

The Endogenous Motivation and Cultivation Strategies for Rural Teachers' Professional Development from the Perspective of Social Support Theory

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Abstract: *Based on social support theory, this paper aims to explore the sources of endogenous motivation for rural teachers' professional development and the cultivation strategies. Due to the influence of factors such as the urban-rural dual structure and the specific geographical environment of rural areas, rural teachers often face the challenges of lack of resources and isolation. Social support can provide emotional support, information help and resource support, thereby enhancing the endogenous motivation for professional development. On this basis, this paper proposes a series of cultivation strategies for rural teachers, including providing institutional guarantees for the professional development of rural teachers, establishing a platform for rural teachers' cooperation and co-construction, providing continuous professional development training, and establishing a supportive education community network, so as to improve the endogenous motivation of rural teachers.*

Keywords: Social Support Theory, Rural Teachers, Professional Development, Endogenous Motivation.

1. Introduction

The professional development of rural teachers is the key to improving the quality of rural education. The core of teacher professional development is the independent development of teachers. The most important thing is to stimulate the endogenous motivation of rural teachers to develop independently. In 2016, the State Council promulgated the "Rural Teacher Support Plan (2015-2020)", pointing out that the construction of rural teacher teams should be given priority in strategic development [1]. In February 2018, the Ministry of Education and five other departments jointly issued the "Action Plan for the Revitalization of Teacher Education (2018-2022)", which proposed to improve the supply of teacher resources and establish a sound support service system for the growth and development of rural teachers. In July 2020, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and six other departments jointly issued the "Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of Rural Teachers in the New Era", which proposed: focus on improving the comprehensive quality of rural teachers, stimulate the internal motivation of teachers to contribute to rural education, and enhance the professional development of rural teachers [2]. The introduction of relevant policies reflects the importance of rural teachers' professional development and the need to establish a support system. The dilemma of rural teachers' development has shifted from external problems such as insufficient number of teachers and low salaries to internal problems such as low professional spirit, insufficient internal motivation for professional development, and relatively weak professional ability [3]. Rural teachers' professional development requires the support of all social forces. Social support is a systematic supply of internal motivation for rural teachers' professional development.

2. Theoretical Framework of Social Support Theory

Social support is essentially a kind of social connection, which includes objective material support, individual perception of support and self-identity obtained from the connection [4]. Social support refers to the material and spiritual support and help provided by social network systems to vulnerable groups through various means. Social support theory emphasizes that the survival and development of individuals cannot be separated from social networks. Individuals can obtain their own development needs from social networks, and society should also play a certain role in supporting and helping the survival of vulnerable groups in society [5]. This study classifies social support according to its sources, and divides social support into substantial support, emotional support and information support. Rural teachers and these support entities have formed a government support system, a school support system, a social support system, a family support system and an individual support system in their interactive connection, and they continue to develop professionally and enhance their endogenous motivation in the support system. This paper understands the endogenous driving force of rural teachers' professional development as follows: in the educational and teaching practice, the internal motivation of rural teachers' self-development and professional consciousness is reflected in the growth power of continuous practical reflection and lifelong learning. In the process of professional development of rural teachers, social support from schools, colleagues, families and communities can provide substantial, emotional and informational support and enhance the motivation for professional development. The individual intrinsic characteristics, external environmental support and professional motivation of rural teachers are consistent with the types and sources of support mentioned in social support theory, and together constitute the endogenous driving force system for the professional development of rural teachers.

3. The Endogenous Driving Force for the Professional Development of Rural Teachers

Social support theory emphasizes the importance of social environment to individual health, happiness and adaptability. In particular, social support can be a key resource for individuals when facing challenges and difficulties. In the professional development of rural teachers, social support is mainly reflected in substantive, emotional and informational support. These sources of support involve family, colleagues, students, schools, communities and educational institutions, and constitute the endogenous driving force system for the professional development of rural teachers.

3.1 Substantial Support: Educational Support in Terms of Resources and Material Conditions

Substantial support includes material assistance, the supply of resources, and the improvement of working conditions. These supports can directly affect the work efficiency and professional development of rural teachers. First, material assistance is an important form of substantial support. In the case of relatively poor rural education conditions, schools and education departments can support rural teachers' teaching work by providing material resources such as teaching equipment, teaching materials, and courseware. This substantial support can improve teaching effectiveness, reduce the economic burden of rural teachers, and enhance their job satisfaction and teaching motivation [6]. Second, the supply of resources is also an important part of substantial support. Rural teachers often face insufficient teaching resources, such as libraries, laboratories, computers, and other teaching resources. By strengthening the investment and allocation of teaching resources and providing rural teachers with more abundant and advanced teaching resources, their teaching level and professional development can be effectively improved. Improving working conditions is also an important aspect of substantial support. Good working conditions can create a more comfortable, safe, and convenient working environment for rural teachers, which is conducive to their better teaching work. This includes support in improving teaching facilities, providing training opportunities, optimizing work processes, etc., which can reduce the work pressure of rural teachers and enhance their work enthusiasm and teaching passion. Substantial support is one of the indispensable sources of endogenous motivation for the professional development of rural teachers. By providing material assistance, supplying resources and improving working conditions, we can effectively support the teaching work of rural teachers, enhance their work motivation and professional development, and thus promote the healthy development of rural education.

