

Research on Rural Education in the Context of Rural Revitalization

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Abstract: In the inaugural year of the 14th Five-Year Plan, General Secretary Xi Jinping profoundly emphasized that promoting rural revitalization development is a comprehensive and historical task essential for building a modern socialist country. Education is the cornerstone of rural revitalization and plays a pioneering role in this process. It is crucial to consolidate and expand the achievements of educational poverty alleviation and seamlessly connect them with rural revitalization. Empowering rural revitalization through the revitalization of rural education is both the responsibility and mission of education. This paper employs theoretical analysis and literature review methods to analyze the macro and micro relationships between rural revitalization and rural education, demonstrating the importance of rural education for rural revitalization. It also enumerates the current challenges faced by rural education and proposes relevant paths for promoting its development.

Keywords: Rural Revitalization, Rural Education, Cultural Development, Teaching Team

1. Introduction

According to the latest data released by the Central People's Government in 2024, the total scale of various forms of higher education in China reached 47.6319 million students in 2023, an increase of 1.0811 million from the previous year, reflecting a growth of 2.32%. The overall development of education in China is positive. However, despite continuous efforts in rural revitalization over the past two years, significant gaps remain in rural education compared to urban areas. According to 2015 data, the national average education Gini coefficient was 0.228, with substantial declines or severe fluctuations observed in the education Gini coefficients of five western provinces: Guizhou, Sichuan, Yunnan, Ningxia, and Gansu. Based on this context, this paper begins with the relationship between rural revitalization and education. By analyzing the current development status of rural education, it offers suggestions from the perspectives of infrastructure construction, teaching team development, and cultural curriculum improvement. These recommendations aim to bolster rural revitalization and promote its further development in the new round of reforms.

2. Rural Education Aiding Rural Revitalization

2.1. Rural Education Cultivating Talents

General Secretary Xi Jinping has profoundly pointed out that education plays a leading role in rural revitalization, and the development of education cannot be separated from the promotion of talents. Rural education should not be limited to primary and secondary school students but should also cater to both young people and adults. Rural revitalization requires a large number of specialized talents in the fields of agriculture, rural areas, and farmers. Through rural education, various local craftsmen and talents are encouraged to enter the classroom. Skill learning classes are set up for adults, enriching rural education with professional skills and cultivating a new generation of specialized farmers. For young people, local education should be strengthened by offering rural practice courses, enabling them to learn about local languages, history, and geography. This helps them understand and identify with their homeland, fostering a love for their home, hometown, and eventually the country, while developing a positive value system that respects diverse cultures [1]. Through local education, the beauty and nostalgia of the countryside can be preserved, and the concept of "studying hard and giving back to one's hometown" can be established. Rural revitalization education provides high-quality educational resources and opportunities for rural areas. By improving the education level and quality of rural residents and contemporary youth, it cultivates more high-quality and fully skilled talents, providing human resource support for rural revitalization.

2.2. Rural Education Promoting Educational Equity

Educational equity is the premise of educational development, and the development of education, in turn, promotes educational equity. The state vigorously promotes the development of rural education by investing a large amount of human, material, and financial resources. Urban and rural governments carry out multifaceted cooperation, establishing a "one school, multiple campuses" model, setting up new campuses in rural areas, and transferring quality teachers and professional teaching equipment from key urban schools to rural schools. A unique evaluation mechanism for teachers and students is established. Urban students can utilize their winter and summer vacations to participate in outdoor practice classes at partner rural schools, and rural students can go to urban areas to learn and see different aspects of the world. The popularization of rural education will improve the infrastructure and educational resources of some rural schools, providing a good educational environment and narrowing the urban-rural education gap, allowing rural students to enjoy educational opportunities equivalent to those of urban students [2].

