

Optimization Research on the Construction of Rural Teacher Teams under the Background of Rural Revitalization Strategy: An Analysis Based on the ERG Theory Perspective

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Abstract: *This research examines the current state and challenges of building a team of rural teachers within the framework of the rural revitalization strategy, utilizing ERG theory to explore three key aspects: survival, relationships, and growth. The findings indicate that rural teachers face numerous issues related to their survival security, social connections, and professional development, which hinder both stability and the quality of education. The study proposes strategies such as raising salaries, reducing burdens, and strengthening home-school cooperation to enhance teachers' job satisfaction, social integration, and professional development, and to promote rural revitalization and education modernization.*

Keywords: Rural Teachers, Teacher Development, ERG Theory, Challenges and Strategies.

1. Introduction

China's development focuses on the rural revitalization strategy. Rural education revitalization is crucial for this strategy. The Ministry of Education has stressed that prioritizing rural education is crucial to raising the level of education, innovation and employability of rural residents, which not only strengthens the competitiveness of the rural economy, but also promotes cultural inheritance and innovation, and strengthens social cohesion. The report of the 19th National Congress of the CPC puts forward the "Strategy for Rural Revitalization", which explicitly takes the revitalization of rural education as the core of the strategy. The Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022) said rural education should be promoted and its quality improved [1]. But the contradiction between urban and rural education is more and more obvious. Also, there are few qualified rural teachers. High-quality teachers are especially leaving. This needs attention urgently. And the government has taken actions like the Rural Teacher Support Program. This is to improve rural teachers' general quality and teaching skills from 2015-2020 [2]. The professional quality of rural teachers is very important for the quality of rural education. China has emphasized that training rural area teachers is very important in the Rural Revitalization Law and many other laws and regulations. It also gives favorable conditions in title assessment and other areas to improve rural educators' welfare and support [3]. This is of great help to the synchronous development of urban and rural education. It can reduce waste and improve rural economic development. It can also improve villagers' quality and enhance rural economic vitality. This paper uses the ERG theory put forward by Clayton Alderfer to analyze the current situation of rural teacher team building. It explores effective methods to stimulate teachers' potential and optimize team building. This is to promote rural education revitalization. The ERG theory emphasizes three basic needs: existence, relatedness, and growth. This framework is useful for understanding and enhancing rural teachers' motivation, job satisfaction, and retention [4]. It helps to create effective incentive strategies,

increase the appeal of rural teaching positions, and foster teaching workforce stability and advancement.

2. The Realistic Dilemma of Rural Teacher Team Building from the Perspective of ERG Theory

In 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Opinions on Implementing the Rural Revitalization Strategy" So, it officially began. It mainly focused on revitalizing rural education. Education is the basis for developing talents [5]. Talents are necessary resources in any nation. Rural teachers are important in this research field. Their job satisfaction, quality of life, and the overall quality and sustainability of education in rural areas are closely related to the life, social interactions, and professional growth of rural teachers. According to ERG theory, rural teachers face three levels of challenges: survival, relationships, and growth. Survival needs are about basic life security. Relationship needs to focus on interpersonal connections. Growth needs are related to professional advancement. Addressing these challenges is vital for improving the appeal, stability, and teaching quality of the rural teaching profession, serving as a foundation for achieving the objectives of the rural revitalization strategy.

2.1 Survival Status of Rural Teachers and Their Plight

2.1.1 Salary and treatment problems: low salary level and incomplete welfare system for rural teachers

In China's rural revitalization initiative, the challenge of rural teachers' salaries is significant. Data indicates that the average monthly salary in the education sector is 8,873 yuan; however, rural teachers typically earn much less, with most making between 3,000 and 4,000 yuan per month. The salary standards for special post teachers in the central and western regions are even lower, only 2,933 yuan and 3,193 yuan respectively [6]. Rural teachers are not satisfied with their pay

and benefits. More than half of them are not satisfied or very dissatisfied with their living allowances. These situations not only make rural teachers have more financial pressure and less job satisfaction, but also have a bad effect on their motivation and commitment to their profession.

