

Rational Allocation and Research on Financial Resources for Compulsory Education under the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program"

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Abstract. The "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" is an important means to alleviate the imbalance in educational levels between urban and rural areas and to reduce the financial burden on local governments. Many places have achieved significant improvements in teacher resource scarcity, school site limitations, limited teaching levels, and overall teacher quality. However, they also face new problems such as incomplete salary and welfare benefits for special teachers, significant differences in teaching environments, insufficient funds for teaching equipment, inadequate and incomplete guarantee measures for special teachers, and unfair distribution of funds for various subjects within compulsory education. To further optimize the construction of rural teachers' teams, this paper takes Hubei Province and Hunan Province as examples to analyze the advantages of this policy and the practical problems encountered in its implementation process. It proposes that the funding system and subsidy guarantee for "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" teachers should be optimized, subsidy indicators should be detailed, a pre-job training mechanism for special teachers should be established, and the financial guarantee mechanism for farmers' primary and secondary schools should be improved. A "three-in-one" collaborative cooperation system of schools, localities, and the state should be constructed to better promote the high-quality development of rural compulsory education.

Keywords: Education powerhouse; special teacher placement program; education finance.

1. Introduction

In 2006, the state issued relevant notifications. As of 2024, the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" has been implemented in China for a total of 19 years. Data statistics show that the central government has cumulatively invested nearly 100 billion yuan, sending over 1.1 million university graduates to 1000-plus counties and over 40,000 rural schools (including village primary schools and teaching points) in 22 provinces in the central and western regions, becoming an important channel for supplementing teachers in rural schools [1]. Under the circumstances where the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" is advancing steadily and continuously, it is necessary to review how to rationally balance the allocation of educational financial funds for both the new and old disciplines, and encourage special teachers to shift from a "passive" position of taking up positions to an "active" one of teaching. The "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" policy should be implemented in conjunction with the national education budget and local fiscal investment to jointly build a special teacher assignment education system with a virtuous cycle, and to establish a more comprehensive fiscal budget system for compulsory education. This will provide more research significance for promoting rural education in the context of China's modernization. This article analyzes the distribution methods of funds in various fields of rural compulsory education since the implementation of the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" from the perspective of finance, summarizes the existing problems, and analyzes the more reasonable and efficient operation mode of the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" based on the original intention of educational equity. It also makes prospects for the further development of the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" in the future.

2. The Role of the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program"

2.1. Definition and Key Measures

Rural revitalization is a top priority for China. The original intention of the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" proposed by the state was to alleviate and improve the educational levels in both urban and rural areas and the equity of resources for compulsory education in rural areas. It made significant contributions to solving problems such as the distribution of rural teachers' resources and the balance of rural compulsory education's financial revenue and expenditure, and helped to better address issues such as low job attractiveness, equipment shortages, and manpower deficiencies [2]. One of the important measures of the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" is that the positions have been optimized. In 2014, it was proposed to give priority to meeting the demand for strengthening the teaching staff in rural teaching points and other impoverished areas. In 2015, efforts were intensified to supplement the teaching staff in rural areas of poverty-stricken regions. Secondly, establish an incentive mechanism. For the special position teachers who voluntarily choose to stay and work in rural areas after three years of teaching, they can be directly included in the scope of unified financial distribution. Those who have completed their service period will enjoy certain bonus points compared to other candidates participating in the master's entrance examination. Thirdly, provide financial support. The central government sets up a special fund specifically for the salary expenditures of special position teachers. It conducts actual settlement with local finances and ensures the salaries of rural teachers are properly implemented. At the same time, local subsidies are provided. This is to offer assistance to rural teachers and rural compulsory education [3].

2.2. Function and Positive Impacts

The Special Positioning Teacher Program holds significant importance for improving the teaching standards in rural areas across the country, enhancing the cultural literacy of children, optimizing the structure of the teaching staff, and promoting the overall development of education. For the overall educational development process of the country, the implementation of the Special Position Teacher Program is one of the educational supplementary policies that has lasted the longest, covered the widest range, invested the most resources and exerted the greatest efforts. Since its implementation, with the continuous large-scale supplementation of special position teachers over the years, coupled with factors such as population mobility and the coordinated development of urban-rural integration, the demand for special position teachers in many places has begun to decline. It is shown that the average recruitment completion rate of special position teachers across various regions has reached over 85% in terms of retention rate upon the expiration of their three-year service period [4]. From addressing the limitations and inconveniences in teachers' daily life such as food, clothing, accommodation and transportation, to improving the shortage of teaching equipment and the insufficient start-up funds for educational projects, these measures have greatly alleviated the real predicaments and contemporary challenges faced by rural compulsory education. They have also cultivated a batch of outstanding fresh blood to serve in rural areas for the country. Meanwhile, the Special Position Program meets the diverse teaching demands and teaching contents in rural areas, and focuses on cultivating outstanding talents with balanced development in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics and labor. Various social expansion courses beyond Chinese, mathematics and foreign languages are offered, such as labor and handicrafts, computer science, mental health and other courses, to promote the overall improvement of teaching levels in remote areas. From the perspective of the overall goal of national urban-rural integration, the Special Teacher Assignment Program not only promotes the integration of educational resources between urban and rural areas, but also enhances the interpersonal communication between them [5]. The promotion of educational equity in rural and urban areas of China has been facilitated by the attraction of outstanding talents. This has made significant improvements to the imbalance in development between the eastern and western regions and made important contributions to building a more satisfactory education powerhouse for the people.

