

Measures to Alleviate the Loss of High School Teachers in County Areas

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Abstract: The quality of teachers is crucial to the development of county high schools. In recent years, the teacher loss rate of county high school has been increasing, worsening the quality of education and the overall development of county areas. Previous studies have paid little attention to the loss of high school teachers in county areas, which leads to the failure to continuously improve the teaching environment of county high school teachers. This paper takes the teaching quality of Dangyang No. 1 High School and Songzi No. 4 High School, Hubei Province as examples, to explore the factors contributing to teacher attrition in these areas and propose strategies to mitigate the problem. Our results found that increasing teacher funding significantly improves the attrition situation, on the other hands, improving status and providing more professional development opportunities and platforms can also alleviate the loss rate of county teachers. Our results are of great importance for mechanism exploration of influencing factor on the loss of county high school teachers, and provide theoretical support for the better study quality in county high school.

Keywords: High School; County Area; Loss of Teachers; Improvement Measures

1. Introduction

Teacher attrition is a significant challenge for educational systems, particularly in rural and county areas. Studies indicate that the trend of teacher attrition at the county level has been on the rise in recent years, which is associated with a range of factors including insufficient occupational security, unfavorable career development prospects, and constrained professional competency advancement [1-2]. This trend is exacerbated in county areas, where

schools often struggle to attract and retain qualified educators. Teacher turnover undermines the consistent delivery of school education and exerts harmful influences on student academic performance as well as local community progress [3]. Notably, most teachers who leave their positions are young professionals under 35 years old, a phenomenon that worsens the unbalanced age structure of school teaching teams. Frequent teacher departures create negative ripple effects for incumbent teachers, disrupting their working stability and teaching continuity. Meanwhile, such staffing instability greatly weakens students' learning initiative and academic performance. These two-fold negative consequences eventually lead to a continuous drop in school enrollment rates, creating a self-perpetuating vicious cycle that hinders the sustainable operation of educational institutions. For instance, Dangyang No. 1 High School as a typical case of county-level high schools, compared with the high schools in Yichang urban area represented by Yichang No. 1 High School and Yiling High School, its constrained investment in financial resources and transportation resources has restricted both the recruitment of outstanding early-career young teachers and the professional development of existing teachers, which indirectly results in a significantly lower academic performance in the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) than that of urban high schools.

2. Factors Contributing to Teacher Attrition

2.1 Lower Financial Investment Leads to Lower Incomes for Teachers

Compared with the diversified funding sources of high schools in large cities, county high schools mainly rely on the government for education funding, and county governments have limited by financial resources. For example, The General

Public Budget Revenue (GPBR) of Yichang No. 1 High School in 2022 is 94.77 million yuan, which is about 1.7 times the GPBR of Dangyang No. 1 High School in the same period. In addition, the GPBR of Jingzhou High School in 2022 is 61.43 million yuan, which is about 2.4 times the GPBR of Songzi No. 4 High School in the same period. What's more, teachers in county areas often receive lower salaries compared to their urban counterparts. According to a report by Liu (2022), the average income of county-level teachers is significantly lower than that of teachers in urban schools [4].

Salary is critical for retaining senior high school teachers [5]. The knowledge system of senior high education is complex and profound. Teachers are not only educators for students, but also members of society with their own social and family responsibilities. If their salary cannot meet the basic standards to support these social and family needs, it will directly affect their job satisfaction and work enthusiasm, and ultimately harm the interests of students.

When a teacher is trapped in the pressure of family and social life due to low salary, they will naturally transfer this negative emotion to students, which leads to the decline of teaching quality. This will further cause worries or even complaints from students and parents, forcing the school to interview the teacher. This phenomenon is particularly prominent in county-level regions and schools with insufficient financial support. A study by Chen (2024) shows that only when the salary is fair, objective and in line with teachers' expectations, will they develop a sense of belonging to the school, form a higher sense of responsibility for students, and the turnover rate will naturally decrease. On the contrary, if the salary is at a low level, teachers will gradually develop a sense of boredom towards the school and their students [6].

