

Research on the Construction of “Tutorial System” in Rural Teacher Support Service System: Based on the Practice of Bijie and Anshun in Guizhou Province

LUO Junbing^{[a],*}

^[a]Southwestern Ethnic Education and Psychology Research Center, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

Received 20 January 2015; accepted 18 March 2015

Published online 26 April 2015

Abstract

Rural teacher support service system has provided an effective way to promote the professional development of teachers in rural areas. The core of rural teacher support service system is the construction of the “tutorial system”. Based on the analysis of the needs of rural teacher support service system and the construction practice of “tutorial system” in rural teacher support service system, this study tries to promote the construction of “tutoring system” in rural teacher support service system from the aspects of the selection of the tutor team, the training of the tutor team and the ongoing support for the tutor team and others

Key words: Rural teacher, Support service system, Tutoring system

Luo, J. B. (2015). Research on the Construction of “Tutorial System” in Rural Teacher Support Service System: Based on the Practice of Bijie and Anshun in Guizhou Province. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 8(4), 90-94. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/6724> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/6724>

INTRODUCTION

Currently the literacy improvement for teachers of primary and secondary schools after they enter the industry is mainly short-term full-time teacher training and academic education, but in the actual teaching and in many researchers’ study, it is found that the result of the two methods is not very satisfactory, and especially in the capacity, there is no substantial increase. In order to adapt to the new situation of China’s economic transformation

and development of education, to promote the professional growth of teachers and protect students’ overall development, in 2008, China-UNICEF teacher training project proposed to establish a county-based teacher support service system based on “tutoring system”. The project attempts to combine the international construction experience of “tutoring system” and the current situation of education in China and establish a rural teacher support service system suitable for China with “tutoring system” as the core to promote reasonable effective training for China’s primary and secondary school teachers in rural areas and promote rural primary and secondary school teachers’ professional development. On this basis, the research summarizes the saturation of the “teacher support service system — tutoring system” in international and domestic projects and the teacher training situation in Guizhou Province, explores new practices in rural teacher training mode — tutorial system in Guizhou Province and conduct localization research on “teacher support service system” to provide realistic experience for the sustained and effective reform of teacher training models in Guizhou and provide new ideas and methods for teacher training in “the twelfth five-year plan” in Guizhou so as to provide practical basis for quality improvement of trainers in the future teacher training in Guizhou Province.

1. THE SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Rural teacher support service system means to provide continuous professional guidance and assistance to teachers in rural areas to promote the professional development of teachers in rural areas so as to improve the quality of education for children. The core of teacher support service system is the construction of the tutor team. “Tutors” in the rural teacher support service system are professionals picked out who are more experienced and glad to help others and have a high quality in the

physical and mental aspects and they are the instructor of the professional development of rural teachers. Tutors in rural teacher support service include three levels, namely provincial tutor team, county-level tutor team and township-level tutor team, the focus of which is the construction of the township-level tutor team selected from schools from this town. This is also the research focus. Of course, the role of provincial and county level tutor teams cannot be ignored and they are important support for the growth of township-level tutor teams.

2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

2.1 The Need of Basic Education Curriculum Reform in China

The stock of knowledge, education creed, and teaching skills of frontline teachers directly affect the effectiveness of education and teaching activities; therefore in order to conduct basic education reform and improve the quality of education, literacy improvement of teachers is an important prerequisite. Only when teachers can be developed and improved can they really bring a good education to all children.

New curriculum reform of basic education in China has put forward new and higher requirements for rural school teachers, but due to the influence of various factors, compared to that in urban areas, there is still a wide gap for the quality of teachers in rural areas. It is difficult for the rural primary and secondary school teachers' quality to meet the needs of basic education curriculum reform. Therefore, how to improve the quality of rural teachers and promote rural teachers' professional development has become the key to promoting the development of China's basic education and improving the education and teaching quality in rural areas.

2.2 Reflection of the Experience of International Projects

"The Construction of Teacher Support Service System — 'Tutorial System'" is one of the important research and practice fields of China — UNICEF teacher training sub project. Based on this model, the implementation of 10 provinces (autonomous regions) including Guizhou, Yunnan, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Sichuan, Guangxi and Gansu, Ningxia, Tibet and etc. has accumulated rich experience and has become one of the model that the Ministry of Education Teacher Training Division actively promotes to improve the ability of the trainer team and the construction of mechanism in provinces (autonomous regions). Yinjiang County in Guizhou Province is in the field of project counties. From 2008 to the present, it has carried out this model for nearly four years and has accumulated some experience; at the same time, the Second Output of Basic Education of Sino-British

Project in the Southwest - teacher training field is also actively carrying out the construction of teacher support service system, which aims to establish the township teacher support service system in Sino-British projects in Guizhou so that the township level assumes important responsibilities in the support of teacher development.

