

A Study on the Loss of Young Teachers in Western Rural Primary Schools and the Countermeasures*

Yanling Peng
 Chongqing University of Education
 Chongqing, China

Xingyi Zeng
 Central Primary School of Dunhao Town
 Chongqing, China

Abstract—The loss of young teachers in rural primary schools is a practical problem faced by rural education in China, and is even more prominent in the western rural areas where the education level is relatively backward. The loss of young teachers impacts the originally disadvantageous western rural teachers and becomes a bottleneck restricting the development of the basic education. Economic income, social status, school management and individual status of teachers become the main factors affecting the loss of young teachers in western rural primary schools. It is suggested to solve the problem of loss of teachers and promote the healthy development of rural basic education in western China by increasing education fund investment and providing more opportunities for growth of young teachers and ways for improving their competencies.

Keywords: western rural primary schools, young teachers, loss, countermeasures

I. INTRODUCTION

With the development of society and economy, breaking the urban-rural structure system and achieving a balanced distribution of education resources has become the main theme of the development of basic education in China. The report of the 19th National Congress of CPC proposes "to promote the integrated development of compulsory education in urban and rural areas, attach great importance to compulsory education in rural area, well provide preschool education, special education and online education, popularize high school education, and strive to ensure that every child can enjoy fair and quality education [1] Rural primary schools have difficult working environment and provide low wages. The loss of young teachers in rural primary schools has become increasingly prominent, especially in remote rural areas in the western regions where the economy is relatively backward. The key to the development of basic education in western rural areas is to build a stable team of teachers. How to effectively prevent the loss of young teachers in the rural primary schools in the west has become a problem to be urgently solved. The author conducted in-depth field investigations in seven rural primary schools in

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Kaizhou District and Yunyang County of Chongqing, and distributed 210 questionnaires to young teachers in rural elementary schools. A total of 189 questionnaires were collected, with a recovery rate of 90%, of which 183 questionnaires were valid, accounting for 87.14 %. It is hoped to further explore the loss of young teachers in western rural primary schools.

II. INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE LOSS OF YOUNG TEACHERS IN WESTERN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

A. Loss of young teachers in rural primary schools

1) Stability of teachers in rural primary schools

TABLE I. STABILITY OF YOUNG TEACHERS IN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Stable	21	11.48%
B. Basically stable	117	63.93%
C. Unstable	36	19.67%
D. Very unstable	9	4.92%

As can be seen in "Table I", 75.41% of the surveyed rural young teachers believe that the team of teachers in rural primary schools in the region is stable and basically stable, but there are still a small number of rural young teachers feel that the team is not stable enough.

2) Types of rural teachers lost

TABLE II. SURVEY ON THE AGES OF YOUNG TEACHERS LOST IN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Graduates assigned here in recent years	72	39.34%
B. Excellent teachers aged around 30-45	87	47.54%
C. Middle-aged teachers	12	6.56%
D. Retiring teachers	12	6.56%

As shown in "Table II", the largest number of rural primary school teachers lost in this region are the excellent backbone teachers aged around 30-45 and the second largest number of such teachers are college graduates assigned to teach in western rural primary schools. The above two types of teachers belong to young teachers among the western rural teachers. They should be the mainstay of the school teachers, but account for the most proportion in the lost teachers.

3) The original intention and willingness of young teachers in rural primary schools to flow

TABLE III. SURVEY ON THE ORIGINAL INTENTION OF YOUNG TEACHERS IN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO FLOW

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Very intended	48	26.23%
B. Occasionally intended	90	49.18%
C. Not intended	39	21.31%
D. Not intended at all	6	3.28%

As can be seen in "Table III", 26.23% of the surveyed young teachers have the intention of teaching in schools in urban area or having better conditions very much; 49.18% of the surveyed young teachers occasionally have that intention. The data indicates that, in this region, a considerable number of young teachers in rural primary schools have the intention of flowing to better school; some teachers are not satisfied with the status and not willing to continuously stay in western rural primary schools, wanting to seek for better development.