3.2 Emotional Support: the Interactive Cycle of Community Cohesion and Emotional Resonance

Emotional support plays a vital role in the endogenous motivation for rural teachers' professional development. From the perspective of social support theory, emotional support includes understanding, care and support from family, colleagues, students and community, which can directly affect the emotional state, work motivation and professional

development of rural teachers. First of all, family support is crucial to the professional development of rural teachers. Family is one of the most important sources of emotional support for rural teachers. The understanding, support and encouragement of family members can provide rural teachers with emotional satisfaction and a sense of belonging. Family support can help rural teachers better adjust the balance between work and life, reduce work pressure, enhance their work motivation and improve their teaching enthusiasm. Support among colleagues is also an important source of emotional support for rural teachers. In the work of rural teachers, mutual support, encouragement and understanding among colleagues can enhance their cohesion and teamwork spirit. By sharing the joy and challenges of work with colleagues, rural teachers can get emotional support and motivation, so as to devote themselves to the cause of education more firmly. In addition, the support of students and the community also plays an important role in the emotional state and professional development of rural teachers. Students' understanding, respect and trust can enhance rural teachers' self-esteem and self-confidence, stimulate their teaching enthusiasm and sense of responsibility, while recognition and encouragement from the community can enhance rural teachers' sense of belonging and honor.

3.3 Information Support: Education Knowledge Transfer and Professional Development Cultivation

Information technology has become the main support for large-scale online teaching and teacher-student learning. The information support system for teachers' professional development has been constructed and gradually improved during the epidemic prevention and control. Further building an online learning platform for rural teachers, improving online learning resources, and providing an online learning support system are also practical needs for the professional development of rural teachers. Rural teachers need to constantly update their educational knowledge and teaching skills to adapt to changes and developments in the field of education. First of all, information support comes from schools and educational institutions. As important organizations for rural teachers' work, schools and educational institutions bear the responsibility of providing information support to teachers. They can provide rural teachers with the latest knowledge of educational theories and teaching methods through educational training, seminars, lectures and other activities, help them understand changes in educational policies and regulations, and thus improve their teaching level and professional quality. In addition, information support can also come from the Internet and digital education platforms. With the development of information technology, the Internet and digital education platforms have become important channels for rural teachers to obtain information support. Through online educational resources, teaching websites, educational applications and other platforms, rural teachers can obtain various educational resources and teaching materials anytime and anywhere, expand their teaching horizons, enrich teaching content, and improve teaching effectiveness.

4. Strategies for Cultivating the Endogenous Motivation for Rural Teachers'

Professional Development based on Social Support Theory

The professional development of rural teachers is the key to the development of rural education. In order to improve the professional level and job satisfaction of rural teachers and promote the development of rural education, based on social support theory, the following four cultivation strategies are proposed:

4.1 Providing Institutional Guarantees for the Professional Development of Rural Teachers

Rules and regulations are the guarantee for the orderly operation of the system. Local governments and education authorities jointly formulate and implement an education resource guarantee system to ensure that rural schools have sufficient teaching resources and equipment. This system should include a clear funding allocation mechanism, equipment renewal plan, and textbook distribution mechanism to ensure that rural teachers have the necessary teaching resource support. The second is economic incentive policies to provide economic support and incentives for rural teachers. This includes increasing the salary and benefits of rural teachers, setting up a teacher reward fund, and issuing teacher performance bonuses to encourage rural teachers to actively engage in teaching and improve their work motivation and job satisfaction. In addition, a long-term financial support mechanism can be established to ensure that rural schools can continue to receive financial support in terms of teaching equipment renewal and teacher training, thereby improving the level of substantive support for rural teachers and ensuring financial investment in rural education. Local governments should set up special funds to improve the infrastructure and teaching equipment of rural schools, and ensure that these funds can be in place and used in a timely manner.