In Sino-British Basic Education Projects in the Southwest, although the project counties have established Township Learning Resource Center, played a certain function, and achieved certain results, how much do these centers play their function? Are teachers at the Township Learning Resource Centers capable of the work of "trainers"? Have they established long-term mechanism? Is the operation effective? What results have they achieved? All these questions need to be studied and verified.

2.3 The Construction of Rural Teacher Support Service System Is the Real Need for Teacher Training in Rural Areas in Guizhou Province

In the "eleventh five-year plan", Guizhou Province has taken greater efforts to strengthen the improvement of the quality of rural teachers, effectively improved the education and teaching level of rural teachers and effectively improved the quality of education in rural areas. However, through the teacher training in the "eleventh five-year plan" period, we have also found that if we expect the quality of teacher training is effective, then for the ideas or methods that the frontline teachers need to accept in the training, we need to reach an agreement between the provincial, municipal (regional) and county level education management staff or research staff and frontline teachers, which requires the establishment of teacher support service system to effectively implement the effective integration of the province, city, county and school.

Reviewing the teacher training in rural areas during the "eleventh five-year plan", according to the author's study and understanding, he finds that basically after the training they are rarely sustained assistance measures. This makes the future teacher training take the pattern combining training base training and school-site guidance. The on-site guidance on how to put the concept or teaching methods of training into real teaching is particularly more welcomed by teachers. However, this presents a challenge for the training tutors in the quantity and quality – do we have so many teachers to work in this area? Specifically how do we carry it out? How do we guarantee the quality of these teachers? Its essence is tutorial system that we want to propose – a system in which we train tutors and put the tutors' focus on the on-site guidance to frontline teachers.

2.4 Based on the Reflection of the Needs of Teacher Training in Yina in Weining County

In the special aid for Weining that Guizhou Provincial Department of Education has carried out, they have conducted a special training in ethics, language, mathematics and other subjects for all teachers in Yina. In

the survey of training needs, more than 80% of teachers agree that there are certain effects in short-term intensive training, but it is quite difficult for most teachers to turn the effect of training to real changes in classroom and provide students with benefits. They think if there are continuous follow-up measures after the training, the training effect will be of a continuing nature and timeliness.

We also find some views of teachers on the current basic education in rural areas through the special ethics research. For example, up to 84.48% of the teachers fall into despair about education prospects in the future in rural areas; about 90% of the teachers look forward to better teaching methods, measures and other urgent demands, which allows researchers to see the numerous constraints affecting the quality of education. Can these factors be changed by one or several trainings? What kind of model of training can make teacher training has sustained effective improvement? Especially after Guizhou Provincial Department of Education Director Huo Jiankang read about the ethics investigation report of Weining, he gave the instructions “to carry out action research on the construction of teacher support service system”, which prompted the in-depth thinking about the existing teacher training models and methods.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE NEEDS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF RURAL TEACHER SUPPORT SERVICE SYSTEM

The continuing education of primary and secondary school teachers in China has drawn more and more attention. All kinds of levels of teaching training for primary and secondary school teachers are also increasing. However, by summarizing the actual situation of teacher training and field research, we find that currently there are still many problems and deficiencies in primary and secondary teacher training practices.

3.1 Teachers Do Not Have the Enthusiasm and Initiative to Participate in the Training

First, teachers do not fully recognize the importance of training. Teachers often think they have received higher teacher education, are fully qualified teachers and do not need any other education or training, and even if they participate in the training it would not be of much help; therefore, when they attend training, they tend to take the attitude of coping with it and they do not actively participate in the training; second, due to a variety of practical difficulties in the work and life, teachers are not willing to attend training. In training practice and research we learn that there is a serious lack of teachers in rural areas. Teachers undertake a heavy teaching task, and some schools even have the phenomenon of one teacher teaching all the subjects of a class. It is difficult to take time to participate in training. Even when they

go out for training, they have to make up their own class for the delay during the training session when they go back, which makes teachers feel very tired and they are not willing to participate in training; in addition, some teachers are in the profession slack state. They are satisfied with the existing state of affair and reluctant to move forward, lack the ideal and motivation to pursue a higher level of development, nor interested in participating in any training.

3.2 The Design of Training Process Is Unreasonable

On the one hand, the content of training is “heavy on theory and light on practice”. Many trainings are to teach knowledge-based theories and universal and common knowledge of education and teaching. They rarely deepen into the participants’ education and teaching practice, making participants feel the training is very far away from their teaching practice and it lacks guidance to their education and teaching, thus affecting the effectiveness of training. On the other hand, the training way is “heavy on lecturing and light on experience”. Current training generally is about classroom lecturing. Usually the training experts lecture in the front and the participating teachers sit listening below. There are little communication and interaction between experts and participants. Even in experimental, hands-on operational lessons, it is also the same that experts themselves are in the front or through multimedia to do presentations. At most they might let a few participants help demonstrate. There is a general lack of experience of activities or exchange in the training. In addition, whether the training content or the training way, they are not targeted. They are neither targeted to education and teaching practice, nor targeted to the practice of participants. They are not based on the ability of teachers to design different levels or different modules of training content or use different training ways.