2.3. Rural Education Promoting Rural Cultural Development

Local culture is the focal point of rural education. Rural revitalization education should emphasize the inheritance and protection of local culture. Through rural cultural education and the protection of traditional culture, children can experience the lives of farmers firsthand by entering the rural areas. This fosters a deep-rooted pride in their hometown, cultivates a sense of identity with their cultural traditions among rural residents, and protects the prosperity and unique cultural heritage of the countryside. By conveying correct values to the public and strengthening the construction of rural spiritual civilization, educational slogans or meaningful paintings can be written or drawn in large characters on walls along the roads. Lastly, cultural and artistic training can be conducted to cultivate the cultural and artistic literacy of rural residents. This involves excavating and inheriting rural cultural heritage and artistic expressions, and regularly holding events such as the Farmers' Harvest Festival and local cultural performances, enriching rural cultural life and enhancing the cultural soft power of the countryside.

3. Major Obstacles to Enhancing Rural Education

3.1. Insufficient and Poor-Quality Hardware Facilities

Due to the influence of the objective environment, the inadequate infrastructure severely restricts the development of rural revitalization education. Firstly, according to the China Education Statistics Yearbook, from 2012 to 2020, the area of dangerous teaching buildings in compulsory education in rural areas decreased by 96%. However, there is still a large area of 1,524,560.43 square meters of dangerous teaching buildings, which cannot ensure the basic personal safety of students while studying. Secondly, although the internet has now been popularized nationwide, as of June 2023, the internet penetration rate in rural areas in China was 60.5%, with a rural internet user base of 301 million. Some rural areas are still without internet access, preventing the combination of online and offline teaching. The comprehensive coverage of digital teaching platforms is challenging, making it difficult to break down information barriers. Lastly, the lack of supporting facilities in schools is evident. Many rural schools do not have libraries, computer rooms, cafeterias, dormitories for teachers and students, or gymnasiums. Even those schools with these basic facilities often have low usage rates, leading to resource wastage.

3.2. Shortage of Teachers and Incomplete Teacher Management System

Teaching and nurturing students require not only the active cooperation of students but also the correct guidance of teachers. Teachers are an indispensable part of rural education. Firstly, there is a shortage of teachers in rural areas, especially young teachers. Many graduates from teacher training colleges are unwilling to work in rural areas, resulting in a higher proportion of middle-aged and elderly teachers and an unreasonable teacher structure. As of 2021, there were 10.5719 million full-time teachers in compulsory education nationwide. The average teacher-student ratio in junior high schools was 3.83:1, with 3.60:1 in urban areas, 3.83:1 in towns, and 4.52:1 in rural areas, indicating an imbalance in the ratio of teachers in rural junior high schools. Secondly, the quality of teachers varies. In the early stages of promoting rural revitalization education, the significant teacher shortage led to the recruitment of some teachers with weak professionalism. Some teachers have lower educational qualifications and lack formal pre-service training, resulting in insufficient teaching experience [3]. Many teachers also have multiple roles, and in boarding schools, it is common for rural teachers to work from six in the morning until eleven at night, even helping younger children with their bedding. Furthermore, there are hardly any teachers for adult professional skill courses, and many areas do not offer courses related to scientific agriculture. Lastly, the management system for teachers is incomplete. Although most teachers adhere to the principle of prioritizing children, there are still issues such as teachers scolding students, being lax and misleading in imparting knowledge, and an increasing number of teachers not fulfilling their duties. These long-term issues are detrimental to the physical and mental growth of students.

3.3. Single Course Setup Lacking Unique Cultivation

Due to the imperfect infrastructure and lack of teacher resources, some areas only offer Chinese, mathematics, English, and physical education classes. The single course setup prevents comprehensive development for young people. Additionally, with the acceleration of urban-rural integration, many schools do not offer distinctive local education courses. The management model, knowledge system, and course setup of rural education do not differ much from those in urban areas. This situation causes rural education to gradually evolve into an "away-from-agriculture" education, leading to the disappearance of traditional and cultural heritage rooted in the local area. Young people's sense of belonging to their hometown is weak, and education becomes increasingly

marginalized and detached from the soil. For rural farmers, only basic skill training is provided, without professional and targeted cultivation for different agricultural tasks.