2.1.2 The problem of workload: increased non-teaching tasks and work overload

The substantial workload in rural areas is attributable to the considerable number of non-teaching responsibilities that are exhausting instructors' energies, thereby diminishing their capacity to focus on teaching. Teachers working in schools with fewer resources are more frequently required to teach multiple subjects within a single class, resulting in a substantially increased workload. Furthermore, the distinction between teaching and non-teaching responsibilities is frequently indistinct, as teachers are obligated to document their performance and undergo training and evaluation, which contributes to their overall stress levels [7]. This has been identified as a significant contributing factor to psychological pressure and burnout in teachers, which in turn has a detrimental effect on their motivation and teaching performance. Consequently, there is an urgent need for reforms in the welfare and work systems to enhance teachers' job satisfaction and improve the quality of education.

2.1.3 Resource allocation: The quality of education varies significantly between urban and rural areas, and there is an imbalance in the allocation of resources.

These gaps in education between urban and rural settings prevail along teachers, facilities, and learning materials. The better economic advantage gives an urban school an added benefit, whereas their rural counterpart schools lag in maintaining the quality of education on account of their economic disadvantages, along with an inadequate policy emphasis. The issues of teacher shortages, high turnover rates, an aging workforce, and challenges in retaining new educators have adversely affected the stability of the education provided in the rural environment. Apart from that, schools in rural areas often lack proper infrastructure and teaching facilities, let alone teaching and learning resources and technology. There is a marked inequity in resource distribution, with financial constraints, low teacher salaries, and poor teaching conditions common in rural schools [8]. While policies exist at the state level that support this, local implementation is often weak; therefore, rural schools often do not have effective policy support and assured resource allocation.

2.2 Social Relations of Rural Teachers and Their Challenges

2.2.1 Identity problems: low social Status and marginalized roles

Rural teachers' identity problem is very complicated. It has its roots in their low social status and unfairness in educational resource distribution. This negatively affects their professional development and social status. Due to a scarcity of resources and poor working conditions, it is tough for rural teachers to win recognition from society, and that contributes

to their gradual marginalization. Negative stereotypes instilled in society affect their self-esteem and work motivation. Many rural teachers lack a strong professional identity, and they consider teaching a temporary job. This reduces their commitment and identity. They feel a lack of respect and involvement in the education system, which further erodes their identity [9]. Psychological detachment from and lack of professional commitment eventually reduce their chances of feeling achieved with the self-ascribed roles, further pushing them towards perplexity and growing alienation from their education-based identity.

2.2.2 Problems of home-school cooperation: poor communication channels and low parental involvement

In the context of rural education, teachers encounter considerable challenges in collaborating with parents or guardians on the home education of their children. These challenges encompass inadequate communication, minimal parental involvement, and a dearth of trust. These issues are further compounded by the absence of systematic mechanisms. Communication is often delayed and inaccurate due to limited channels. Some parents appear to underestimate the value of education and are reluctant to participate in school activities, thereby hindering the quality of education. Trust-building between teachers and parents is challenging; parents may doubt the competence of teachers, and it is difficult for teachers to gain the trust of parents during home visits [10]. This dynamic, in turn, may adversely affect the level of parental support and participation in school activities. The absence of a comprehensive and systematic framework for home-school cooperation, the sporadic and haphazard interactions, and the paucity of guidance for teachers in their communication further affect the depth and breadth of home-school cooperation.

2.2.3 Problems of Organizational Culture: Solidified Management Mode and Lack of Humanistic Atmosphere

The management structure of rural schools is quite rigid, which significantly restricts teachers' involvement and creativity, leading to decreased job satisfaction and a lower desire to remain in their positions. In this management framework, teachers do not influence over decision-making, and the evaluation system is biased, focusing excessively on test scores while neglecting other important contributions from teachers, thereby increasing their professional stress. Furthermore, there is insufficient emotional interaction between teachers and students, along with a lack of constructive feedback, which adversely impacts teachers' motivation [11]. Further, the lack of professional development and the absence of a school culture supporting teachers' professional identity have deprived them of any sense of belonging and responsibility that might have nurtured their desire to be able to stay longer in the profession.

