

# An analysis of the equity and adaptability of title evaluation for rural elementary school teachers

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**Abstract:** *The current title evaluation system in the rural elementary school teachers face the double challenge of fairness and adaptability. The imbalance between urban and rural educational resources, the deviation in the implementation of policy favoritism, and the "one-size-fits-all" evaluation standard have seriously restricted the career development of rural teachers. This paper suggests that through the design of differentiated evaluation standards, precise policy support, optimization of evaluation procedures and other reform measures, we can build a fairer career promotion channel for rural teachers, stimulate their enthusiasm for teaching, and help the balanced development of urban and rural education.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher title, Rural teachers, Professional title evaluation*

## 1. Introduction

China's title evaluation system began in the 1980s, and after three stages of development, including initial establishment, pilot reform, and comprehensive reform, China now has a stable title selection system[1]. Teachers' titles are not only about income and career ladder, but also become a yardstick for social recognition. However, in the vast countryside, many elementary school teachers have been stuck in the "title ceiling" for years - they bear heavy teaching tasks, but due to the lack of resources and scarcity of scientific research opportunities, they have repeatedly hit a wall in the promotion of their titles. The Ministry of Education has launched a number of policies in recent years to try to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, but the reality is that the sunshine of "title" often does not shine into the classrooms of remote village schools. Although there are policies favoring rural teachers, the actual operation of the village primary school, teaching point teachers and young teachers in rural areas are not enough attention[2]. The Matthew effect of resource allocation, the "paperwork" of evaluation standards, and the distortion of implementation at the grassroots level have plunged rural teachers into the predicament of "hard work but hard to get ahead". This unfairness not only weakens the sense of professional identity of the teaching community, but also exacerbates the hollowing out of rural education.

How to make the title evaluation system truly "see" the contributions of rural teachers? In this paper, we will analyze the difficulties faced by rural elementary school teachers in title evaluation, from which we can understand the actual challenges and specific needs encountered by rural elementary school teachers in title evaluation, and try to find out the improvement policies that can be used for reference. To retain more "lampglitters" for rural education.

## 2. Job evaluation meets rural reality

According to the requirements of the Qualification Assessment Conditions for High, Middle and Junior Professional and Technical Positions of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (for Trial Implementation), the assessment standards for senior titles are more stringent, with stricter requirements in terms of demonstration leadership, participation in teaching reforms, and scientific research papers.[3] Teachers are not only required to achieve a certain degree of success in teaching and research, but also to take into account quality education and scientific research. For rural teachers, the skewed title evaluation policy does not play to the advantage of teachers in small-scale rural teaching sites. The title application process not only involves a number of links, but also requires teachers to invest a lot of time and energy to prepare the relevant materials, especially the requirements of scientific research, which is a major challenge for rural elementary school teachers.

### ***2.1 Between rural and urban elementary school teachers***

The differences between rural elementary school teachers and urban elementary school teachers in the evaluation of their titles are mainly reflected in access to resources, research opportunities and promotion channels. In urban teaching environments, teachers are able to rely on sufficient educational resources, a well-developed research system and abundant training opportunities, whereas rural teachers are often required to take on comprehensive tasks such as multidisciplinary teaching, student management, home visits and poverty alleviation in education at the same time. Their daily work is centered on maintaining the normal operation of basic education, but due to the lack of research conditions and academic support, they are rejected by the mandatory indicator of "academic achievements" in the evaluation of their professional titles.

### ***2.2 Institutional in the evaluation of titles***

Under the current system of title evaluation, the distribution of rural teachers' titles shows a "diamond-shaped" structure, with the majority of rural elementary school teachers being in the middle level. There are obvious systemic obstacles in the design of the current system of title evaluation, which is poorly adapted to the needs of rural elementary school teachers in particular.

Although it has been proposed at the policy level that title quotas should be tilted in favor of the countryside, in actual implementation, resource allocation tends to be concentrated in township and city centers, with teachers at remote teaching points remaining on the periphery. In some areas, the quota allocation mechanism has a hierarchical retention problem, making it difficult for rural teachers at the lowest level to reach the policy dividends. In addition, some teachers choose to move away from the countryside after obtaining a senior title, thus exacerbating the loss of teachers and creating a vicious cycle of "promotion is loss".

The current evaluation standards for titles are based on a unified national framework, ignoring the special characteristics of rural education. For example, the mandatory requirements for the publication of papers and the hosting of projects are seriously out of touch with the teaching reality of rural teachers; the complex reporting process and the repetitive filling of paper materials further aggravate the workload of teachers. This "form over substance" evaluation logic not only fails to truly reflect the teaching contributions of rural teachers, but also becomes a shackle to their professional development.

