

# ***Pre-service and Post-service Integration of Teachers in China: Results and Reflections of the Hainan Rural Teacher Training Program***

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**Abstract:** The paper explores the outcomes of local rural teacher training programs in China using an interview methodology, focusing on reflections on the achievements and problems in the integrated development of pre-service and post-service training for rural teachers. Under the strategy of "rural revitalization" and the national policy of "excellent teachers", the overall level of education at the local level has been improved to a certain extent. In Hainan, for example, while seeing more young people flocking to local rural schools to carry out education and teaching work, it is also important to note that new teachers are reflecting on the problems that exist in their post-service work by reflecting on the problems that exist in their post-service work. The article mentions that it is possible to help publicly-funded teacher trainees master more methods of teaching management in advance to cope with the problems they will encounter in their upcoming careers by increasing the number of hours of practical education courses. In enhancing new teachers' sense of identity in the rural educational environment, it is also important to focus on fostering children's pride in the local culture of the countryside to make education more localized. The paper concludes by suggesting that we should pay attention to the lifelong professional development of rural teachers, actively carry out online and offline teaching and learning activities, and help rural teachers continue to improve their academic qualifications, so that people can better promote high-quality, long-term and balanced development of rural basic education in Hainan.

**Keywords:** pre-service and post-service teacher integration, rural teacher training, rural basic education

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Research Background**

The State Council, the highest organ of State administration in China, has decided to introduce free education for ordinary students in ordinary colleges and universities directly under the Ministry of Education from the fall of 2007.

In 2016, the College of Primary Education of Hainan Normal University began to undertake the Hainan Provincial Rural Teacher Support Program. In order to improve the overall quality of basic

education in Hainan Province, supplement the gap in rural basic education, and actively respond to the call to improve the quality of primary and secondary school teachers, the college began to recruit rural teachers in Hainan Province with the support of the government. The number of students enrolled in the college entrance examination has been steadily improving, and the enrollment situation has been improving year by year, which has injected firm strength into the development of rural education in Hainan.

With more and more normal university students entering the job, the long-term career development of teachers has received more and more attention. Among them, how novice teachers adapt to different identities faster and better in the process of learning from university to working in school has become an important guidance for the current training of normal university students.

## 1.2. Research Theme

This paper pays special attention to the local practice of the integration of teachers before and after service in China, aiming to study the lifelong development of teachers' career in order to better carry out the overall construction of teachers.

## 1.3. Research Methods

This paper uses the interview method to carry out a study on the pre-service and post-service integration of rural teachers in China. Through interviews with former undergraduate graduates and university teachers who participated in the program, the author can get first-hand information about the people who have experienced the program, and combine other literature information to generate more in-depth theoretical research.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Interview Subjects

The interviews were conducted with two groups of people: undergraduates who participated in the Rural Teacher Training Program of Hainan Normal University and have more than one year of work experience, and teachers from the School of Elementary Education of Hainan Normal University who were involved in the development of the training program. The author interviewed a total of nine people, five of whom were former graduates of the program and four university teachers. The basic information of the interviewees is shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Basic information of interviewed former graduates.

	NAME	qualifications	MAJOR	working experience
1	Y	undergraduate	Primary Education (English)	1 year
2	M	undergraduate	Primary Education (Mathematics)	2 years
3	D	undergraduate	Primary Education (English)	1 year
4	L	undergraduate	Primary Education (English)	1 year
5	X	undergraduate	Primary Education (Chinese)	2 years

Table 2: Basic information of interviewed college teachers.

	NAME	title	field of research	teaching experience
1	W	Associate Professor	Comparative Educational Studies between China and the United States	12 years
2	S	Associate Professor	Elementary Education Curriculum and Instructional Theory	30 years
3	C	Associate Professor	Teacher Education	15 years
4	P	Associate Professor	English Curriculum and Teaching Theory	20 years

Students who have participated in this type of training at the undergraduate level have direct experience with the program and have a major say in the curriculum and the strengths and weaknesses of the program as a whole. Combined with the different types and forms of study they receive before and after becoming rural teachers, they can more clearly recognize whether the study at the undergraduate level is helpful to their current work.

The reason for choosing university teachers as interviewees is that they have rich experience in guidance and education, and based on the study and graduation employment of former undergraduates. They can know the advantages of this training mode more thoroughly. When carrying out related education and teaching work, teachers also pay close attention to and study the difficulties encountered by undergraduates in their studies and the problems they encounter after employment.

## 2.2. Interview Outline

Two interview outlines were set up for the interviews because of the large differences between the two groups of people interviewed.

