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## TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAM IN RURAL CHINA: TOWARDS A PLAN OF ACTION

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**Abstract:** In this paper, the data will be analyzed and discussed through literature survey, combined with the questionnaire and interview of all primary school teachers in Shuangyi. In order to get the problems and solutions of rural primary school teachers' motivation at a certain level. This paper discusses the two factor theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, etc., and makes a preliminary study on the evaluation of the incentive policy for rural primary school teachers in the study area, the extent of the implementation of the incentive policy, the challenges encountered, and the solutions to the problems. After analysis, the corresponding plans are proposed mainly from the aspects of the implementation of incentive policies, increasing salaries, increasing allowances for working primary school teachers in remote areas, strengthening teacher training, optimizing career planning channels, etc., so as to improve the work enthusiasm of rural primary school teachers and improve teaching quality.

**Key words:** rural primary school teachers; excitement; Evaluation and analysis; Optimize incentives

### I. INTRODUCTION

The development of a country is inseparable from education, and the development of education is inseparable from teachers. Teachers are the foundation and source of education. Education is the foundation of a society, and teachers are the key to this foundation. Incentive, as an important means of human resource management, can effectively improve the enthusiasm and creativity of employees and have a long-term impact on the realization of goals (Offorma, 2016).

Therefore, the research on teacher incentive is in line with the development trend of today's society. As the development of today's society gradually tends to urbanization, the gap between urban and rural areas is gradually opened, which leads to some problems and contradictions in the human resource management of rural primary school teachers. There are three obvious points.

First, there is a gap in the salary of rural primary school teachers compared with urban teachers. For rural teachers, the existence of the above problems makes their enthusiasm and initiative unable to be mobilized (Sun et al., 2015). The second is closely related to the imperfect incentive mechanism at this stage, which is reflected in the insufficient attention to the needs of teachers, which is the main reason for the obvious job burnout of rural primary school teachers. If we still use the same incentive strategy on the issue of teacher incentive, do not distinguish between urban and rural areas, and ignore the different needs of rural teachers, which is a special group, it will directly affect the enthusiasm and enthusiasm of work (Afridi et al., 2015). Third, there is still an obvious gap between rural and urban areas in their own development opportunities, and the rising channel is narrow. Therefore, various studies related to this will help to solve various problems at this stage and put forward the effectiveness and pertinence of various incentive and management strategies, which is one of the important problems faced by the management of rural primary school teachers (Hallinger & Liu, 2016).

To sum up, this paper selects rural teachers as the research object, and will put forward effective strategies for the problems existing in their teacher incentive, which has certain theoretical and practical significance.

This paper will mainly investigate and understand the incentive policy for rural teachers through the methods of literature, questionnaire and interview, without directly conducting a qualitative research on the current incentive policy. It makes statistical analysis on the results, so as to simply judge whether the incentive policy is practical and effective, and puts forward some opinions and suggestions on improving the incentive policy according to the survey results.

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RELATED STUDIES

In teaching management, incentive is an important part of building a scientific and reasonable teacher human resource management mechanism. Effective incentives can drive teachers' work motivation, fully reflect teachers' subject status and sense of ownership, mobilize their enthusiasm and initiative, and greatly improve their sense of happiness.

Hierarchy theory is needed. Maslow divides human needs into five categories, from lower level to higher level, followed by physiology, safety, belonging and love, respect and self realization. When people's lower level needs are guaranteed, they naturally hope that their higher-level needs will be met, especially those belonging to love, respect and self realization. It can be said that it is one of the most typical incentive theories (Fallatah & Syed, 2018).

The basic theory of fairness was pointed out by American psychologist Adams in the production process. When people's pay and return are equal, they will have a sense of fairness, so as to stimulate the behavior of the parties. Research on teacher incentive factors Smith and Ingersoll found through research and analysis that the turnover rate of teachers in schools with underdeveloped

social background and economic conditions is much higher than that in other schools. It is concluded that the nature of school is also one of the factors affecting teachers' motivation (Gulosino et al., 2016).