## **3. Improving the adaptability and equity of the system for the evaluation of titles**

### ***3.1 Of differentiated title evaluation criteria***

In order to address the unfairness in the evaluation of titles, more flexible evaluation criteria should be designed, especially for the special situation of rural elementary school teachers. Specifically, teaching practice and educational quality can be given more weight in the evaluation process, and the mandatory requirement for scientific research results can be reduced. For rural teachers, their work focuses more on teaching practice and student management, so they should be given more opportunities to show their work when their titles are evaluated. For example, the Conditions for Reviewing Qualifications for Senior, Middle and Junior Professional and Technical Positions for Primary and Secondary School Teachers in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (for Trial Implementation) requires that the requirements for rural teachers' scientific research be relaxed in the requirements for reviewing the titles of teachers at the same level.

At the same time, the evaluation criteria should also take regional differences into account, and a more reasonable evaluation system should be formulated according to the educational resources and conditions of different regions. For example, for rural areas where scientific research resources are scarce, indicators such as teaching achievements, classroom management effectiveness and student feedback can be used as the basis for evaluation, forming differentiated evaluation criteria.

### ***3.2 Policy preferences and resource***

In addition to adjusting the evaluation criteria, there is a need at the policy level to provide more resource support for rural elementary school teachers. It is possible to provide rural teachers with more targeted title evaluation programs through the establishment of special promotion channels. For example,

the mandatory requirements for scientific research achievements should be reduced, and the weight of the assessment of teaching performance should be increased.

In addition, the Government should increase its support for the training and scientific research of rural teachers, and help them to improve their academic abilities and professional qualities through the provision of special training programs, opportunities for academic exchanges, and funding for scientific research. Such policy favoritism will help rural teachers gain more opportunities in title evaluation and enhance their sense of professional identity.

### ***3.3 Optimizing fairness in the evaluation of job titles***

In order to ensure the fairness of title evaluation, a more transparent and fair evaluation mechanism can be established. For example, an independent evaluation committee could be established to ensure fairness and transparency in the evaluation process. In addition, consideration should be given to setting up a regional evaluation mechanism, with differentiated evaluations for teachers in different regions, to ensure that rural teachers are not at a disadvantage in the evaluation process.

At the same time, incentives should be introduced at the policy level to motivate rural teachers to actively participate in title evaluation through material rewards and professional honors, and to encourage them to devote themselves to the cause of rural education in the long term. Such incentives will not only enhance the confidence of rural teachers in their professional development, but also effectively alleviate the problem of teacher wastage and stabilize the rural education team.

## **4. Policy recommendations**

In order to enhance the fairness and adaptability of the title evaluation system, this paper tries to make suggestions from the following aspects.

### ***4.1 Optimizing the criteria and procedures for the evaluation of titles***

The complexity of the title appraisal process often makes rural teachers feel overburdened, and the complexity of the filing system and supporting documents adds to the burden of rural elementary school teachers in addition to their teaching duties. Consideration should be given to simplifying the appraisal process according to the actual situation of rural elementary school.

#### ***4.1.1 Reduce burdensome material requirements***

For example, the rigid requirements for scientific research results and academic papers can be replaced with materials that are closer to rural teaching practices, such as teaching design, curriculum innovation, and rural education cases. The specific content of rural elementary school teachers in their daily teaching practice should be included in the scope of evaluation.

#### ***4.1.2 Shortening the review cycle***

The evaluation of titles can take up to six months, and because of the cumbersome materials and processes, some teachers may even prepare their materials up to a year in advance. The evaluation process should be accelerated, especially for rural teachers who are busy and lack the time to prepare evaluation materials, to avoid delays in the evaluation process that could lead to untimely evaluation results.

#### ***4.1.3 Streamlining the declaration and evaluation process***

Although the current title declaration relies on the online system to fill in, the required supporting documents and other paper materials still need to be printed and filled in before uploading to the system, adding many useless processes for teachers. Further improvements can be made to the online digital platform in the future to reduce redundant paper materials.

