

Analysis of the Teacher Rotation System from the Perspective of Educational Equity

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Abstract: As a key policy to promote the balanced distribution of educational resources and realise educational equity, the teacher rotation system aims to alleviate the disparity in the level of teachers between urban and rural areas and among schools through the rational allocation of teacher resources. With the perspective of better achieving educational equity, this paper systematically comprehends the implementation status and experience of the teacher rotation system at home and abroad through literature reading and analysis. It is found that although the teacher rotation system plays a significant role in promoting educational equity, there are still challenges in the implementation process, such as teachers' adaptation difficulties, schools' conflict of interest, and imperfect supporting measures. In response to these problems, this paper proposes optimisation paths, including providing policy support to help teachers adapt to the new environment, strengthening publicity to enhance public acceptance, and improving monitoring mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of policy implementation. The conclusion stresses that the effective implementation of the teacher rotation system requires the joint efforts of the government, schools, teachers and all sectors of the society, so as to promote the balanced development of education and achieve educational equity through the continuous optimisation of the system design and supporting measures.

Keywords: teacher rotation system, educational equity, resource balance, challenges and optimisation, policy implementation.

1. Introduction

Education is the cornerstone of national revitalisation and social progress, and has a bearing on the future of the country. Entering the new era, China's education development goal has gradually shifted from "providing more education opportunities for more people" to "providing the best possible education for as many people as possible"[1]. The teacher rotation system is a policy proposed to improve the problem of unequal distribution of resources in education. However, due to the relatively short time of its implementation and the many challenges and shortcomings that still exist, it is necessary to carry out an in-depth study on it and try to propose an optimisation path.

The research method employed in this paper is literature review and analysis. Through reviewing relevant literature, it is found that foreign research on teacher rotation systems mainly focuses on developed countries such as Japan, South Korea and the European Union. For example, Japan established a regular mobility system for teachers after World War II and has persisted in its

implementation for 70 years, which not only provides teachers with generous treatment and allowances, but also ensures a balanced teaching and learning environment in each school through standardisation [2]. In South Korea, the rotation system is implemented by considering various factors related to teachers and the local context, as outlined in the Personnel Management Regulations for Educational Civil Servants [3]. Domestic studies on the teacher rotation system mainly focus on the basis, motivation, value, performance and attribution of implementation distortion, and improvement paths of the system, etc. For instance, Zhang Wenli believes that the teacher rotation system is faced with multiple dilemmas of stakeholders, and that it is necessary to improve the effectiveness of its implementation by updating the concepts and setting up an effective mechanism [4]. Cao Hui and Zhu Yuxin analysed the institutional causes of the negative "passing" mentality of rotating teachers and explored measures to solve the problem[5].

From this point of view, the successful implementation of the teacher rotation system in developed countries such as Japan and South Korea is due to the integrity of the system. China, Japan, and South Korea share certain similarities in terms of economy, population, and other factors. This paper will combine the national conditions of China, and through further reading and analysis of the literature, explore in depth the status quo, roles, challenges, and improvements of the teacher rotation system, thereby providing theoretical support for the decision-making.

2. Analysis of the Current Status of the Teacher Rotation System

For a long time, the gap in teacher qualifications between urban and rural areas, as well as among schools, has been a prominent constraint on the balanced development of education. On the one hand, parents flock to "famous schools" and "famous teachers," leading to challenges related to school choice and zoning; on the other hand, the educational levels in remote and economically disadvantaged areas, such as rural and mountainous areas, are hampered by inadequate teacher qualifications, necessitating urgent attention to equity in education. Furthermore, the recent proliferation of out-of-school training institutions has compounded these issues, alongside the ongoing rotation of teachers among schools.

The teacher rotation system has been in place for many years in order to solve the problem of school choice and promote equity in education. From 2006 to 2009, cities such as Shenyang and Fuzhou implemented teacher rotation policies. However, an article published three years later in the *Chinese Journal of Education*, titled "Teacher Rotation Policy Implementation Problems," highlighted two major challenges: ineffective policy implementation and concerns among rotating teachers. The release of the "Outline of the National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)" in 2010 explicitly stated that "a sound guarantee mechanism for the balanced development of compulsory education should be established and improved", alongside the implementation of a system for the exchange of teachers and headmasters within counties or districts. In August 2014, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security jointly issued the "Opinions on Promoting the Exchange and Rotation of Principals and Teachers in Compulsory Education Schools within County (District) Areas", proposing that "we strive to achieve the institutionalisation and regularisation of the exchange and rotation of headmasters and teachers within the county (city and district) areas in three to five years", subsequently involving more provinces and cities in teacher rotation initiatives. After the introduction of the "double-decrease" policy, various places have released documents related to the teacher rotation system. For example, Shenzhen has put forward the implementation of university district enrolment, school management, and the establishment of a teacher exchange system to balance the allocation of resources; Changzhou has issued a notice on teacher exchange and rotation, stipulating that full-time teachers within the scope of the mobility of the exchange and rotation every six years or teaching support; and Beijing districts have established resource supply and demand accounts