The ongoing teacher shortage in China's rural schools has become a major concern threatening the balanced growth of rural basic education. Liu et al., (2022) use a qualitative research approach to attend the field research site and live with rural primary school teachers. A huge number of first-hand materials were collected after a one-year field research, and the interview findings were processed and analyzed using NvivoT11 software. According to the findings, the main reason of the scarcity of young teachers in rural schools is not a lack of educational human resources, but rather a social spillover problem created by the demands of professional role adjustment and professional role transformation in rural schools. Notably, they discovered that the nature of long-term shortage from teachers' self-professional role transformation of knowledge, competence, and emotional conflicts by evaluating the lack of rural school teachers. To that aim, we propose, from the perspective of a person's overall life development, a strategy to completely eliminate the long-term challenge, not via the passivity of proper education human resource injection. However, poverty may be eradicated via the good self-professional competence of rural schoolteachers. This notion not only helps to reduce the continuous poverty of subject instructors in rural schools, but it also sets better standards for human development and progress.

Faced with tough competition in the global marketplace, China has achieved amazing economic successes and established itself as an essential player in the global economy. However, the economic divide between rural and urban China is expanding, leading to educational disparity. Rural education in China is still plagued by financial shortages, teacher shortages, poor teacher quality, uneven teacher distribution, and other issues as a result of severe economic disparities and stark educational inequities between rural and urban areas. To address these challenges, the Chinese government has developed a large-scale volunteer teaching program for college students to promote rural education. However, as more college students participate in the volunteer teaching program, the outcomes are erratic. Despite widespread public concern about the volunteer teaching program, no one had truly focused on it or really analyzed its virtues and faults. It remains to be seen if this represents an opportunity or a threat to rural education. Liu (2015)'s research sought to analyze the rural China short-term volunteer teaching program in Henan Province. In the international setting, certain organizations and governments also ran a large number of volunteer teaching initiatives, with varying degrees of success. By evaluating volunteer teaching in the worldwide context as well as the short-term volunteer teaching program in China, it is clear that greater emphasis should be placed on the role and efficacy of short-term volunteer teaching. It is hoped that this study would have some ramifications for future research on this issue.

### III. Research Design

This paper adopts quantitative research design, mainly using three survey methods: literature, questionnaire and interview survey to investigate and understand the satisfaction of rural teachers with the existing incentive policy, the demand for the incentive field and the current teaching management level, deduce the existing problems and improvement direction of the incentive policy, and provide help for Managers' decision-making. This study is aimed at the rural teachers in Shuangyi District, Yibin City, Sichuan province in China.

### IV. Research Instrument

The study will develop an instrument to satisfy the data that needed to be accomplished. The plan is to divide the parts into three. The first will comprise of the teacher incentive program evaluation in the rural areas of China. The second part will be focused on the extent of its implementation. Lastly, it will seek to find out the challenges met in the implementation of the teacher incentive program.

The contents of the first two parts of the questionnaire will be based on teachers law of the people's republic of China (adopted at the 4th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Eighth National People's Congress and promulgated by Order No.15 of the President of the People's Republic of China).

The challenges experienced by rural teachers will be well captured in the research by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and will be made as a questionnaire (Heeralal, 2014) .

The questions will be subjected for validation of three experts and the suggestions will be integrated. The following are the qualifications of the validators: the first is a school administrator, the second is a rural teacher for 10 years, and the last is a language expert.

## V. Results And Discussion

### 5.1 Result

Table 1

- 5 Extremely relevant  
4 Relevant  
3 Neutral  
2 Irrelevant  
1 Extremely irrelevant