2.2 Limited Professional Development

Teachers' professional education is also vital for senior high schools, because test questions are highly diverse and teaching materials are updated frequently nowadays. In each teaching cycle, a large number of new educational findings and theories will emerge, which pose challenges to the existing knowledge framework, and even indicate that some contents in the current teaching materials are not appropriate. If teachers cannot improve their professional level in time, their teaching ability will be directly affected,

and then the learning outcomes of students will be undermined. However, it is worth noting that county senior high schools usually lack such growth opportunities that can help teachers grasp the changes of teaching materials and improve their sensitivity to teaching practice. This situation easily leads to job burnout among senior high school teachers [7]. For example, Compared with Dangyang No. 1 High School, Yichang No. 1 High School provides far more opportunities for teachers' professional development. For instance, a number of distinguished alumni cultivated by Yichang No. 1 Senior High School, including academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering, can provide professional opportunities for teachers to pursue further academic qualifications. In May 2026, Yichang No. 1 Senior High School released the official announcement on the construction of the "Qian Xuesen Class", which demonstrates the school's strong capacity for interconnection and collaboration with other high schools and even universities, and helps to build a better professional development platform for outstanding early-career teachers. In contrast, Dangyang No. 1 Senior High School provides relatively limited professional development opportunities for its teaching staff. This limitation is determined not only by the strategic vision and priority level of the school's leadership, but also by the constraints of its objective operational context. It was not until recent years that the school gradually began to systematically tap into its distinguished alumni resources, including Yu Gang (Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences), Yu Zujun (President of Beijing Jiaotong University), and Liang Hua (Chairman of Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd.). Although these prominent figures carry significant halo effect, the practical implementation of this effect exhibits a distinct time lag, which has impeded the targeted professional advancement of the school's faculty. Teacher professional training empowers educators to upgrade teaching skills and pedagogical approaches. Regular courses and workshops optimize daily instructional practice. Educators with sustained professional training can apply creative teaching tactics to boost student learning outcomes. Training in differentiated teaching assists teachers in catering to varied student needs and building inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, professional

training promotes teacher cooperation and communication. Such activities allow educators to exchange experience and practical insights. This peer connection greatly benefits county teachers who often face professional isolation. Shared practices and resources in group training enhance overall school and district education quality.

2.3 Challenging Working Conditions

At present, the factors that affect teachers' work enthusiasm in county high schools are diverse [8]. Problems such as insufficient teaching resources and unreasonable class configuration may lead to teachers' negative work emotions. Taking the regular classes and key classes in a county high school as an example, the difference in student quality will significantly affect high school teachers' teaching experience. Teachers show higher evaluation and stronger work enthusiasm for key classes than for regular classes. The reason is that students in key classes are smarter and have higher concentration. They are prone to refute teachers' views and carry out divergent thinking, which in turn promotes classroom activity and makes teachers more willing to prepare lessons carefully and accurately.

By contrast, students in regular classes have poor learning performance and weak autonomous learning ability. This will make teachers spend more energy on maintaining classroom order rather than improving teaching quality [9].

3. Strategies for Retaining Teachers

3.1 Competitive Salaries and Incentives

Increasing funding for county senior high schools not only helps attract young teachers with high education levels, but also helps retain experienced teachers. Specifically, besides raising basic salaries, special funds should be provided for teachers of different age groups in county schools. For example, young teachers have a strong demand for housing, so their salaries and housing fund contributions can be properly increased. Middle-aged teachers focus more on family harmony and childcare, so senior high schools can set up special rest rooms and tutoring rooms for teachers' children, and even allow these children to study at school together with regular students. Older teachers pay more attention to physical health, so schools can hold various health lectures and related activities. In

this way, teachers of all age groups will improve their sense of identity with the school, and the teaching team can be stabilized.

These burden-reduction and care measures are not isolated projects. When combined, they form a comprehensive system to guarantee the quality of school education. Notably, economic support must also have proper limits. Easily obtained financial support may make some teachers less motivated. Therefore, economic support projects can be appropriately linked to teachers' teaching quality and students' satisfaction, so as to build a complete teacher retention system.