4.2 Establishing a Cooperative Platform for Rural Teachers

Establish a cooperative platform for rural teachers to provide teachers with a platform for communication and cooperation and opportunities for resource sharing. This platform can include online and offline teaching resource libraries, teaching seminars, teaching cooperation groups, etc. Through cooperative learning and sharing with colleagues, rural teachers can inspire and learn from each other, make progress together, and enhance their motivation and ability for professional development. Secondly, on this platform, rural teachers can share teaching resources, teaching experience, teaching methods, etc., and provide support and help to each other. They can upload their own lesson plans, courseware, teaching videos and other resources, and can also participate in discussions and comment on the content shared by other teachers, thereby expanding the channels for obtaining teaching resources and enriching the scope of application of teaching methods. Through the platform, rural teachers can carry out cooperative research projects, jointly explore educational issues, carry out practical activities, and improve teaching quality. They can jointly carry out research projects, teaching reform projects, etc., jointly explore teaching models and methods suitable for the development of rural education,

and provide theoretical support and practical experience for the improvement and enhancement of rural education.

4.3 Providing Continuous Professional Development Training

Provide continuous professional development training to provide rural teachers with updated and rich educational knowledge and teaching skills. This strategy aims to provide rural teachers with constantly updated educational theories, teaching skills and professional knowledge to improve their teaching level and professional quality. The school builds a rich and diverse professional development portfolio for teachers, fully tapping various resources, such as master-apprenticeship, joint teaching and research, summer training, international training, etc., to achieve the integration of resources inside and outside the school, first-line famous teachers and education experts, domestic universities and foreign universities [7]. The training content should cover multiple aspects, including educational theory, curriculum design, teaching methods, application of educational technology, subject knowledge update, etc. The diversification of training content can meet the different needs of rural teachers and help them comprehensively improve their teaching ability. During the training process, a professional training team can be established, including education experts, subject experts, education technology experts, etc., to provide professional training services for rural teachers. These experts can tailor training content according to the needs and feedback of rural teachers, provide targeted guidance and support; establish a training effect evaluation and feedback mechanism, regularly evaluate and summarize training activities, understand the training effect and participation, and adjust the training content and form in a timely manner according to the evaluation results, continuously optimize the training plan, and improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the training; a learning community can also be established during the training process, through cooperative learning and experience sharing among teachers, to promote communication and mutual assistance among teachers, enhance the sociality and practicality of learning, and improve the training effect and the level of professional development of teachers. Rural teachers can continuously improve their professional quality, adapt to changes and developments in the field of education, and improve their teaching level and quality.

4.4 Establish a Supportive Education Community Network

Establish a supportive education community network to integrate the strengths of school leaders, teachers, parents, students and local communities to form a closely connected and mutually supportive community. This community network can provide a platform for rural teachers to learn and grow. The education community network provides a platform for emotional support, allowing rural teachers to feel the warmth and support from schools, families and communities. Through regular group activities, seminars, psychological counseling and other forms of activities, promote emotional communication and resonance among teachers, establish emotional relationships of mutual trust and support, and enhance their ability to resist pressure and emotional

regulation when facing difficulties. The education community network provides an information sharing platform to provide rural teachers with information support in education policies, teaching resources, teaching experience and other aspects; through the establishment of online platforms, holding education seminars, and conducting teaching observation and other activities, promote information exchange and sharing, provide teachers with the latest education trends and teaching methods, and help them continuously improve their teaching level; as a platform for co-construction and sharing, the education community network encourages schools, families, communities and other relevant parties to participate in rural education. By establishing a diversified cooperation mechanism and partnership, jointly formulate rural education development plans, jointly assume the responsibilities and obligations of rural education reform, and jointly share the results and achievements of rural education development.

In the construction of the support system for the professional development of rural teachers, a systematic and comprehensive construction is needed. It is necessary to organically combine external and internal factors, coordinate policy guarantees, social environment construction and professional support, and base all support on the continuous improvement of rural teachers' professional development. At the same time, in practice, we must continue to think about how to help rural teachers gradually enhance their endogenous motivation through external and ontological support.

Starting from the perspective of social support theory, this paper explores the intrinsic motivation and cultivation strategies for the professional development of rural teachers. By analyzing the sources of the intrinsic motivation for the professional growth of rural teachers and the important role of social support in their professional development, this paper explores how social support can promote the professional growth of rural teachers and improve their work effectiveness. Specifically, multiple levels such as government, school and community can provide substantial, emotional and information support, which has an important impact on the professional development of rural teachers, which provides a theoretical basis and practical path for the formulation of corresponding cultivation strategies. However, it should be noted that the professional development of rural teachers still faces many challenges, such as insufficient educational resources and low social recognition. Future research can further explore the impact mechanism and differences of different types of social support on the professional development of rural teachers; secondly, deeply explore the role positioning and social responsibility of rural teachers in the community on their professional development; finally, through the development of training programs and intervention measures, further improve the work effectiveness and career satisfaction of rural teachers.

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