3.3 The Training Is Short, the Teacher Teaching Lacks Continuing Effects and Guidance After the Training

A grassroots teacher said in the interview that, “when we come back from the teacher training, we cannot feel the changes. Even if you have some thoughts, it is difficult to motivate the students. Some teachers try to use new methods, but the effect is not good. There is nobody to guide the new methods. There is no parental support as well. It is hard to carry out activities.” In general, after the teacher training, there is a lack of subsequent tracking guidance. When teachers are confused when they use the knowledge from the teacher training, they cannot get a good solution, affecting the effectiveness of training, thereby also affecting the growth of teachers.

3.4 The Organization and Management of Teacher Training Is Out of Order

First, for the selection of teachers, there are no certain reasonable criteria. There are occasions that for the same

type of training, some teachers have taken part in for several times, but those teachers who really need such training never get the chance to participate in the training. Some teachers who participate in the training say that they come to the training just because they are teachers for the graduating class. The school has told them that the training is as welfare giving them and let them have a chance to go out for sight-seeing and so on. Second, during the training, there are no incentives for participants. During the training, the participants in the training are often come and go as they wish. During the class, experts concentrate on their lecturing, while participants randomly chat or answer phones. These training units are lack of strict management system. Even if their misconduct has been recorded, eventually there will be no solution to it and finally they all can get the training completion certificate.

4. THE CONSTRUCTION PRACTICE OF “TUTORING SYSTEM” IN RURAL TEACHER SUPPORT SERVICE SYSTEM

The core of the construction of rural teacher support service system is the construction of the tutor team, and its focus is the construction of the tutor team from villages and towns selected by the schools, specifically including the selection, training and practice of township tutor team and the continuing support of provincial, county tutor team to the township tutor team.

4.1 The Selection of the Tutor Team

The construction of the tutor team in the construction of teacher support service system first is the selection of a high-quality tutor team, which is the basis of the construction of the “tutoring system” in rural teacher support service system. The selection of tutors should comprehensively consider their physical condition, knowledge, ability and responsible sense and many other quality requirements in accordance with certain procedures to select them. In principle, the township tutor team should be no more than 30 people. Schools in the town select the tutor team according to the needs of the schools to consist of the team. The selection of tutors takes the way of bottom-up recommended registration, according to *Tutor Selection Criteria* to determine tutor candidates to combine intensive training and on-site guidance together. First, 80 or so innovative and energetic young teachers who respect, understand and care students and are of team spirit and of research potential are selected as tutor reserve team. After twice or three times centralized trainings, ultimately about 30 tutors are determined. We continue to develop them into qualified tutors and eventually identify them as formal tutors. The appointment of tutors will be performed by the administrative department of education. The administrative department of education will offer them with the appointment certificate and develop ongoing

training mechanism, and consider their corresponding economic benefits. The tutor team in each school should pay attention to the various disciplines and the proportion of male and female tutors. Each school should start from the actual situation of the school to fully meet the needs of various teachers’ learning and development. In addition, all schools should appoint a person responsible for managing the tutor team, give recognition and some policy preferential for the labor that tutors have made and reward outstanding tutors in order to maintain a stable tutor team.

4.2 The Training of the Tutor Team

As a qualified tutor, one must have the skills that a tutor should have, such as analysis skills, the skills to collect and recommend resources, cooperation and communication skills, skills to organize training, the skills to make plans and time management, the skills to supervise and evaluate the development of teachers, the skill to observe classroom and listen to a class, and the skill to build a learning community for teachers and so on. Based on those skills, provincial and county tutor team has respectively carried out on-site training and guidance for the township tutor team of Xinchang in Xixiu District and Yina in Weining County. The training for these skills of tutors have gone throughout several theme trainings such as “teach teachers how to listen to observe and comment on a class, how to tell a class, how to implement effective participatory teaching, how to effectively conduct classroom teaching instructional activities, how to carry out class observation training activities, and how a tutor makes plans for action” and so on. Of course, in addition to these field skill trainings, the project team also conducted training to the selected tutors, principles and people in charge Xinchang in Xixiu District and Yina in Weining County about the selection, management and evaluation of tutors, the work processes and responsibilities of tutors, the evaluation of tutors, and tutor development planning and other areas (or send provincial experts to the field or organize them into Guizhou Teacher Education School for training).