TABLE IV. SURVEY ON THE WILLINGNESS OF YOUNG TEACHERS IN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO FLOW

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. good working environment	45	24.59%
B. high wage and treatment	69	37.7%
C. harmonious interpersonal relationship	60	32.79%
D. high sense of professional identity	9	4.92%

As can be observed in "Table IV", most of the surveyed rural young teachers selected "wage and treatment" and "interpersonal relationship" in response to the question "what kind of school would you like to work in?". This indicates that "wage and treatment" and "interpersonal relationship" have the largest influence on the loss of young teachers and have even become the dominant factors causing flow of rural primary school teachers. Meanwhile, it also reflects the influence of teamwork spirit and economic factors among primary school teachers on the loss of young teachers from side.

4) Willingness of rural primary school young teachers to change profession

TABLE V. SURVEY ON THE WILLINGNESS OF RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL YOUNG TEACHERS TO CHANGE PROFESSION

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Won't	27	14.75%
B. May be	114	62.3%
C. Don't know	30	16.39%
D. Sure	12	6.56%

As is shown in "Table V", when it comes to the question of "are you willing to change to other profession?", 62.3% of the surveyed rural young teachers selected "May be" and 6.56% of such teachers selected "Sure". This data shows that most of the surveyed rural young teachers have strong willingness to change profession as they are not satisfied with the profession and are seeking for entering other industry. Teacher is a profession that requires a strong sense of responsibility and dedication. In particular, rural primary school teachers need to have the spirit of "going deep into the work" "retaining in the position" and "doing a good in the position" in order to take root in rural basic education.

B. Influence posed by the loss of young teachers in rural primary schools

1) Impeding the realization of educational fairness

Educational fairness is a hot spot concerned in China at present. The fundament for realizing educational fairness is balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural education, so that both urban and rural residents can enjoy high-quality and equal educational resources. Speeding up the development of compulsory education in rural areas and reducing the gap between urban and rural education levels is an important way to achieve fair education. For a long time, the urban-rural structure has caused uneven economic development between urban and rural areas in China, especially in western China with relatively backward economy. Affected by the lagging economic conditions, educational resources in western rural areas possess poor education resources and especially weak teacher resources.

In the survey, it is found that the loss of young teachers in western rural primary schools was serious, further restricting the development of teachers and improving the quality of education. Teacher is an important part of teaching resources; their balanced development is the key to reducing the gap between urban and rural education and achieving educational fairness. Young teachers in western rural primary schools, as a new force and mainstay, inject fresh blood into the development of rural education in the west. The loss of young teachers has led to a serious decline in the number of teachers in rural primary schools in the west, further hinders the development of basic education in rural areas, exacerbates the disparity between urban and rural education, so that it is hard to achieve educational fairness.

2) Aggravating the instability of the teaching staff

After changing to other profession, the lost rural primary school young teachers have been significantly improved in their working environment and treatment, arousing the comparison mind of rural primary school young teachers in the job and creating a sense of imbalance in their hearts. For the good purpose of leading by hand, the lost teachers encourage other in-the-job young teachers to change their jobs, resulting in the loss of more young teachers in rural primary schools. This not only increases the number of young teachers lost in rural primary schools, but also increases the work pressure of other rural teachers in the job. Hence, it can be seen that the loss of young rural teachers will eventually lead to the instability of the rural primary school teachers in the west.

3) Decreasing the teaching quality of rural primary schools

A large number of young teachers outflow from rural primary schools in western China, resulting in a reduction in the allocation level of teachers for primary school education in rural areas in the west. Some remote rural schools even have one teacher teach several classes and courses. This phenomenon increases the workload and mental stress of the teacher, tending to cause the reduction in teaching quality. Some small-scale rural schools may hire temporary substitutive teachers in the extreme absence of music, physical education, and art teachers. Temporary substitutive teachers' teaching levels are uneven, and some teachers lack a sense of responsibility so that the teaching quality cannot be guaranteed and students' academic performance may also be affected. Therefore, the loss of young teachers in rural primary schools eventually leads to a decline in teaching quality of the entire school.