### 2.2.1.Outline of Interviews with Undergraduates Who Have Participated in Rural Education Work

- 1.Why did you choose to participate in the Rural Teacher Training Program?
- 2.What courses did you take during your undergraduate studies that you still find very useful in your work?
- 3.Have you ever encountered any difficult problems at work? How did you solve them?
- 4.What do you think are the advantages of the Rural Teacher Program at Hainan Normal University? What are the limitations?
- 5.If you were asked to participate in revising the rural teacher training program of Hainan Normal University's College of Elementary Education, what would you suggest?

### 2.2.2.Outline of Interviews with College Teachers

- 1.Do you have a continuous concern about the graduated targeted public training students? What are the specific positions they have held in the school after joining the workforce?
- 2.When they encountered difficult problems in the course of their work, how did they solve them in the end?
- 3.Where do you get your rationale from when revising the college's training programs?

4. Based on the employment and career development of previous graduates, in what ways do you think the training model can be improved in the future?

5. What do you think are the strengths of the Rural Teacher Training Program at Hainan Normal University College of Elementary Education? What are the limitations?

### **2.3. Interview Process**

The interviews were mainly conducted through face-to-face and WeChat calls, while the interviews were recorded and organized to form a transcript so that the contents could be analyzed and summarized at a later stage.

## **3. Result**

### **3.1. Effectiveness**

#### **3.1.1. Enhanced the Level of Basic Education in Rural Hainan**

At present, the gap in educational resources between regions, between urban and rural areas, and between schools in Hainan Province is still relatively obvious [1]. Since 2016, Hainan Normal University has recruited 200 undergraduate-level rural public elementary exempted students every year, and now there have been four new rural elementary school teachers on duty to teach in grass-roots rural schools, which are continuing to add bricks and mortar to the development of Hainan's basic education cause, and injecting strength into the revitalization of Hainan's rural education. Through participation in this training program, more and more Hainan locals began to pay more attention to the development and construction of education in their hometowns. D, a former graduate, mentioned the original intention of participating in this training program: "To be able to satisfy my wish to be a teacher, and to be able to go back to my hometown to be a teacher, and to contribute to my hometown to do service. This is the best choice, both from the point of view of my work and the realization of my personal ideal".

#### **3.1.2. Solving the Problem of "Difficult Employment" of Teacher Trainees**

In accordance with the system of quality standards for compulsory education, local governments can ensure that the status and working conditions of schoolteachers are not lower than certain industry standards, provide teachers with competitive salaries and working conditions in schools, attract more talented people to pursue a lifelong career in teaching, and ensure that the overall level of the teaching force improves, thereby effectively guaranteeing the improvement of the quality of education [2]. Hainan Normal University released the latest enrollment announcement on June 23, 2023 for "Rural Teacher Oriented Publicly-funded Cultivation Students" in Elementary Education. In the document from the provincial education department, it is mentioned that students are exempted from all tuition and miscellaneous fees during their undergraduate studies. A series of living subsidies will be granted every semester. The government not only financially supports students participating in this training program through the four years of undergraduate study, but also provides jobs for students after graduation in rural public elementary schools where they are domiciled, which solves the problem of students' difficulties in obtaining employment, and gives students with difficult family conditions a way out to receive knowledge and contribute to the society.

### **3.1.3. Promote the Ability of Teaching Practice and the Development of "Multi-talented" Teachers**

Due to insufficient resources, schools in rural areas have been relatively closed for a long time, the quality of teaching is relatively weak, and there is a relative lack of knowledge on the part of students' parents, lagging educational concepts, and relatively simple educational methods [3]. Therefore, the assistance of the local universities in solving the problem is urgently needed. The College of Elementary Education of Hainan Normal University is responsible for training publicly-funded teacher trainees majoring in elementary education. Teaching at the College is based on practice, supplemented by theoretical learning. During the first three years of their undergraduate program, all students are placed in a number of public elementary schools for educational internships. This allows them to gain experience in schooling and to enter the role of teacher more quickly. The ultimate goal is to improve the teaching practice ability of the future rural teachers in Hainan.

In the latest version of the 2023 training program for publicly-funded teacher trainees in primary education, it is stated that the latest training model is for students in the Chinese direction to be able to teach Morals and Rule of Law, students in the Mathematics direction to be able to teach Science, and students in the English direction to be able to teach either Language or Mathematics. At the undergraduate level, students are required to choose at least one of the following disciplines: Dance, Music, Calligraphy and Fine Arts. The College is committed to training students to become "multi-talented" rural education professionals who can teach multiple subjects and have artistic specialties.