3. Issues and Current Situation of the Implementation of the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program"

3.1. Low Attractiveness of the Positions

According to the survey, under the implementation of the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program, there are conditions such as meeting the requirements for a three-year transfer and receiving preferential treatment, which to some extent improve the cost-effectiveness. However, the harsh conditions in rural areas for entry and the fierce competition in cities have led to contradictions in people's decisions to stay or leave. Meanwhile, the focus of local implementation of the "Teacher Special Recruitment Program" still does not favor the development of the lives of Special Teacher Program teachers. The problems such as poor employment environment, remote geographical location and poor teaching quality undoubtedly increase the risk level of the position of special education teachers [6]. Based on the nationwide investigation on the special position teachers, the shortage of training resources is the main reason for the lack of satisfaction. The insufficient teaching equipment, the poor harmony among schools and the unsatisfactory salary levels have become the main reasons for the teachers' negativity. This is tantamount to increasing the economic burden on the special position teachers, thereby causing psychological disparity and leading to their lack of enthusiasm and even career burnout [7].

3.2. The Burden of Local Finance

The implementation of the "Special Teacher Assignment Program" has long occupied a large amount of funds in various aspects such as salary subsidies, teachers' housing, and teaching equipment. To some extent, this has led to the local financial burden. One of the main reasons for the relatively heavy pressure on local finances is the imperfect implementation of macro policies and the relatively slow efficiency of coordination among localities. Financial funds have a significant impact on the improvement of local teaching equipment, the enhancement of material conditions, and the on-the-job rate of rural teachers. In 2024, the work-related subsidy funds for the special position teachers will increase from 35,200 yuan per person to 38,800 yuan per person, and the salary-related subsidy for each teacher will increase by 3,600 yuan per year [8]. This undoubtedly means that the amount of funds needed for education finance will increase significantly. To ensure that the special position teachers receive corresponding treatment, efforts will be made to strengthen the development of teaching equipment, special projects and diverse courses, which will inevitably lead to an increase in the recruitment scale. Correspondingly, the expenditures on staff wages, subsidies and training will also increase.

3.3. Coordination Efficiency among Central Government, Local Governments and Schools

From the perspective of the national level, the welfare subsidies for special position teachers have been gradually increased year by year to promote the integrated development of urban and rural areas. In the central region, the per capita annual subsidy has been raised from 35,200 yuan to 38,800 yuan, while in the western region, it has been raised from 38,200 yuan to 41,800 yuan. Although the total amount of financial support has increased, the differences in the interest demands among regions have been overlooked [9]. From the perspective of local levels, there are differences in the approaches to addressing local issues and the allocation of funds among different regions, which leads to information disparities. That is to say, the central government's understanding of the specific conditions of local education is not clear, and local authorities also fail to promptly and accurately reflect the problems arising from the implementation of the Special Position Teacher Program. The central government's grasp of the distribution of local fiscal funds is far from sufficient. From the perspective of the school level, even if encourage special position teachers to settle in rural areas, it is inevitable that the basic conditions will be weak, the information access will be limited, and the problems of laziness and procrastination will arise [10].

3.4. The Subsidy Procedures

The subsidy policies for the Special Teacher Recruitment Program are usually formulated at the national or provincial level. To ensure fairness, justice and standardized implementation, unified standards and procedures are set, which makes it difficult to fully take into account the specific conditions and individual differences of each region. By comparing the teacher recruitment guidelines of Hubei Province and Hunan Province, Hubei Province proposed that the public funds subsidy should be allocated in a certain proportion based on the number of urban districts, cities, and districts in the provinces, cities and districts where the central and local regions are participating. Hunan Province focuses on the allocation of fixed quotas for the region. When comparing the two provinces, the subsidy quotas in Hubei Province are often determined based on the number of residents in poverty-stricken areas, while in Hunan Province, the fixed subsidy quotas and indicators are clearly defined based on the proportion of the population. Although both provinces have provided relatively complete subsidy measures based on local actual conditions, they have overlooked the variability of population over time and the uncertainty of the number of people. This to some extent, limits the flexibility of the subsidy procedures [11].