2.3 Professional Development of Rural Teachers and Its Challenges

2.3.1 Problems with career progression: lack of opportunities and development bottlenecks

Rural teachers are facing a variety of obstacles about their

careers and promotion. Firstly, few opportunities for career development, difficulties in title progression and strict evaluation criteria combine to hinder the development of many rural teachers, thereby weakening their professional motivation. Second, the economic remuneration of rural teachers is unsatisfactory. Remuneration is not proportional to performance, salaries are low, and there are few opportunities for career development. These factors lead to a low sense of professional fulfilment among teachers. The lack of career development channels, the lack of professional training opportunities and the lack of career guidance further undermine teachers' professional growth [12]. Finally, the lack of effective incentives and the high mobility of talent have a direct impact on teachers' motivation and willingness to develop their careers.

2.3.2 Problems with educational philosophy: delay in updating knowledge and traditionalism in teaching methods

Rural teachers face significant challenges with regard to educational philosophy, primarily due to outdated knowledge and traditional teaching methods. Their limited access to resources and inadequate use of information technology prevents them from accessing the latest educational theories and practices. In addition, a lack of training and professional development limits their ability to learn new ideas. There is also an overemphasis on examination-based education and an over-reliance on one-way lecturing, resulting in a lack of student participation and practical skills training. This approach fails to meet the needs arising from differences between students and is inflexible [13]. Ultimately, this will inhibit students' autonomy and creativity, negatively affecting the overall quality of education and students' development.

2.3.3 Quality of training: Lack of depth and significant formalization

With regard to the assessment of training quality for rural teachers, several issues closely related to professional development and the enhancement of teaching standards are raised. Firstly, training content is poor in that it does not depict much about the culture of rural areas and educational contexts, which makes the curriculum very generalized, not taking into account the unique backgrounds and cultural identities of the rural educators. Besides, the training course is too formalized, presenting a standardized form of approach with the same content, dependence on traditional lecturing and briefing, and absence of opportunity for in-depth discussion and reflection. This kind of passive learning suppresses the enthusiasm of teachers to learn and motivate themselves for growth. Last but not least, the training objectives are irrelevant to the real needs of teachers [14]; therefore, it cannot meet the needs of every one of them, simplifies the complexities of rural educators, and negatively affects their professional identity and motivation to learn.

3. Exploring the Way of Rural Teacher Training from the Perspective of ERG Theory

The ERG theory indicates that developing training for rural teachers is urgent to revitalize education in rural areas. For the effective recruitment and retention of rural teachers and to

ensure quality education, three basic challenges must be met: survival security, identity, and professional development. These challenges are important for rural teachers' professional development. They have a big influence on their quality of life, social integration, professional identity, and career advancement. It is able to effectively enhance the fulfillment, identity, responsibility, and belonging of rural teachers through the effective solution to these problems, thus laying a solid foundation for the sustainable development of rural education.

3.1 Ensuring Survival: Improving the Treatment and Quality of Life of Rural Teachers

3.1.1 Improve the salary and welfare system

First, the salary structure for teachers in rural areas should be improved to ensure that their salaries are at least on par with those teaching in urban areas. Additionally, subsidies for specific regions, like mountainous and border areas, should be increased to attract and retain high-quality educators. Furthermore, financial support must be enhanced, with both central and local governments contributing to performance pay for rural teachers, and a fair distribution mechanism should be established based on local financial capabilities. The basic merit pay should be increased to stabilize rural teachers' incomes, minimize fluctuations, and boost their job security. Moreover, the social security system should be improved so that rural teachers receive the same or even better medical and pension benefits as their urban counterparts [15]. Additionally, an occupational pension system should be created to ensure financial security in retirement, and the contribution rate for housing funds should be raised to address housing challenges.