## **3.2. Problems**

The results of the interviews show that most of the respondents have a supportive attitude towards the rural teacher training program currently implemented in Hainan. The program can be oriented to the actual development of rural education in Hainan at present, and integrate local characteristics to carry out teaching. However, there is still some room for improvement in the overall development of the program.

### **3.2.1. Inability to Fully Meet the Needs of the Actual Work**

In the face of actual education and teaching work, there are still many blind spots in the operation of publicly-funded teacher trainees who come to work in the countryside. In terms of interpersonal communication, the common schooling experience of participating in the Rural Teacher Training Program at Hainan Normal University enables them to have good interactions with peer teachers. However, some problems were encountered in the process of communicating with students' parents. Teacher S said: "A few days ago, we went to the countryside to communicate with several teachers, because the publicly-funded teacher trainees are also local people in the county, and the overall relationship with the parents is still quite cordial. Very few parents do not attach importance to education, really against you, we have a student's personal safety is even threatened". Most of the former graduates interviewed by the author felt that the instructional management methods learned at the undergraduate level were relatively limited. It was felt that there was a strong need to increase the number of hours of practical education courses such as Classroom Management, Elementary Student Psychology, and Educational Psychology. At the same time, it is hoped that the study of the important educational theme of "how to better guide problem students" will be strengthened.

It is not enough to gain direct experience in practice, but it is also necessary to continue to develop a more comprehensive and systematic study of pedagogical knowledge. Supplementing theoretical knowledge will help new rural teachers to do a better job in teaching. Practice-oriented rural teacher training should pay full attention to rural teachers' personal knowledge, which is an

important practical resource, and excavate and utilize it, critically examine it and reconstruct it innovatively, so as to promote the generation of practical knowledge through the fusion of multiple perspectives [4].

### **3.2.2. Lack of a Complete and Clear Career Development Plan**

In Hainan Normal University this year issued by the Hainan Provincial Department of Education and other four departments on the issuance of Hainan Province, rural teacher orientation training program implementation measures notice shows that the government is only free to support publicly funded teacher training students to complete the undergraduate stage of the study, they are required to be required in the stipulated six years of service can not be completely off the postgraduate study to continue to further education. When interviewed, graduate L said, "Some rural schools have a relatively short history, for example, the rural elementary school where I work is just in its third year of operation, and the teachers in this school are all new, so the other teachers don't give too constructive answers to questions about lesson planning and classroom management". Other graduates interviewed also mentioned that they were confused about their career paths. Since many rural schools were newly established in recent years, new teachers would also take on other important roles in the school, and would have to deal with school and classroom chores in addition to lesson planning every day, which would consume their time and experience in teaching and research.

Most local governments in China have established online or offline platforms for sharing educational research. However, interviewees said that new teachers seldom have the opportunity to go to Haikou, the provincial capital, to learn advanced education methods. Nearly 80% of the graduates interviewed still hope that local education administrations and schools will give new teachers more opportunities to participate in training.

Most of the former graduates interviewed by the author were novice teachers who had just joined the profession and were still at the stage of figuring out how to teach in rural education, so burnout basically did not occur. China's rural teacher career development model has always been a top-down, extrapolated development model constructed by the power of administrative policy [5]. When rural teachers are in a closed evaluation system for a long period of time, their sense of subjectivity will begin to be disorganized and their rich professional emotions may begin to fade. Therefore, it is all the more necessary to help publicly-funded teacher trainees in university education to utilize their subjective initiative in advance, to make good plans for teachers' career development, and to establish the concept of lifelong career development.

### **3.2.3. Misadaptation of Some New Teachers to the Teaching Environment in the Countryside**

Teacher C mentioned that he found a similar problem during his participation in the research activities of previous graduates: "Because it was most of the students with urban household registration who chose to enroll in our program, it was still difficult for them to adapt to the living habits and cultural environment in the countryside. But this is an environment that we can't change all of a sudden, so I told the students that they still have to face it positively. " Rural teachers have been influenced by both urban and rural culture, losing their agricultural and vernacular nature, and the content of rural education they provide is generally urbanized exam-oriented education [6]. Former graduate Y mentioned in the interview: "In fact, the provincial capital of Haikou's student population and we really go to face the following cities and counties compared to the level of the level is a big difference, just started to work may produce a great sense of disparity, my classmates and I basically to the time of the induction to go to the formal contact to the rural education, the countryside environment is still a little bit of rejection ". The object of education and teaching



practice has shifted from the city to the countryside, and because of their limited teaching experience, newly-installed rural teachers participating in the training program are unable to make good changes in their mentality and approach to teaching.