3.2 Professional Development Opportunities

As we all known, adaptable educational methods strongly supports the professional development of county teachers, such as project-based learning, educational technology adoption [10]. Partnering with educational institutions to develop school-specific curricula also admits county teachers access to appropriate advanced resources and specific training styles [11]. Danyang No. 1 Senior High School provides appropriate official curricula to teacher training content so that teachers can obtain educational skills apply to daily-class teaching. In September 2026, school applied Xiwo electronic education system in each classroom, which provides flexible teaching aids and accurate counting and time systems for multiple courses. According to the comments from teachers, this system has been successfully and smoothly promoted their professional development skills.

Moreover, involving teachers in designing student-centered teaching plans helps them take greater initiative in professional development, achieving sustainable long-term improvement. When teachers act as positive contributors instead of negative followers, they can incorporate real classroom experience, professional knowledge into plans, this practice promotes their professional autonomy and alleviates burnout. In the past, as a typical county-level high school, Danyang No.1 High School did not have so many opportunities to communicate with other high schools within Hubei Province or even nationwide. With the development of the times, Danyang No.1 High School has gradually increased the frequency of communication with other high schools, which enables teachers to understand the educational trends that keep up with current events and improve their educational methods for different

students.

3.3 Improving Working Conditions

Enhancing working conditions for county high school teachers demands targeted improvements in curriculum planning, humane support and student development governance [12-13]. Building a school culture centered on daily care plays a vital role in optimizing working conditions. Furthermore, recognizing and celebrating teachers' achievements can boost morale and create a sense of community within the school. It is worth noting that Dangyang No.1 High School currently attaches great importance to improving the working condition for teachers, such as organizing faculty sports meeting in spring and long-distance running activities in winter. In addition, regular psychological counseling and physical examinations are also conducted for all teachers.

The quality of students in a school has a clear and significant effect on teachers' daily working conditions, and it shapes how smoothly teachers can carry out their teaching plans in class. Schools should carry out practical, easy-to-follow initiatives that are fully aimed at improving students' daily behavior and their active engagement in all kinds of learning activities. These useful measures can include regular, hands-on training for all teaching staff in simple restorative practices and positive behavior intervention skills. These skills help teachers solve small conflicts between students calmly, guide students to form good class rules together, and finally build a quieter, more orderly and far more conducive learning environment for everyone in the classroom. Besides, inviting teachers to take part in the whole process of student recruitment and selection can make sure that every new incoming class fits well with the long-held core values and unique campus culture of the school, instead of bringing in new students who find it hard to follow the school's basic learning rules. When schools put the improvement of student quality as a top daily work priority, they can cut down most unnecessary, energy-draining management troubles for teachers, and finally create a far more positive, low-pressure and highly productive working environment for all teachers.

3.4 Provide Family Support for Teachers

Building trust-based relationships between high schools and student families can effectively

improve teacher retention rates, especially for young teachers who have just started their teaching careers. Teacher's own family life plays a very critical role in their daily work, and it directly affects their long-term working state in the school. For most high school teachers, their family conditions and support levels have a clear influence on their personal well-being, daily satisfaction, and their overall teaching effectiveness in every class. When schools take small but warming steps to build close connections with teachers' families instead of only focusing on students' parents, they can bring many clear benefits. For example, schools can regularly organize family open days for teachers' family members, allowing them to participate in school construction, and enhancing their sense of participation and identity with the school. Care gifts can be distributed on important festivals, and flexible policies can be introduced to help teachers properly take care of the elderly or young children at home. These measures make teachers feel respected and supported in both work and life. They will not easily choose to resign due to family reasons, and can devote more stable energy to daily teaching work. Such simple humanized arrangements can help schools retain excellent teachers for a longer period.

Schools can create flexible working - time schemes that accommodate domestic conditions of teachers. For example, permitting reasonable adjustments to working hours and offering partial remote - work options facilitates teachers in reconciling professional duties with family commitments. Such flexible institutional arrangements serve to alleviate occupational stress and promote job - satisfaction level.

4. Conclusion

The loss of county high school teachers is caused by various factors, among which the most significant factor is the salary level. In addition, professional development opportunities, county economic environment and the care measures of school for teachers' families are all influencing factors. Only by improving the salary level of teachers, especially for young teachers, and providing young teachers with sufficient development opportunities, can schools fundamentally improve the phenomenon of teacher turnover. What's more, county high schools must select excellent teachers based on professional ability rather than seniority.

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