3.1.2 Reducing workload and improving the working environment

Firstly, the allocation of non-teaching work should be optimized, with teaching and non-teaching posts clearly defined. Furthermore, there is a necessity to augment the number of support staff, whilst concomitantly reducing the administrative burden on teaching staff, with a view to enabling them to focus on teaching and student growth. The distribution of teaching workload should be reasonably apportioned in accordance with the particular circumstances of each educational institution and the capabilities of the teaching faculty. This approach will ensure that the assigned tasks are appropriately proportioned and do not impose an undue burden on the teaching staff. Concurrently, the implementation of flexible teaching methodologies should be undertaken to align with the requirements of students and the curriculum. Furthermore, there is a necessity to enhance the provision of mental health support and professional development, with the establishment of robust support systems, regular psychological counselling services, and designated funds for professional development to foster teacher growth. Finally, enhancing the working conditions of teachers is imperative, including investing in infrastructure, optimizing office and classroom design, and ensuring a safe and comfortable teaching environment.

3.1.3 Balancing the distribution of resources and building

equity in education

Firstly, financial investment should be increased to develop infrastructure and improve teaching resources, so that rural schools can enjoy the same conditions of teaching facilities and equipment as those in urban schools, and the comparative gap in educational opportunities can be narrowed. Then, attract more highly qualified teachers through professional training and special posting plans, and cooperate with universities to design special teacher training plans to improve teaching standards. The supervision of financial resources has been strengthened so that national policies can be effectively implemented. At the same time, private investment is being encouraged to ensure the rational allocation and use of rural education funds. Lastly, sustainable mechanisms for educational equity should be established: educational equity policies should be formulated, and a quality monitoring system should be set up to ensure that all children enjoy equal educational opportunities.

3.2 Social Relations: Strengthening the Social Integration and Professional Identity of Rural Teachers

3.2.1 Improving social status and strengthening role identity

Currently, the enhancement of collaboration with media outlets is imperative to accentuate the role of resilience and dedication exhibited by rural educators in challenging ecosystems through dedicated columns and documentaries. Simultaneously, the facilitation of social media enables the dissemination of video content in a concise format, thereby facilitating effective public awareness-raising and fostering respect among rural teachers. The incorporation of rural educators' narratives within school curricula is also recommended, with a view to facilitating student education regarding their contributions. The organization of public lectures by experts is also recommended, with the aim of providing a detailed description of the works and influences of rural teachers. This will serve to combat negative stereotypes. The establishment of exchange opportunities will empower rural educators to showcase their professionalism and achievements, thereby elevating their social status. Finally, special training with the involvement of modern educational technologies and teaching methods needs to be included to enhance rural educators' teaching skills [16]. This would involve the establishment of a mentorship system connecting teachers and students for the purpose of professional development, involvement in educational research, and the strengthening of professional identity.

3.2.2 Strengthening home-school cooperation and opening communication channels between home and school

First, by using state-of-the-art communication technology in developing mobile phone applications for facilitating the improvement in communication between home and school, these would aid in informing parents of news within the school, lesson planning, performance information, and any comments by the parents. Use SMS for urgent notifications to ensure all parents receive critical information, and utilize official school social media accounts to share updates and achievements, thereby improving overall communication. Redesign parent-teacher meetings. Increase the number of

smaller gatherings. Offer online and in-person options. This will enhance engagement and relevance. Create a regular one-on-one communication system between teachers and parents. Also, create a parent volunteer program. This will build trust and understanding of school activities. Improve teacher training on communication. Include topics on parent psychology and simulation exercises. This will improve their communication skills.

3.2.3 Improving the organizational culture and creating a harmonious atmosphere

First of all, the implementation of democratic management structures, such as teachers' councils and teachers' parliaments, is recommended in order to increase the level of teacher participation in school decision-making. The promotion of transparent management practices and the establishment of regular channels of communication will enable educators to keep abreast of and participate in the development of school policies. This, in turn, fosters a sense of belonging and engagement among educators, thereby enhancing their sense of investment in the school community. In addition, initiatives such as teacher exchange and team building activities, as well as the establishment of a "Teacher's Wall of Honor" and a "Teacher of the Month" competition, aim to foster a culture of respect, support and encouragement, thereby strengthening the emotional ties among educators and the team cohesion. Finally, professional development projects are provided for rural teachers, including training in new pedagogical methods, the application of educational technology, and customized refresher courses in cooperation with universities, while online learning platforms and learning subsidies are provided to encourage teachers to enhance their professionalism [17].