## **4. Discussion**

The pre-service education received by rural teachers in Hainan contributes to the post-service development, and the problems that arise in the post-service of teachers can in turn contribute to the development of pre-service education.

### **4.1. Reasons**

In recent years, China's "Rural Revitalization" strategy and Hainan Province's Rural Teacher Orientation and Training Program have provided the conditions for more teachers to move from the cities to the countryside. It has helped to solve the employment problem of publicly funded teacher trainees. The development of Hainan basic education in the countryside to make their own contribution.

In order to improve this education model with local characteristics, the designers need to get real feedback from the actual participants as first-hand modification material, and combine it with the usual teaching feedback to reflect on the process and results of the implementation of the program in a timely manner and modification, so as to make the whole education program can be successfully continued.

### **4.2. Recommendations**

#### **4.2.1. Increase the Class Time Setting of Practical Courses**

Teachers work with natural persons with different characteristics, teaching work is different from the production of goods in factories, and also different from the general scientific research activities, it is often necessary to face different teaching environments and teaching objects and adopt different teaching behaviors [7]. Some less specialized courses can be deleted under the guidance of the ideas of the Ministry of Education and the school documents, and oriented to the actual content of the specific future work focus of the publicly-funded teacher trainees, so as to better pave the way for the cultivation of the new force of local rural teachers in Hainan Province.

#### **4.2.2. Improve the New Rural Teachers' Sense of Identity in the Rural Education Environment**

The author believes that the undergraduate stage of learning should be the current situation of rural education and the difficulties of theoretical learning, and the fourth year during the internship should give students a more diversified choice of schools, encouraging students to go to the countryside in advance to learn about the future work of the school. Taking the U.S. elementary and secondary teacher residency model as an example, teachers are trained to teach and learn using culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). The goal of the model is to motivate teachers to be well-prepared, to respect the cultural backgrounds that students have, to develop culturally responsive teaching methods, and to highlight the strengths and values that are unique to the students and the district as a way of bridging thinking deficits and breaking the cycle of poverty [8]. The cultural background of the schools where the senior students will do their internships should also be taken into account to maximize their cultural responsiveness. Through theoretical learning and pre-service rural school internship experience, publicly-funded teacher trainees will be better prepared for future work as rural teachers.

Rural education is not intrinsically better or worse than urban education. The purpose of educating children in the countryside is to promote local culture by means of education and inheritance, and to promote the equalization of basic education resources. Compulsory rural education is about making children understand, love and identify with the uniqueness and advantages of the countryside, and making full use of this advantage by sowing the seeds of democracy, culture, science, ecology and economy, establishing their self-confidence and making them proud of their modern, idyllic rural education [9].

#### 4.2.3. Pay Attention to Teachers' Lifelong Career Development and Cultivate Educator's Spirit

Based on the results of the interviews, the author believes that the main goal of publicly-funded teacher trainees is not to teach in rural schools, which is not conducive to the formation of a lifelong career development concept for teachers and a long-term mechanism for nurturing teachers in rural schools.

The national "Excellent Teacher Program" policy is centered on the cultivation goal of "Four Good Teachers", with the formation of solid academic knowledge and moral character as the logical starting point, aiming to strengthen the professional identity, local sentiment and internal motivation of future teachers [10]. Under the guidance of the national policy of the "Excellent Teacher Plan", the education department of the local government should carry out regular thematic teaching and research activities in conjunction with local schools. The universities, as the front line of educational research, should also take the corresponding responsibility to actively organize and promote the development of pre-service and post-service training for local teachers, especially for rural teachers, and encourage them to study in the appropriate majors in conjunction with the relevant policies. Combined with the relevant policies, they should encourage in-service teachers to study in-service postgraduate studies in the relevant specialties, so as to improve the teacher strength of local schools, especially in rural areas.

## 5. Conclusion

The study is only a vision of the author as an observer, only in theory puts forward some new views. The real implementation of the government and universities needs to spend a lot of effort to re-study and set up, the implementation of the complete reform of the difficulty has not been realistically estimated.

The theoretical organization and research in this paper can let more people pay attention to the development of local basic education in Hainan, and see the current development of rural teacher training program in Hainan in the development of deficiencies and future feasible development path. The author hopes that the views on the improvement of this program can be inspired, so as to cultivate more and more in line with the local characteristics of the high-quality, want to stay also retained in the rural teachers.

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