III. ANALYSIS ON THE CAUSES FOR LOSS OF YOUNG TEACHERS IN WESTERN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Based on the investigation on loss of young teachers in western rural primary schools, the following analyzes the causes for the loss from four aspects.

A. Economy

1) Rural primary school young teachers have low wage income

TABLE VI. SURVEY ON WAGE INCOME OF YOUNG TEACHERS IN WESTERN RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A.1501-2000 Yuan	30	16.39%
B.2001-2500 Yuan	18	9.84%
C.2501- 3000 Yuan	72	39.34%
D. More than 3000 Yuan	47	31.15%
(N/A)	6	3.28%

As is shown in "Table VI", wage income of most of the surveyed rural primary school young teachers is less than

3000 Yuan. According to the list of average wages in cities all over China in 2017 as published on the social insurance query website, the monthly average wage income in Chongqing in 2017 was 6584 Yuan. The surveyed area is a county of Chongqing and the monthly income of rural primary school young teachers in this area is far less than the average income level in Chongqing. Due to the gradual rise of the price of commodities in the society and the increasingly high living cost, young teachers' economic pressure becomes larger and larger and their living requirement cannot be met just by their wages so that some of them begin to seek for other way of living, causing loss of young teachers. [2]

2) Low satisfaction of rural primary school young teachers with their economic incomes

TABLE VII. SURVEY ON THE SATISFACTION OF RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL YOUNG TEACHERS WITH THEIR ECONOMIC INCOMES

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Very satisfied	12	6.56%
B. Satisfied	69	37.7%
C. Don't care	6	3.28%
D. Dissatisfied	69	37.7%
E. Very dissatisfied	27	14.75%

As can be seen from "Table VII", among the surveyed rural primary school young teachers, more than half of them are dissatisfied with their economic incomes; only 6.56% of the teachers are very satisfied with their economic incomes. This indicates that the dissatisfaction with economic income is one of the main causes for the loss of such teachers. Since the reform and opening up, China's economy has undergone a rapid development; the price of commodities has also increased year by year. But teacher's wage level cannot catch up with the rise of price of commodities. Young rural teachers cannot maintain for a living just by their wage incomes. The work of rural primary school teachers is cumbersome, and the majority of rural students are left-behind children. After completing teaching tasks, the teachers often need to spend a lot of time and energy on education management and psychological counseling of students to make up for the lack of family education. Therefore, most rural primary school teachers do not have clear commuting boundaries. Moreover, due to the limited fund for education in rural schools, these large amounts of extra work are not compensated with any subsidy. In the long run, teachers will feel a sense of imbalance; especially for young teachers newly entering the profession, they may even be dissatisfied, eventually leading to the loss of young rural teachers.

B. Society

1) Rural primary school teachers have a low social position

"With interior social position and bad reputation, rural teachers have insufficient confidence [3]." By the survey, it

is found that the social position of rural teachers is low. Teacher is an important pillar for the development of a country's education course. Especially for primary school teachers who have been given the title of "gardener", they shoulder the heavy responsibility of enlightening the pillars of various industries in the future. Teacher has been a respected profession since ancient times; but in recent years, there have been certain prejudices against educators in society, and teachers' social position has gradually lowered. The social position of rural primary school teachers is even lower, and their work is cumbersome and heavy, greatly impacting the enthusiasm of young rural teachers.

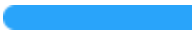


2) The society has high expectation for primary school teachers

In the survey, it is found that the society puts forward high expectations and requirements for primary school teachers. It is a truism that teacher is the model of morality and knowledge, so that the society has strict requirements for teachers, especially for primary school teachers who carry the responsibility of enlightenment. The society has a low recognition on the position of teachers and strict requirements for teachers. Such contradictory phenomena make teachers feel pressured, resulting in loss of some young teachers in rural primary schools for reason of feeling overwhelmed.