TEACHER'S RIGHTS	AVERAGE SCORE
Teachers shall enjoy the conduct of educational and teaching activities and carry out reform and experiment in education and teaching	3.6
Teachers shall enjoy their engagement in scientific research and academic exchanges, join professional academic societies and fully express their views in academic activities	4.2
Teachers shall enjoy giving guidance to students in their studies and development and evaluate students' conduct and academic achievements	4.6
Teachers shall enjoy obtaining salaries and remunerations on schedule and enjoy the welfare benefits prescribed by the State and the leave with pay in winter and summer vacations	4.9
Teachers shall enjoy putting forward opinions and suggestions regarding education, teaching, management of schools and the work of the administrative departments of education; and to participate in the democratic management of schools through congresses of teachers, staff, and workers, or through other forms	3.3
Teachers shall enjoy taking refresher courses or other forms of training	4.1
Teachers have sufficient channels to put forward opinions and suggestions on the current educational policies, and will receive feedback	2.9
TEACHER'S EMPLOYMENT	5
Graduates of normal schools at various levels shall be engaged in education and teaching in accordance with the relevant provisions of the State.	4.6
The State shall encourage graduates of non-normal schools of higher learning to teach at primary and secondary schools or vocational schools.	4.3
The State shall institute a system of professional titles for teachers.	4.9
Appointment of teachers shall be based on the principle of equality between the school and the teachers.	3
TEACHER'S CULTIVATION AND TRAINING	5
Students of normal schools at various levels shall enjoy professional scholarships.	4.8
The administrative departments of education under the people's governments at various levels, the departments in charge of school affairs and the schools shall work out teachers' training programs and conduct various forms of ideological, political and professional training among teachers.	3.9
State organs, enterprises, institutions and other social organizations shall provide convenience and assistance to teachers in their social investigation and social practice.	3.3
People's governments at various levels shall adopt measures to cultivate and train teachers for regions inhabited by national minorities and for outlying and poverty-stricken areas.	4.5
TEACHER'S MATERIAL BENEFITS	5
Teachers' average salary shall not be lower or shall be higher than that of State public servants and shall be gradually raised. A regular system for promotion and pay rise shall be established, and the specific measures therefor shall be formulated by the State Council.	3.8
Teachers of primary and secondary schools and vocational schools shall enjoy allowances commensurate with the length of their teaching and other allowances, and the specific measures therefor shall be formulated by the administrative department of education under the State Council in conjunction with the departments concerned.	3.3
Teachers shall enjoy equal treatment in medical care as the State public servants in the localities.	4.8
After retirement or quitting work, teachers shall enjoy the material benefits as prescribed by the State.	4.7
TEACHER'S REWARDS	5
Teachers who have achieved excellent results in education and teaching, in the training of personnel, and in scientific research, educational reform, school development, social services and work-study programs shall be commended and awarded	3.7
Teachers who have made major contributions shall be conferred honorary titles in accordance with relevant provisions of the State.	4.2
TEACHER'S LEGAL PROTECTION	5
Anyone who insults or assaults a teacher shall be given an administrative sanction or penalty depending on the different circumstances	4.9
Anyone who retaliates against the teachers who have made complaints, charges against or exposures of, any organization or individual in accordance with the law shall be ordered by his or her unit or by the authorities at a higher level to make a rectification	4.7

Table 2

- 1 – Never true  
 2 – Rarely true  
 3 – Neutral  
 4 – Usually true  
 5 – Always true

EXTENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAM	
MATERIAL DEMANDS	AVERAGE SCORE
Local people's government grants subsidies to teachers and graduates from schools who engage themselves in education and teaching in regions inhabited by national minorities or in outlying and poverty-stricken areas.	3.6
Local people's government gives priority and preferential treatment to the construction, renting and sale of houses for teachers in urban areas.	4.2
People's government at the county and township level provides conveniences for primary and secondary school teachers in rural areas in solving the housing problems.	3.6
Medical institutions provide conveniences in medical care for teachers in the locality.	4.5
Teachers enjoy rest and recuperation holidays arranged in the light of local conditions.	4.7
Local people's government appropriately raise the ratio of pensions for the retired primary and secondary school teachers who have long been engaged in education and teaching.	3.3
<b>SUPPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>5</b>
Provide educational and teaching facilities and equipment that are up to the safety standards set by the State	4.7
Provide necessary books, reference materials and other articles for education and teaching	4.8
Encourage and help teachers in their creative work in education, teaching and scientific research	3.7
Back up teachers in their efforts to stop acts that are harmful to students and other acts that encroach upon students' legitimate rights and interests.	4.9
<b>ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNITION</b>	<b>5</b>
Teachers who have made outstanding contributions shall be commended and awarded by the State Council, the local people's governments at various levels and the relevant departments under them.	3.9
Local people's government and school encourage and support social organizations and individuals to donate money to foundations established according to law for awarding teachers.	3.5
September 10 of each year is designated as Teachers' Day celebration.	4.9
<b>PERSONAL NEEDS</b>	<b>5</b>
Enough time spent with the family	3.3
Courage to voice out sentiments	3.8
Programs for emotional and mental health	4.2
Once had the idea of rechoosing a job	3.2

Table 3

- 1 – Not challenged  
 2 – Slightly challenged  
 3 – Somewhat challenged  
 4 – Moderately challenged  
 5 – Extremely challenged

