

## Advice on the development of small-scale rural school

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**Abstract:** As an important carrier for the implementation of rural compulsory education and a cornerstone for safeguarding the rights and interests of farmers and addressing the problems of people's livelihood, the development of small-scale rural schools is closely connected with the national strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education and the overall layout of modernization. Also, it also weighs heavily on rural revitalization, the balanced development of urban and rural public service and the stability of the grassroots society. This paper sheds light on what the overall situation of small-scale schools in rural areas is and analyzes the main difficulties that block the development of small-scale schools in rural areas and proposes corresponding suggestions for the development of small-scale schools in rural areas.

### 1. Introduction

“Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening the Construction of Small-Scale Schools and Township Boarding Schools in Rural Areas by the General Office of the State Council “, published by the General Office of the State Council in May 2018, clearly stated that as an important part of rural compulsory education, small-scale rural schools, which means village primary schools with less than 100 people, and township boarding schools (referred to as two types of schools) should be run well, which can be both an important task, a basic requirement and a fruitful measure. By important task, we mean implementing the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education and accelerating the modernization of education; by basic requirement, we mean implementing the strategy of rural revitalization and up gradation the equalization of basic public services in urban and rural areas; by fruitful measure, we mean winning the battle against poverty to build a well-off society in an all-round way.

It is generally accepted that schools with fewer than 100 students are called small-scale schools according to the educational realities in China. According to statistics, the number of small-scale schools is 123,143 as of 2016, of which 108,330 are small-scale rural schools, which means rural areas are home to 87.97% of small-scale schools in China and small-scale schools also account for over 44% of the total number of rural primary schools. The successful implementation of compulsory education in rural areas in China owes much to small-scale rural schools. The high proportion of small-scale schools in rural areas is the realities of rural education in China.

### 2. The realities of small-scale schools in rural areas

(1) Rural areas see small-scale schools everywhere. The evolution of the society drives the emergence and development of small-scale rural schools. In the 1960s, the literacy popularization in rural areas was an important task, making primary school and junior high school in each village. At that time, the number of rural schools reached the record high since the founding of the country. After the reform and opening up, as the strict implementation of the family planning policy, the number of children has decreased, decreasing many village-run primary schools. On the other hand, the number of primary school student climbing the ladder of junior school was not high in the 1980s, which means nearly half of the students found it difficult to enter junior high school for various reasons. Therefore, the grassroots government and education authorities prioritized the development of junior high schools at that time, decelerating the development of rural primary schools.

The government has relaxed urban and rural household registration system in the new century,

greatly draining the rural population. Many children have left rural primary schools for living with their parents or receiving high-quality education in the city. At first, some villages with few people had a small number of students, which gave birth to small-scale schools or contributed to the cancellation of village school; time goes by, some natural villages with a large population and even the administrative villages of the township government resident have witnessed that situation. It is inevitable that social development will bring the decreasing of small-scale schools.

(2) Rural areas see great number of small-scale schools. As mentioned above, China's rural small-scale schools have reached 108,330 as of 2016. The current situation of rural development in China decides the large number of small-scale schools in rural areas. The population density of rural areas in China is relatively low compared with cities, haunted with the outflow of rural population, making only a small number of children in many villages. Therefore, the enrollment scope of rural schools is much larger than that of urban schools. The students in one school may come from several natural villages, which is common in rural areas. That can bring two problems which cannot be avoided. The first is traffic problems, which means that the expansion of the enrollment has brought further distance from school, remote mountainous areas in particular. Although some schools have the school bus and boarding system to facilitate students, they still cannot solve this problem fundamentally. The second is that the expansion of the enrollment scope is essentially in violation of the education policies and regulations in China, resulting security incidents and school disputes, and causing public anger. All that unsolved problems make many rural schools or teaching sites in small scale existing. The large number of small-scale schools in rural areas is a need for the actual situation in rural areas, but also a paralyzed move.

(3). Rural areas see long-term existence of small-scale rural schools. Various factors, especially the imbalance education development between urban and rural make a large number of rural parents try to get their children to study in urban schools. 1979 saw 12% education urbanization rate of China, but 2015 witnessed 73.8%, which is much higher than the population urbanization rate of 56.1%.The higher urbanization rate of education than the urbanization rate of population is quite uncommon according to the theory of social development and the success story of urbanization in developed countries. The rapid advancement of urbanization construction, the reduction of rural schools and the unbalanced urban and rural education can be the reason. With the adjustment of relevant national policies and the implementation of targeted measures, the growth rate of urbanization of education is slowing down, which shows that the layout of urban and rural schools has stabilized and some rural students have already returned. The changes in the birth policy will also increase the rural population, which make decreasing of students number in rural schools halted. It can be seen that small-scale rural schools will exist for quite a long time.