through in-depth research to accurately match teachers and ensure that every school receives support from educational resources. Initiatives in various regions have promoted the rational allocation and effective use of educational resources.

3. Challenges in the implementation of the teacher rotation system

However, despite the obvious contribution of the teacher rotation system to educational equity, there are still many dilemmas in its implementation, and in some cases, it has even brought about negative effects on educational equity.

First of all, from the perspective of teachers, those participating in the rotation system encounter numerous difficulties and challenges, including the cultural conflict dilemma, cognitive bias dilemma, insufficient motivation dilemma, and difficult developmental period dilemma. Cultural dilemma refers to the fact that rotating teachers are not adapted to the new environment (including student groups, interpersonal relationships, classroom teaching, classroom development degree, etc.) due to the changes in the teaching environment that they have experienced, which causes a certain amount of psychological burden and anxiety. The dilemma of cognitive bias refers to the fact that rotating teachers do not correctly perceive the purpose, role and value of the system, and some of them think that the rotation system is only a manifestation of "formalism" and "meritocracy". The insufficient motivation dilemma occurs when teachers arrive at new schools and, lacking clear internal and external incentives, experience a diminishing enthusiasm for their work. This, combined with the disruption of their previously stable lifestyles, may lead to a sense of wanderlust, exacerbating the negative effects. The developmental difficulties dilemma is closely related to the rotating teachers' own development, referring to the fact that teachers need to adjust their teaching style when they arrive at the inflow school, and they may encounter unforeseen situations in their career planning and personal growth. Overall, the various challenges encountered by rotating teachers reflect both the shortcomings in the design of the rotation system and the embodiment and elaboration of the inherent characteristics of the public welfare nature of education [6].

Secondly, schools, as stakeholders and implementers of the teacher rotation system, also face certain challenges and dilemmas. Schools are expected to deploy teachers in accordance with the relevant regulations made by local education administrations and in line with their own actual situation, in order to comply with the rotation system and its relevant regulations. However, in actual education practice, the evaluation of schools—including promotion rates based on various performance indicators—is closely linked to teacher quality and teaching standards. Consequently, a natural conflict of interest arises between implementing the teacher rotation system and enhancing the school's promotion rate; for instance, a decline in teacher qualifications may hinder the school's competitive edge in attracting students, leading to a series of adverse chain reactions. In order to achieve a balance between the two, some schools will choose ordinary teachers, new teachers or even substitute teachers to go to the exchange in order to retain the better teachers. Although this may seem to achieve a balance between obeying the institutional arrangements and maintaining their own interests, it ultimately diminishes the effectiveness of the teacher rotation system and constitutes another form of unfairness to the teachers selected for rotation.

The teacher rotation system still lacks relevant supporting measures at the initial stage of its implementation. On the one hand, although the teacher rotation system has been proposed for many years, it is still at the exploratory stage; in other words, there is no clear document or law regulating the system, resulting in a high degree of autonomy in implementation. While this autonomy allows localities and schools to rationally arrange teacher resources according to their specific contexts, it also introduces significant uncertainty. Questions arise regarding whether the specific timing of rotations has been adequately evaluated and whether there is a clear basis for arranging staff rotations. Furthermore, the shortcomings of the monitoring mechanism and the lack of defined methods for

assessing effectiveness contribute to the challenges faced. In most reports, local governments and education administrations focus on the total number of rotations and the cumulative number of times they have been carried out. It is undeniable that the total number of teachers rotated is indeed one of the criteria for testing the effectiveness of the implementation of the rotational system, but in fact, it is not possible to judge the effect of this policy on the promotion of equity in education by relying on this indicator alone. On the other hand, the dualistic education environment of urban and rural areas cannot be changed by the teacher rotation system alone. However, the inherent gap between urban and rural areas, such as supporting infrastructure and economic welfare protection, represent significant obstacles to effective implementation. Without simultaneous improvements in these supporting facilities, teachers' enthusiasm may be greatly diminished, hindering their ability to fully utilise their professional skills. This scenario ultimately constitutes a misallocation of teaching resources and fails to advance equity in education.