3.3 Career Growth: Opening Channels for Growth and Stimulating Career Potential

3.3.1 Expand career paths and enrich career development opportunities

Firstly, constructing a title evaluation system suitable for teachers working in rural areas, implementing a 'targeted evaluation, targeted use' policy, relaxing the restrictions on the proportion of middle- and high-ranking titles, using actual teaching contributions as the core evaluation criterion, and ensuring that postings match the size of the school and its educational needs. Besides, the training of rural education leaders should be encouraged through the adoption of multi-dimensional selection criteria, the provision of customized training and mentorship, the combination of this with dedicated financial support, and the facilitation of their participation in high-end education forums and field trips to enhance their educational vision and leadership. Finally, the expansion of space for diversified development is to be pursued, with the establishment of educational practice bases and distance learning centers to be undertaken in cooperation with universities and research institutes. The provision of network resources and expert guidance is also to be facilitated [18]. Concurrently, a paid leave system should be initiated to encourage systematic learning, and material rewards and career advancement incentives are provided in rural revitalization projects.

3.3.2 Innovating the teaching mode and updating the knowledge structure

First, an all-round training system should be constructed, with both online learning platforms and centralized offline training. Not only should teaching resources on the latest educational theories and technologies be provided, but a supportive environment for knowledge sharing and reflective teaching should also be created, with the establishment of partnerships between teachers and students and professional development guided by experienced teachers in schools. It is recommended that interactive teaching methods, such as cooperative group learning and classroom discussions, be introduced. These methods provide opportunities for teamwork and critical thinking development for students. Student-centered instructional design includes the development of individualized learning plans and project-based learning activities. This helps to improve the overall literacy of students. Good at tapping local cultural resources. Conduct in-depth studies on cultural heritage, interview folk artists and develop school-based projects that showcase local culture. Finally, school-based curricula should be improved by adding courses such as “local folk culture” and “local art”, systematically teaching knowledge of local culture, and establishing a mechanism for curriculum evaluation and improvement [19].

3.3.3 Tailoring training and improving training quality and efficiency

First and foremost, the content of the training must remain highly specialized and should meet the specific needs of rural education and educators on the basis of extensive research. This encompasses the development of innovative teaching methodologies that utilize local resources, as well as the provision of courses that reflect ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The implementation of diverse learning methodologies, online learning, on-the-job training, and other forms, is imperative to cater to the varied needs of teachers and enhance their participation and effectiveness. Currently, a comprehensive capacity analysis and needs assessment of teachers is conducted, and a personalized target and tracking system is established to enhance their motivation for professional development. Finally, an intelligent training platform is constructed using advanced technology to provide effective personalized services and ensure the sustainable development of quality training.

4. Summary

The present study explores how rural educators are constructed through the ERG theory and, subsequently, provides viable strategies for improvement.

Primarily, the survival security of rural teachers should be enhanced. The enhancement of survival security can be achieved through various means, including salary increments, the refinement of the social security system, the reduction of workload, and the improvement of working conditions. These enhancements have the potential to elevate their living standards and enhance job satisfaction. This, in turn, has the potential to engender greater enthusiasm and loyalty to the

profession. The promotion of social relationships is also crucial. The enhancement of organizational culture within family and educational institutions, in conjunction with the promotion of family-school cooperation, is poised to foster social integration and professional identity among rural teachers. The creation of a harmonious educational environment is, thus, a key objective, with a consequent enhancement of the professional attractiveness and stability of rural teachers. Finally, it is essential to emphasize the need for professional development, which can be achieved through the innovation of pedagogical approaches, the provision of specialized training and career advancement opportunities, and the renewal of knowledge bases. These measures will unlock the professional potential of countryside teachers, facilitate their professional growth, and enhance the quality of teaching, thereby nurturing a new generation of educators who are capable of innovative thinking and who are endowed with practical skills.

In summary, these strategies are expected to bring about a remarkable improvement in the overall quality and teaching effectiveness of rural teachers, thus promoting the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy and modernization of education, which will help in the revitalization of rural education and sustainable development of the nation.

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