CHALLENGES MET IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAM	
STATEMENTS	AVERAGE SCORE
Lack of basic services (water, electricity, roads, sanitation) affect access to and quality of schooling	1.9
Inadequate physical and infrastructure conditions of schools – buildings, toilet facilities, telecommunications and equipment	2.2
Distance travelled to school – teachers walk long distances, and no adequate transport provision available	2.6
Quality of education in rural schools- irrelevance of curriculum, large classes, lack of teaching aids, higher learner/educator ratios are a major challenge	1.5
Curriculum relevance – need for Maths Science and Technology, understanding of local and global environment, need to promote critical thinking, need for useful skills □	1.9
Approaches to learning – rote learning still rife, no understanding of teachers and text books, teachers largely use monologue although exceptions exist □	2
Large classes, limited resources learners do not understand teachers and text books, expensive to implement, confusing □	1.4
Language of teaching and learning a barrier □	1.2
Lack of Early Childhood Development (ECD) education □	1.3
Lack of capacity of School Governing Bodies □	2.2



Competing priorities between education and domestic chores undermine support for teaching	1.6
Hunger, sickness and diseases affecting teaching	1.1
High attrition and drop out rate	1.2
Educational disparities for male and female teachers	1.3
Practice of corporal punishment is extensive <input type="checkbox"/>	1.1
Inappropriate conditions of service for teachers	1.9
District support is minimal <input type="checkbox"/>	1.4
Role of traditional leaders and concept of democracy to be understood in context	2.2

The questions raised in the questionnaire were classified and sorted out. Among them, the questions mentioned were: (Rank according to the number of people mentioned)

1. Relatively low allowance
2. Can't go home every day to accompany family and children
3. Classrooms, dormitories and other hardware facilities are relatively old, and rural areas cannot meet the personalized life needs
4. Excellent teachers and students are losing every year
5. Professional title promotion is difficult, and career ends at a glance
6. The pressure of work and life is great

A few people mentioned the problems of interpersonal relationship, social identity, difficulty in participating in school management, and difficulty in finding love in rural areas

Note: Of the 186 teachers in this survey, 6 were trained abroad or held temporary posts, and 180 participated in the questionnaire. In addition, 4 school administrators, 12 retired teachers and 9 government education department administrators also participated in the questionnaire. Therefore, there are 205 questionnaires in total, of which few are invalid due to multiple choices or unidentifiable, and 196 are valid, and rest of them are partially valid

## 5.2 Discussion

### Teacher incentive program evaluation

In the teacher incentive program evaluation questionnaire, there are 6 chapters and 23 questions, and the average score is 4 points. This shows that the current teacher incentive program is relatively comprehensive and basically effective, but there are still some problems.

Among them, the only question below 3 points was the teacher's right to put forward suggestions and get relevant replies, and the lowest score was 2.9 points. This shows that teachers are neutral about whether there are channels to collect teachers' opinions and suggestions, and put forward opinions and suggestions, which may not be able to get efficient and responsible responses. In the follow-up on-site interview, it was found that teachers would put forward relevant suggestions and opinions, and there were also special channels to collect them, such as the trade union, the headmaster's mailbox, the education bureau's informal discussion, the petition bureau and other channels, but often too many channels would lead to a problem, and no channel could get an effective response. For example, one teacher who participated in the interview mentioned that he had worked as an employed teacher for many years through various channels and hoped to get the opportunity to become a regular teacher. The trade union replied that he had reported to the superior leader, the principal replied that he would report to the education bureau leader and actively compete after he understood the situation, and the petition bureau replied that he had contacted the competent department and was in the process of discussion.

The employment of teachers is based on the equality between teachers and schools, which also gets a relatively low 3 points. It shows that in terms of teacher employment, directly speaking, schools often choose teachers rather than teachers, because this is a seller's market with scarce supplies. In the follow-up interview, we learned that in the process of two-way choice between teachers and schools, teachers are often willing to choose urban schools rather than rural schools.

The plate with the lowest average score is the training of teachers and the material treatment of teachers. It shows that teachers are more willing to get a broader learning platform and display stage. Rural primary schools often cannot compare with urban primary schools in this respect. Teachers of urban primary schools undoubtedly have more training opportunities and display opportunities to improve themselves. The material treatment of teachers is also a problem, and rural primary school teachers think their treatment is not good enough. In the follow-up interview, we learned that although rural primary school teachers have special subsidies for teaching in rural areas, it seems that they have better material treatment than other teachers. But urban primary school teachers have higher regional allowances. The working environment of rural primary school teachers is obviously more difficult than that of urban primary school teachers.

In terms of teachers' rights, medical care and legal support, they got 4.9 points close to the full score, which shows that teachers are satisfied with the incentive policies in these areas.

In general, the interviewed teachers are relatively satisfied with the current incentive policies, and they still need to improve their suggestions, teaching reform, career development, subsidies and working conditions.