C. School

1) The remote location of school restricts the travel of young rural teachers

TABLE VIII. THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL'S GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION ON THE LOSS OF YOUNG TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Large influence	123	 67.21%
B. Some influence	51	 27.87%
C. No influence	9	 4.92%






The result of survey on the influence of school's geographical location on the loss of young teachers in primary schools is as shown in "Table VIII". It can be seen that, 95.08% of young rural teachers selected "large influence" and "some influence", which proves that the geographical location of a school may become a key reference basis for loss of the young teachers. If a school's geographical location is too remote or the transportation is not convenient, it may cause difficulty for teachers of the school to get around. Young teachers should take care of their families while working; they will concern more about whether they need to spend a lot of time on commuting. Therefore, a school's geographical location has become an important measurement factor for young teachers to choose a post or choose to leave or not.

2) School's unreasonable management system affects the development of young teachers

Young teachers have a strong sense of democracy. They are eager to express themselves and participate in the daily management of the school. Because school's daily management is not only related to the school's development, but also has a close relation with teachers' personnel development. In the survey, it is found that management personnel of some western rural primary schools do not pay attention to teachers' opinions, and "decide everything by one man's say" in the school, ignoring reasonable opinions put forward by young teachers. In the management systems of some rural primary schools, there is only "concentration" and lack of "democracy". No one listens to the voices of young teachers. Their opinions and suggestions cannot be fed back. The negative emotions accumulated to certain extent in the mind of young teachers will lead to their losing confidence in the school and finally choose to leave.

3) School training for young teachers fails to reach teachers' expectations for personal development

TABLE IX. SURVEY ON WHETHER SCHOOL TRAINING CAN MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUNG TEACHERS

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Completely can	21	 11.48%
B. Mostly can	60	 32.79%
C. Generally can	84	 45.9%
D. Most cannot	18	 9.84%
E. Completely cannot	0	 0%

As can be seen from "Table IX", 55.74% of the surveyed rural primary school young teachers think that school training cannot meet their personal development needs. The survey reveals that young teachers generally think that what available to benefit them for lifelong time is the precious experience obtained in the teaching work. Corresponding training and guidance provided by schools can enable young teachers to acquire more teaching knowledge and experience. However, some schools in rural areas in western China are lacking in school-based guidance and training for young teachers due to economic lag and lack of outstanding teachers, hindering personal development of young rural teachers. Therefore, some young rural teachers choose to leave for seeking better development.

D. Teacher

1) Young rural teachers are facing high working pressure

TABLE X. SURVEY ON WORKING HOURS OF RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL YOUNG TEACHERS

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A.4-6h	21	11.48%
B.7-9h	111	60.66%
C.10-12h	48	26.23%
D. more than 12h	3	1.64%

As can be seen from the results in "Table X", the working hours of 86.89% of the surveyed teachers is 7-12h and longer than the working hours of most occupations. Through the survey, it is also found that, after completing the teaching in school, teachers often need to spend a lot of time in preparing lessons and correcting student assignments, etc. The working time has far exceeded the working hours set by the school.

TABLE XI. SURVEY ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL YOUNG TEACHERS

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Very large	21	11.48%
B. Large	102	55.74%
C. Common	51	27.87%
D. Small	9	4.92%
E. Very small	0	0%

As can be seen from "Table XI", 67.22% of the young rural teachers feel large occupational stress, while 27.87% of the young rural teachers feel that the stress is common. This indicates that rural primary school young teachers are facing heavy work load and mental stress. Most of the young rural teachers are college graduates who have just stepped out of school, and belong to the groups with large economic pressure. Some of them have just set up families. The low wage income in rural school is difficult to ease their economic pressure. At the same time, the accompanying pressures are high-intensity workload, uneasy relationship with colleagues and leaders, and tense interpersonal relationship caused by poor communication with parents of students. Multiple work pressures lead to their lack of the sense of belonging so that they can hardly maintain a positive mental outlook. Eventually, they will shake their beliefs and choose to leave.