### **3. Major difficulties in the development of small-scale schools**

(1) The backward conditions for running a school. Firstly, the weak infrastructure. In recent years, the renovation project of dilapidated buildings has significantly improved the quality of small-scale school buildings in rural area. The number of classrooms in most schools can meet the actual needs or even have idle classrooms because of the small number of students. However, that is not enough. Many schools lack function rooms, which means music, art, science and other disciplines can only be used in turn, causing insufficient professionalism. Many schools do not have libraries. The smaller schools are, the less libraries will be .What's more, the construction of the playground is also a link that cannot be ignored. It's estimated that nearly one-third of the small-scale primary schools in rural areas lack of outdoor activities for students, and in which schools with activity venues, problems like small playground, no runway, no hardening, etc. are also common. Secondly, the insufficient teaching equipment, which can be shown in the following aspects. Every student is access to a set of Tables and chairs , but the quality of Tables and chairs differentiates, which means many Tables and chairs can not meet the national “school desk and chair functional size” standard, and many schools have different Tables and chairs for each student in the same class with high damage rate. Another is about teaching equipment. Small-scale schools in rural areas all find themselves equipped with backward and insufficient teaching

equipment. Although some schools can receive social donations or corporate sponsorship, but many of which do not meet the actual needs of school teaching, resulting in a large amount of idleness; on the other hand, small-scale rural schools lack funds and professionals to repair teaching equipment, resulting in aging equipment. Lighting and heating are also big problem. The lighting design of many time-enduring small-scale schools is not reasonable, especially in remote rural areas, power failure are more common. Lack of lighting greatly disables the development of education and teaching. And in the northern part of China, coal-to-gas has been fully rolled out in rural areas because of the environmental protection measures. Many schools have changed from boiler heating to electric heating in winter, which can be affected by rural power supply, causing unsatisfied heating. As number of rural small-scale school buildings are old, the function of sealing and keeping warm works bad, which further aggravates that problem.

(2) Weak faculty pool. Firstly, insufficient teachers. It is estimated that there are only about 67% of small-scale primary schools in the country can meet the standard of 1 to 23 ratio of students to teachers, which means nearly one-third of schools fail to meet the standards. Secondly, the huge mobility of teachers. Most teachers feel reluctant to teach in rural schools because of the poor conditions and low income of rural schools. Many small-scale schools are home to in-service teachers, special-post teachers and helped-teaching teachers, among which the proportion of special-post teachers is high. Most of them are younger and they often apply for urban teachers while working, which means they are likely to leave at any time. Or even if they have completed the service time in rural schools, once they become officially, most of them will choose a better school. The irrational mix of teachers. On the one hand, there is a trend of teachers aging in rural small-scale schools, and a huge gap exist between different ages. On the other hand, some teachers with higher professional qualities such as phonological beauty are in great need, making many rural small scale schools only have mathematics, Chinese, English and other main courses, leaving great potential in sub-teaching.

In addition, rural small-scale schools without independent legal person qualification are managed by township central school. They are subject to the central school in terms of funding, staffing, and performance appraisal, causing lack of autonomy in the development of school construction and less targeted measures. That is also an important reason that restricts the development of small-scale schools.

#### **4. Suggestions on the development of small-scale schools in rural areas**

(1) We will research and set criteria for conditions of small-scale schools in operation of rural areas. The standard for small-scale schools is more effective to provide institutional guarantee for the development of small-scale schools in rural areas. The established standards should take the safety of teachers and students and the quality of teaching as the primary task. It should also fully integrate the actual condition of local economic and social development and educational demands. Besides, it ought to pay attention to the pragmatic use and proper advancement. Such approaches are to make the base for infrastructure construction, establishment of teaching equipment and supporting facilities of small-scale rural schools. At the same time, the grass-roots government and the education departments in charge should establish corresponding supervision and accountability mechanism according to the standards. It is supposed to ensure the implementation of the standards, improve the attitude of the employers and assure the standard set for the performance of the government.

(2) Attention should be paid to the building of teaching staff in small-scale rural schools. Strengthening the building of teaching staff is the key to promote the development of small-scale schools in rural areas. First, under the guide of the government, colleges and universities carry out directional training, aiming at the actual demands for teachers of small-scale schools in rural areas. And they should train more local and multi-disciplinary teaching talents to enrich the teaching staff of small-scale schools in rural areas. Second, we should improve the wages and benefits of teachers in small-scale rural schools. National and local subsidy policies should be fully implemented for rural teachers. Rural teachers should be given a certain degree of preference in terms of wages, titles

and living conditions, so as to enhance the attraction of rural schools for teachers, and at the same time enhance the professional recognition of rural teachers.

(3) Reasonable utilization of social service resources in rural areas. Due to the insufficient economic development in most rural areas and the limited investment and support of local governments in schools, small-scale rural schools should give full play to their location advantages and actively promote the development of schools with the help of local social service institutions. Such as opening the school playground on holidays to facilitate villagers' activities and to draw near the relationship within the village; establishing a mutual aid mechanism between the school and the village. The village assists the school in repairing, cleaning and other duties. The schools cooperate with the village security department and the health department, to share the work of school safety, epidemic prevention and health care, and to reduce the cost of school operation.

(4) Improve the autonomy of small-scale schools in rural areas. We should rationally optimize the current system of overall management of small-scale rural schools by local central schools, reduce the red tape of management, and improve the autonomy of small-scale rural schools. Particularly in the use of funds, the characteristics of school operation, and the organization of activities, we should respect the wishes of small-scale school personnel, fully mobilize their enthusiasm and initiative in work, and improve the efficiency and timeliness of work.

The development of small-scale rural schools largely determines the quality of rural education, which has a profound and long-term influence. The development of such schools is an important subject worthy of enduring study. We need to constantly renew our thinking and explore new models and methods in practice in order to get better blueprints and make greater contributions to promoting the balanced development of high-quality education in China.

## References

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