### Extent of the implementation of the teacher incentive program

In the questionnaire part of the implementation of incentive. The average score of 17 questions in 4 parts is 3.9, and the score of government support and personal needs is relatively low. This shows that there is a certain gap between the formulation and implementation of incentive policies, which is generally good.

Teachers working in remote areas get more subsidies. The score is relatively low, which indicates that there are some problems in the implementation process. In the follow-up interview, we learned that some remote areas do get more subsidies, but sometimes these subsidies are not enough to pay the high road fees and living costs. In some places, infrastructure construction needs to be improved.

On the housing issue, the score is 3.6, which shows that teachers are not sure about the convenience of housing. In the follow-up interview, we learned that it was because there were no suitable rental or housing conditions around some rural primary schools, and teachers had to live in schools, which caused inconvenience to life.

In terms of pension, teachers have a lot of opinions. With the rapid development of the economy, the increase rate of pension cannot catch up with the speed of economic development, especially for teachers who have retired for several years.

In terms of carrying out teaching creatively, it is also relatively lacking, and got 3.7 points. According to the interview, because of the heavy daily teaching tasks, creative teaching will inevitably bring some risks, which may cause instability in students' learning, so most teachers choose to follow the rules of teaching interaction.

In the individual demand section, it is the section with the lowest score in the questionnaire. Not having enough time to spend with your family may be the biggest reason. In the interview, I learned that most rural primary schools are remote and can not return home every day, which has caused many people to have the idea of re choosing jobs. To some extent, it has caused the loss of excellent teachers.

In general, the implementation of incentive policies is relatively good, but there are problems. It is not completely implemented according to the incentive policy, or the degree of implementation is not enough. Especially in the areas of allowance, pension, innovation and basic conditions.

Challenges met in the implementation of the teacher incentive program

In the third questionnaire, the average score of the challenges encountered in the implementation of incentive policies is less than 2, indicating that there are challenges in the implementation process, but the overall situation is good. The high score is mainly due to the challenges in the infrastructure and management of the school.

The distance is remote and the teaching infrastructure is old, which is a relatively prominent problem. Because children in remote areas also need to go to school nearby, it is impossible to completely split and merge all remote primary schools and concentrate them all in cities and towns. It is not realistic for children in remote areas to go to school, which is a big problem. The renewal of teaching infrastructure is also a problem.

There are challenges in school management. In the follow-up interview, we learned that the loss of excellent management and excellent teachers, the lack of teacher rank promotion quota, teacher training and multi-dimensional ability improvement are the main problems.

Interview questions at the end of the questionnaire

In the interview at the end of the questionnaire, you mentioned the main problems, which are summarized as follows:

Relatively low allowance.

Can't go home every day to accompany family and children.

Classrooms, dormitories and other hardware facilities are relatively old.

Individualized living needs cannot be met in rural areas.

Excellent teachers and students are losing every year.

Difficulty in promotion of professional title and clear career.

Great pressure in work and life.

And A few people mentioned the problems of interpersonal relationship, social identity, difficulty in participating in school management, and difficulty in finding love in rural areas.

The conclusion of the interview is basically consistent with that of the questionnaire.

According to our data and interview results, after expert discussion, policy research, and the summary of government departments' opinions, an improved incentive plan has been formed, mainly focusing on the salary, basic conditions, rank promotion and other aspects of teachers' dissatisfaction. For those whose incentive policies have not been implemented in place, the mechanism for supervising the implementation has been improved. The challenges and problems encountered in the implementation of the incentives mentioned by the teachers also made some responses.

In the questionnaire and interview, teachers' spiritual needs scored higher. At present, in rural areas of China, teachers' social status and respect are relatively high, and their mutual recognition is also high, while other aspects of spiritual needs are more complex, which is not mentioned in this paper.

The achievement needs of teachers are partially mentioned in the questionnaire and interview, which is discrete distribution, so this study has made part of the achievement needs incentive plan.

## VI. Recommendations

Ensure that the existing incentive policies are fully implemented to attract outstanding teachers. Increase the salary of rural primary school teachers. Improve the subsidy policy of hardship allowance for rural primary school teachers. Vigorously implement the teacher training plan. Optimize the professional title promotion mechanism and create fair competition. Cultivate the innovation spirit of rural primary school teachers. Optimize the honor system and improve the enthusiasm of participants. Strengthen democratic management and improve teachers' satisfaction with school management.

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