", As Tao Xingzhi said: "We should start social schools and weekly seminars to help teachers learn further."^[21] The shortage and low quality of preschool teachers is an important reason that restricts the development of preschool education in rural areas. To solve the problem of insufficient number, the local government mainly adopts the method of transferring some surplus primary and secondary school teachers to kindergartens to become rural preschool teachers. How to train these rural preschool teachers to improve their professional knowledge and skills has become an important issue in the development of rural preschool education. Not only transferred preschool teachers need professional training, actually the training opportunities are essential to professional growth for all rural preschool teachers. In recent years, governments at all levels have created a variety of training methods to provide rural preschool teachers with a variety of professional growth opportunities, the overall effect is very ideal. Several aspects need to be improved include: First, teacher training should be mainly in the form of short-term training, long-term training as a secondary way. Go out the way of long-term training is bound to let the shortage of preschool teachers more shortage. To solve the problem of insufficient number of rural preschool teachers, the strategy is to perfect the current model of letting urban preschool teachers go to rural kindergartens to help rural preschool teachers. Which is a kind of short-term training method that is popular among rural preschool teachers. The model of letting urban preschool teachers go to rural kindergartens to help rural preschool teachers is conducive to the localization and kindergartenization of curriculum resources and helps rural preschool teachers improve their teaching level in a more intuitive way through demonstration teaching. This model can enable urban preschool teachers to help rural preschool teachers accumulate professional knowledge and develop professional skills through research and discussion. Second, general training is the main mode, and specialized training is the auxiliary mode. Urban preschool teachers can undertake specialized teaching, but rural preschool teachers undertake general teaching, because the number of rural preschool teachers is too small. Refers to "the comprehensive type kindergarten teacher" has the corresponding qualification education institutions specialized training, master education teaching basic knowledge and skills, subject knowledge and ability structure is reasonable, their practice ability strong, can bear the pre-school education stage as stipulated by the state education activities of the organization and to carry out in each field, engaged in the teaching research and management of the early childhood education teachers.^[22] The training of rural preschool teachers should focus on comprehensively mastering the professional knowledge and skills in five areas, and cultivate comprehensive education talents who can be engaged in the research and management of rural preschool education.

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