2) Young rural teachers have not that high sense of career achievement

TABLE XII. SURVEY ON CAREER ACHIEVEMENT OF RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL YOUNG TEACHERS

Option	Subtotal	Proportion
A. Very high	12	6.56%
B. High	48	26.23%
C. Common	90	49.18%
D. Low	30	16.39%
E. Very low	3	1.64%

The results in "Table XII" show that the overall sense of career achievement of young teachers in rural primary schools in the west is not high. Only 32.79% of them can obtain a sense of achievement from the profession. The survey finds two causes for this result: firstly, western rural schools are lack of education resources; young teachers enter rural education career with full enthusiasm but find the lagging hardware facilities and education idea in rural primary schools restricts the exertion of their teaching level. The school-based training provided for young teachers by rural primary schools is far from catching up with the needs of their personal development, which further restricts the improvement of their teaching ability and makes them difficult to obtain a sense of career achievement. Secondly, the majority of students in western rural primary schools are left-behind children. Due to long-term absence of family education, some students are naughty and rebellious, and there are also many students with personality defects and psychological problems. The overall learning habits and performance of the class are poor. After spending much time and energy into the work, young rural teachers still cannot see the effect. This fact greatly impacts their enthusiasm for work and makes them difficult to obtain a sense of career achievement.

IV. COUNTERMEASURES FOR RELIEVING THE LOSS

A. Government should increase investment in education

1) China and local governments should increase education fund investment in western rural schools

"The sixth national census shows that China's urban population accounts for 49.68% of the total population, and rural population accounts for 50.32% [4]." Rural area has more school-age children than urban area. The focus of compulsory education should be on rural area; but for a long time, the urban-rural structure has led to a shortage in funding for rural education. Therefore, China and local governments must increase the fund investment in education. "Only by increasing the proportion of fiscal investment in rural education in the west can it be available to ensure the development of education in rural primary schools in the west, stabilize the rural primary school teachers in the west, and ensure that the gap between urban and rural education is narrowed in terms of resources [5]." It is also possible to invest special funds to alleviate the shortage of rural teachers caused by the loss of local teachers. For example, Chongqing

started a general teacher training program for rural primary schools in 2013, cultivating excellent teachers oriented to remote rural area. Over 5 years of hard work, there have been more than 2,000 general normal school graduates served in rural primary schools in remote places; an initial result has been achieved in alleviating the loss of young teachers in rural primary schools in the west. Other provinces in the west are suggested to adopt a special plan for training teachers in rural areas to solve the problem of the loss of young rural teachers.

2) China and local governments should vigorously improve the welfare of rural teachers in the west

The economic development in western rural area is weak, and teacher's welfare is far lower than those in developed areas and urban area. Therefore, many young rural teachers in the west choose to leave under economic pressure. In response to the cause for this loss, China and local governments should increase fund investment in education and focus on rural schools, especially schools in remote rural areas in the west to promote the development of rural basic education and reduce the gap between urban and rural basic education. China and local governments should also vigorously increase the salary income of rural teachers in the west, and practically protect their welfares.

3) China and local governments should focus on improving the social position of rural teachers in the west

The professional position of rural primary school teachers is not high. Many of them think that their efforts are not recognized by the society. Some of them gradually lose their original teaching motivation and choose other jobs, eventually leading to the loss of teachers. For this reason, China and local governments should focus on improving the social position of teachers, especially for teachers in remote rural areas. The government should increase publicity, reward outstanding teachers, and take various approaches to strengthen the public's positive recognition on the profession of teachers, realizing the "retention by emotions" for rural teachers. The mainstream media in the society should disseminate the idea of respecting teachers and their teaching to the masses, increase the publicity of advanced deeds of outstanding rural teachers, expand the social influence of rural teachers, and ultimately improve the social position of rural teachers in the west.