4. Development Paths for Rural Education

4.1. Strengthen the Construction of Rural Infrastructure and Reduce Resource Waste

Ensuring the effective supply of rural infrastructure requires the introduction of relevant incentive policies and competitive mechanisms. This encourages various stakeholders to invest in the construction of rural infrastructure, diversifying the construction entities while fostering competition among them. This competitive environment can also improve the quality of rural infrastructure construction. When building infrastructure, attention should be paid to environmental protection by adopting green, low-carbon concepts, promoting the intensive and cyclical use of resources, and protecting characteristic rural buildings to minimize damage to traditional structures. Implementing green planning and conservation-oriented construction ensures the organic integration of rural infrastructure development and the natural ecological environment. Lastly, after the construction is completed, basic training should be provided to the supporting personnel to ensure they are proficient in using the facilities, thereby improving resource utilization efficiency.

4.2. Strengthen the Standardization of Rural Teachers and Improve Their Welfare

To build a team of rural teachers with high comprehensive quality, professional level, and innovative ability, the recruitment plans for rural teachers need adjustment. Firstly, the welfare benefits of rural teachers should be improved, advocating that their salaries align with those of local civil servants. Financial assistance should be provided to particularly impoverished areas to expand recruitment while ensuring the quality of teaching staff. Secondly, the training system for rural teachers, primarily led by teacher training colleges, should be improved. This includes increasing the precision of special programs such as "Three Supports and One Assistance," special post teachers, and the Western Program, and conducting a month-long pre-service training. Implementing a system where new teachers mentor the existing ones can introduce fresh talent into rural education, further optimizing the age and professional structure of rural teachers. Lastly, a comprehensive evaluation framework should be established, with evaluations conducted each semester by students, parents, and colleagues. Regular teacher skill assessments and a complete reward and punishment mechanism, particularly concerning bonuses, promotions, and benefits, should be in place.

4.3. Revise Curricula, Add Unique Local Courses, and Develop Cultural Education

Given the significant differences in living habits, thought processes, and behavior patterns between rural and urban areas, urban-rural integration does not mean urban-rural homogenization. High-quality rural education should develop rural characteristics and localization based on urban-rural integration [4]. Teachers need to deeply understand and experience local rural culture, extracting and teaching the excellent aspects to students. Incorporating historical stories and traditional classics from the students' sociocultural system into the curriculum can foster a sense of belonging and promote local culture. Furthermore, exclusive rural textbooks should be compiled, covering rural agricultural knowledge and rural technological innovation theories, enhancing students' understanding of their hometown and aiding future technological rural development [5]. Lastly, increasing science and technology education and popularizing computer use can help students understand the diverse world, reduce issues related to information gaps, and lay a fundamental technological foundation for rural students who choose to study and live in big cities in the future.

4.4. Coordinate In-Class and Extracurricular Activities and Emphasize Family-School Cooperation

Achieving the comprehensive development of students requires extending learning beyond the traditional classroom. Students should be encouraged to engage in outdoor learning, participate in rural social practices, experience farm labor education, and try various cultural activities, thus bridging the gap between teachers, students, and rural life while nurturing their physical and mental well-being. Meanwhile, families are an indispensable part of education. Many parents in rural areas still hold outdated beliefs, thinking children should work early to support the family instead of attending school. The government and schools should educate these parents, encouraging maximum cooperation with school teaching to promote the future development of rural areas.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

This paper first identified the issues existing in the hardware and software facilities of rural education and then proposed targeted suggestions in hopes of aiding subsequent research. Rural education is an indispensable part of rural revitalization, and rural revitalization cannot be achieved without rural education. During the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, after China has comprehensively built a moderately prosperous society and achieved the first centenary goal [6], provincial, municipal, and even national governments have strongly supported the development of rural education. Under the leadership of the Party and the state, the development of rural education in the context of rural revitalization has already achieved preliminary success. However, with the continuous development of society, many issues still exist in rural education. The journey is ongoing, and continuous efforts will be needed in the future.

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