4. Improvements to the Special Teacher Placement Program

4.1. Establishing a "Three-in-One" Collaborative Cooperation System at the National, Local and School Levels

From the national perspective, based on the 2024 placement plans of each region and the number of previous year's special teachers in service, the funding ratio and amount can be adjusted accordingly to appropriately allocate relevant funds to address the issue of significant differences in infrastructure between rural and urban areas. At the local level, efforts should be made to conduct synchronized statistics and supervision on teaching environment, teaching quality and teaching satisfaction. Actively respond to national policies, implement compulsory education in all cities and counties, formulate local regulations and salary ratios based on different levels of urban and rural development, and fully coordinate the teaching conditions for special position teachers. Detail the teaching plans and requirements for each county. From the perspective of the school level, it is necessary to ensure the smooth transition of regional regulations, strictly follow the allocated quotas and special funds to carry out teaching projects and formulate student training plans, meet the diverse needs of students, and enrich the teaching contents of different types. With the goal of satisfying both teachers' and students' needs, it should promote the "three-in-one" collaborative cooperation system, which is conducive to promoting balanced development between urban and rural areas, strengthening the rural teacher team, and achieving balanced development of urban and rural compulsory education [2].

4.2. Establishing the Service Guarantee System for Teachers under the Special Position Program

The service guarantee system for teachers under the Special Position Program can be analyzed from the aspects of salary, living security, and family support.

From the perspective of salary, taking the "Central Direct Funding for the Rural Compulsory Education Stage School Teachers' Special Position Program in 2024" issued by the Finance Bureau of Hunan Province as an example, the fixed number of special position teachers' subsidies and the amount of funds for 47 cities and counties are classified to ensure that each city and county meets the indicators of quantity, quality, and efficiency [12]. The process and progress of implementing the "Special Position Program" in each city have been detailed, and the distribution process of subsidy funds has been strictly guaranteed, taking into account the investigation of public satisfaction and the statistics of funds. This has promoted the increase of the number of special position teachers teaching in each city of Hunan Province from a "passive" state to an "active" one.

From the perspective of living security, taking Hunan Province as an example, by comparing the number of teachers and staff in urban and rural compulsory education schools over the past ten years, it is found that the number of teachers and staff has flowed from rural areas to urban areas. The number of teachers and staff in urban and suburban areas is the largest. Although the number of teachers and staff in rural areas has increased again in the past three years, compared with this, the overall trend of teachers and staff is towards urban primary and secondary schools rather than rural ones [13]. Local education funds should be adjusted flexibly according to the length of tenure of rural teachers, teaching quality, etc. The local finance should increase the investment in teaching equipment and refer to the teaching facilities of urban schools to meet the teaching needs of rural primary and secondary schools and improve the teaching quality in rural areas.

In terms of family support, considering the regional disparity, age difference and family income disparity of the teachers assigned to special positions, appropriate subsidies should be provided to the families of these teachers. On the one hand, this can alleviate the problem of low salaries for impoverished teachers and their lack of enthusiasm for remaining in their posts. On the other hand, it can encourage college students to participate in the "Special Teacher Program" more actively. Local impoverished teacher families generally have a large population, are severely aging, have a narrow employment range and backward material conditions. To some extent, this has increased the burden on families and social pressure. Family support can to some extent reduce the pressure of supporting parents or raising children and provide employment motivation for special position teachers. College students generally have less social experience, diverse living expenses and low economic reserves. This system encourages young teachers to go to rural areas for teaching and reduces the burden on young teachers' lives, which to some extent reduces the pressure of employment [14].

4.3. Establishment of Diverse Subject Project Funds

In response to the demand for offering a wider range of subjects under the recruitment plan of the "Special Teacher Position Program", more funds and personnel should be allocated to subjects such as psychology, English, music, and art compared to Chinese and mathematics. On the one hand, this effectively compensates for the shortcomings of subjects by providing funds and personnel for foreign languages, information technology, etc. The special funds for these subjects can complement the strengths of the Chinese and mathematics projects, reducing the shortcomings of subjects caused by insufficient funds. On the other hand, it enriches the types of subjects, meets the diverse needs of students, supplements the comprehensive development quality and learning ability of rural students, and further diversifies the teaching content and teaching methods. Pay attention to the mental health and special education of minority disadvantaged groups, provide better ideological guidance and life support for rural students from these disadvantaged groups, and promote the sustained and healthy development of rural compulsory education in a more comprehensive manner.

5. Conclusion

The core objective of the Special Teacher Assignment Program is to narrow the educational gap between urban and rural areas and establish a more complete and fair rural compulsory education system. By rationally allocating the financial resources for rural compulsory education, on the one hand, it can alleviate the living and employment hardships of special teachers, enhance their sense of happiness and achievement, and achieve significant improvements in optimizing the teaching staff, the rural structure, and the overall quality of teachers. On the other hand, it can better and more efficiently promote the cooperation among the central government, local authorities, and schools for the Special Teacher Assignment Program, bringing more modern, scientific, and reliable educational concepts to rural schools, more efficient educational methods and educational plans, and promoting the development of rural compulsory education.

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