In summary, the teacher rotation system still has problems and challenges in all aspects of its formulation, implementation, monitoring and testing. Addressing these issues is crucial for enhancing the system's capacity to promote equity in education.

4. Optimisation of the Path of the Teacher Rotation System

In response to the problems and challenges raised above, through literature reading and analysis, an attempt is made to propose countermeasures to the relevant problems and to explore the feasibility of optimising the path of the teacher rotation system.

4.1. Policy Support

The original intent of the teacher rotation system is to promote educational equity through the power of quality teachers. Only by safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of rotating teachers and resolving their worries can the teacher rotation system be better promoted. Specifically, firstly, it is necessary to optimise the system of "county management and school recruitment", to ensure that education administrations have a full grasp of the number, establishment and positions of teachers in rural areas. This will facilitate reasonable overall planning and coordination, alleviate schools' concerns about teacher wastage and shortages, and support the exchange and rotation of teachers. Secondly, promoting the reform of the "school district system" can help narrow the scope of teacher mobility, effectively address commuting issues, enhance teacher-student matching, and facilitate teacher adaptation, ultimately contributing to balanced educational development [7]. At the same time, the government should increase its investment in education, especially in economically underdeveloped areas such as rural and mountainous regions, and strengthen the supporting construction of infrastructure, including the repair of school buildings, temporary housing for rotating teachers and the updating of teaching equipment, which should also encompass the popularisation of network information technology, the enrichment of library resources and the improvement of sports facilities.

4.2. Public Policy Acceptance

At present, the publicity for the teacher rotation system is not yet adequate, and the policy is still not well received by teachers' groups, parents and people from all walks of life. Enriching the means of publicity and strengthening publicity are important factors in promoting public acceptance of the policy and its better implementation. On the one hand, they can help teachers to understand the purpose and function of the teacher rotation system and to build up their identity; on the other hand, they can reverse the concepts of some parents and avoid speculative behaviours, so as to achieve the goal of narrowing the education gap. At the same time, in conjunction with the implementation of the

"Double Reduction" policy, the publicity of the teacher rotation system can further alleviate students' academic pressure, optimise the education ecology and achieve a balanced allocation of education resources. Multi-channel, multi-angle and sustained publicity can enhance social awareness of and support for the teacher rotation system, creating a conducive environment for its successful implementation.

4.3. Effectiveness of Policy Implementation

In order to ensure the normal implementation of the teacher rotation system, it is necessary not only to establish a comprehensive, scientific, and reasonable incentive mechanism alongside a robust supervision and management framework, which will guarantee that the implementation process remains open and transparent [8]. In the process of selecting teachers for rotation, it is necessary to make it open and transparent, standardise the procedures of selection and allocation, and avoid the abuse of power. Additionally, establishing a stringent evaluation mechanism and a reliable feedback channel is necessary to supervise and assess teaching quality, educators' attitudes, and student feedback following teacher rotations. This approach will ensure that teachers on rotation are able to adapt to new environments, give full play to their professional abilities, and promote the enhancement of the quality of education.

5. Conclusion

As the cornerstone of national revitalisation and social progress, the equity of education is directly related to the future development of the country. Entering the new era, the goal of China's educational development has shifted to providing the best possible education for as many people as possible, with the aim of promoting educational equity by optimising the distribution of educational resources. In this context, the teacher rotation system emerges as a significant policy designed to address the uneven distribution of teacher resources.

Focusing on the theme of "Teacher rotation system from the perspective of educational equity", this paper presents a relatively comprehensive discussion on the status quo, role, challenges, and optimisation pathways of the teacher rotation system through literature review and analysis; there are still some shortcomings. For example, due to the limitation of time and resources, this paper may have some limitations in data collection and analysis. In addition, this paper fails to explore in greater depth the specific differences and special problems in the implementation of the teacher rotation system in different regions and types of schools. Future research can further focus on these issues and provide more specific and targeted recommendations for the improvement of the teacher rotation system through field research and case studies.

In conclusion, the effective implementation of the teacher rotation system, as an important means of promoting equity in education, requires the joint efforts of the Government, schools, teachers and all sectors of society. By continuously optimising the design of the system, improving supporting measures, and strengthening publicity and supervision, there is reason to believe that the teacher rotation system will play a more positive role in fostering balanced educational development and achieving educational equity in the future.

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