In real training and guidance, it is found that in education and teaching practice and the guidance to other teachers, there are some problems and as tutors they lack some required skills. For example, in the skill training of class observation and evaluation, it is found that in the observation and evaluation of teachers, there are the following problems: First, the observing and evaluating tutors comment on the lessons with the attitude to find problems. Some teachers believe that “observation and evaluation are to pick the bones in the egg and only in this way can we promote the growth teachers and the observation and evaluation makes sense.” When the observing and evaluating tutors have the attitude to “prick”, it may cause that the class that the teacher carefully prepares or the most satisfying places are

ignored. Finally, the observation and evaluation activities have become the “struggle sessions”. Teachers who give the lesson always stand in the position to be hurt, which could blow the self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation of teachers. Second, the observation and evaluation tutors’ comments are not specific and rigorous. For example, when a tutor provides comments on a Chinese teacher’s class, he says: “The teacher stressed the importance of raising questions, which cultivates students’ ability to think independently.” Is the teacher’s questioning valid? Does the question cause students think independently? Can students’ ability to think independently be cultivated only by asking questions? These are the questions to be explored. In another example, an observing and evaluating teacher says, “From the whole class, we can see that the teacher’s language skills are excellent.” However, what details do the language skills of the teacher show in the classroom? We do not know. Such observation and evaluation have not been fully discovered the advantages of teachers. There is no help for teachers to solve the education problems and the professional development of teachers. Third, there is no established equal secure class observation atmosphere. In the provincial expert’s on-site model lesson, in the observation and evaluation process, some teachers do not point out the shortcomings, and in order to point out the shortcomings, some teachers say a lot of good things to pave the way for the subsequent comments and opinions and then they even apologize for that. Fourth, there are no constructive suggestions. In observation and evaluation process, observing and evaluating teachers indicate problems from all angles, but they rarely clearly indicate how to improve. For example, in the evaluation of a mathematics teacher’s class, a researcher says: “I think in higher grades, the knowledge can be further deepened.” So, knowledge should be deep to what extent? He does not tell them. It is also through on-site training and guidance and the actual scenes and interaction of teachers and students, we find problems and deficiencies that exist in practice in teaching practice and mentoring other teachers, and then the provincial and county tutor teams can provide further on-site guidance for township tutor teams to effectively promote the growth of the township tutor teams.

4.3 To Continue to Support the Tutor Team to Carry Out Regular Work

In the construction of rural teacher support service system, after the provincial, county tutor team has finished the intensive on-site training and guidance to township-level tutors, township-level tutors should put the acquired knowledge and skills in training into practice to enable rural teacher support services to be carried out regularly, and thus help and guide other teachers and promote the growth of other teachers. Selected tutors should actively get involved in activities and have strict demands on themselves using the standard for tutors, in accordance

with the training requirements of the provincial experts to consciously take the initiative to improve themselves and to promote their professional development. In addition, in the leading guidance and help of tutors, other teachers are in continuous development and progress; their educational philosophy has changed; teaching methods are updated; they are also actively and initiatively seeking self-development, establish their own career development objectives, and make their own career development plan. Of course, in the course of carry out the work, the township-level tutors will experience some confusion, which requires provincial, county tutors continue to support, guide and assist them, particularly by way of E-mail, QQ and other means of communication to establish a long relationship with the township tutors to provide them with ongoing technical support and guidance.

CONCLUSION

The construction of “tutorial system” in rural teacher support service system is carried out mainly from the aspects of tutor team selection, tutor team training and ongoing support and so on. The selection of the tutor team is to select a number of major high-quality tutors to form the team, which is the basis of the construction of “tutorial system”; the training of the tutor team refers to the necessary skill training such as “analysis of teachers’ needs”, “cooperation and communication” and other skills that tutors should have to carry out the work, which is the main part of the construction of “tutorial system”; continued support to the tutor team means continuously helping with the problems that the tutor team encounters when they guide other teachers so the team can regularly guide and help other teachers and promote the growth of other teachers, which is the protection of the construction of “tutorial system”.

REFERENCES

- Li, Z. L. (2009). The construction of teacher support service system and rural school improvement. *Modern Education and Culture*, (4).
- Lu, D. S., & Nima, B. (2008). On the construction of the teacher training system in western rural areas. *Chinese Society of Education*, (5).
- Ma, L. Y., & Wang, J. Y. (2009). Problems and proposals for teacher training in northwest — From the perspective of the construction of “county teacher support service system”. *Ethnic Education Research*, (2).
- Ran, Y. M. (2009). New opinions on the construction of ethnic teachers’ title service system (tutorial system) in rural areas. *Guizhou Ethnic Education*, (3).
- Zheng, X. R., & Tu, Y. L., et al. (2008). To promote the professional development of teachers in rural areas by “tutorial system” — Experience and implications from Romania. *Chinese Teachers*, (12).