B. Schools should strengthen the construction of teacher resources

1) Schools should give young teachers the opportunity to participate in management

"Western rural schools should improve their management level, and be teacher-oriented in their management [6]." First of all, they should pay attention to the opinions and suggestions proposed by young teachers so that they can express their ideas. Young teachers should be given the opportunity to take part in the management of school and obtain a sense of identity; secondly, school should give teachers humanistic care, actively give feedback to young teachers' suggestions, actively mediate their negative

emotions. Retaining talents by career and emotion can make young teachers feel more belonging to the school.

2) School should appropriately reduce the pressure of teachers

"Rural primary school teachers generally have heavy work task and high work pressure [7]. Teacher is a tedious and heavy job; moreover, rural teacher is a high-workload and low-income job and consumes a lot of physical and mental energy. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that teachers have sufficient rest time and personal space so that they can have enough energy to work; school should try to minimize all unnecessary activities and checks and ease teachers from work intensity and stress somewhat. This can alleviate the loss of young teachers in rural primary schools to a certain extent.

3) School should provide more opportunities for training and learning

New teachers and young teachers need to continuously learn to accumulate more experience in their work, so school should pay attention to their training. The "guiding new teachers by old teacher" guidance model and regular school-based training can play a very good role, and can also create other opportunities for further education of rural young teachers and boost their growth; it can not only better serve the school's teaching work but also meet the personal development needs of young teachers and play a role in alleviating the loss of teachers.

C. Teachers should improve their professional competencies

1) Teachers should strive to improve their personal qualities and professional ethics

Tao Xingzhi, a well-known modern educator in China, once said, "they come with heart and leave without taking a blade of grass", education is a cause of conscience, and its profession has special characteristics [5]. Therefore, teacher should uphold the spirit of "maintaining high knowledge and moral integrity" and possess high personal qualities and professional ethics, in order to "preach, impart knowledge and answer questions". Only by working hard to improve their personal qualities and professional ethics can young teachers in rural primary schools overcome all kinds of unpredictable difficulties and challenges in the hard working environment, and practically "do not forget their original intentions and continue to move forward".

2) Teachers should eliminate their sense of job burnout

"Young primary school teachers will inevitably experience job burnout within three years of employment, and many rural primary school young teachers will choose to leave at this stage for this reason." Rural primary school young teachers with job burnout often feel tired and dissatisfied with their work, leading them to choose other jobs, resulting in loss of such teachers. In order to solve this problem, eliminating the teacher's job burnout is the most radical solution. And only by increasing the teaching interest of young teachers in rural primary schools and enhancing

their enthusiasm in working can it be available to reduce the loss of such teachers.

V. CONCLUSION

The loss of young teachers in rural primary schools in the west has become a key bottleneck that affects the stability of rural primary school teachers in the west, hinders the development of basic education in western rural areas and further expands the educational gap between urban and rural areas in western China. The lost rural primary school teachers are mainly outstanding backbone teachers around the age of 30-45, and college graduates newly assigned to teach in rural primary schools in the west, which seriously impedes the realization of educational fairness, exacerbates the instability of the teachers, and reduces the teaching quality of rural primary schools. China and local governments are recommended to increase fund investment in education of rural schools in the west, improve the welfare of rural teachers in the west, and focus on improving the social position of rural teachers in the west; such schools are recommended to strengthen the construction of teacher resources, provide teachers with more opportunities for training and learning and appropriately alleviate the pressure of young teachers; the teachers are recommended to make specific effort to improve their personal quality and professional ethics and strengthen their development of professional capabilities. By making the multilateral efforts, it is possible to solve the problem of loss of young teachers in rural primary schools in western China and promote the development of basic education in western rural area.

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