### ***4.2 Redirecting policies towards village primary and teaching point teachers and young teachers in rural areas***

Although the current title evaluation policy has been tilted somewhat in favor of rural teachers, in its implementation, it tends to favor those relatively resource-rich township central schools or key schools, while ignoring the most basic groups of teachers in village primary schools and teaching points, as well as young teachers in rural areas. These groups of teachers work in difficult environments, lack

educational resources, have limited opportunities for professional development, and face many obstacles in title evaluation. Therefore, policy tilts should be more accurately directed at these groups of teachers, and a series of specific measures should be taken to enhance their fairness in title evaluation and to promote professional development.

#### ***4.2.1 Establishment of a special channel for title evaluation***

Setting up a separate channel for the evaluation of titles for teachers in village primary schools and teaching sites; the work characteristics of teachers in village primary schools and teaching sites are significantly different from those of teachers in urban or township-centered schools, and full consideration should be given to their actual working conditions in the evaluation process. The special channel can set up evaluation criteria different from those for urban teachers, with less reliance on scientific research results and more focus on teaching effectiveness, student management, and teaching innovation. For example, indicators such as student growth feedback and parent satisfaction surveys can be introduced into the evaluation of these teachers, so that the evaluation criteria can be closer to the reality of their daily work. The right of accreditation can be moderately decentralized to county-level education departments, which will conduct accreditation based on the actual situation of local village primary school teachers, to ensure that the accreditation process is closer to the actual working environment of teachers, and to reduce the unfairness brought about by asymmetric information on resources.

#### ***4.2.2 Inclined quota distribution***

When titles are evaluated each year, the Government can set up a certain percentage of senior title quotas exclusively for teachers in village primary schools and teaching points, so as to prevent them from competing directly with teachers in resource-rich cities or key schools. The establishment of such exclusive quotas can alleviate the disadvantages of village primary school teachers in title evaluation and enhance their motivation to participate. Policies should provide special incentives for teachers who have been rooted in village primary schools and teaching points for a long time. For example, a long-service bonus point mechanism should be established in the evaluation of titles, or their long-term contribution to teaching in difficult environments should be reflected in the evaluation criteria to ensure that they enjoy priority in the evaluation process. Such measures can incentivize more teachers to be willing to stay and work in village primary schools and reduce the negative impact of excessive teacher mobility on village primary education.

#### ***4.2.3 Rural Young Teachers Support Program***

Establishing special support policies for young rural teachers to encourage them to participate in the evaluation of their titles and to engage in pedagogical innovation. For example, the government can provide young teachers with exclusive career development planning and guidance, help them clarify their promotion paths, and enhance their teaching skills and ability to prepare evaluation materials through regular training. Through such support programs, the disadvantages of young teachers in evaluation can be alleviated and their confidence in career development can be boosted. The government can encourage outstanding urban teachers to establish a regular exchange mechanism with young teachers in the countryside to carry out activities such as sharing teaching experience and classroom teaching demonstrations. Through such urban-rural interaction, young teachers will not only have access to more teaching resources and information, but will also enhance their competitiveness in title evaluation.

### ***4.3. Revision of evaluation criteria and standardization of evaluation procedures***

In order to make the criteria for the evaluation of titles more relevant to the actual work of rural teachers, the current criteria need to be revised, especially the assessment of scientific research achievements.

#### ***4.3.1 Optimize the evaluation criteria and process***

Specific practices such as teaching effectiveness, student growth, home-school communication, and education for poverty alleviation will be incorporated into the evaluation criteria, reducing over-reliance on papers and research projects. Provincial and municipal education departments need to ensure the consistency of the evaluation process to avoid confusing procedures or inconsistent standards caused by local policies. The evaluation committees should be based on uniform norms to ensure that the results of the evaluation in each region are fair and transparent.

#### ***4.3.2 Strengthening policy preferences and guidance***

Within counties, senior title quotas are flexibly allocated according to the actual situation of teachers in each rural school to ensure that teachers in rural elementary school have more opportunities for promotion. For example, teachers in remote villages should be given priority in the allocation of senior title quotas. A cross-regional quota transfer mechanism can be implemented to balance the quotas in areas with high teacher mobility, ensuring that there is no waste of resources and that there is a fair distribution of title promotion opportunities.

#### ***4.4 Enhancing the professionalization of rural teachers***

In order to meet the reform needs of rural basic education, the professional qualifications of rural teachers need to be further upgraded. This will not only achieve the goal of improving the level of rural education, but will also be of great help to the professional development of individual teachers and the building of a high-quality teaching force.

##### ***4.4.1 Establishment of a special training program and introduction of external expert support***

The Government should set up special training programmes to provide rural teachers with systematic courses on upgrading teaching skills, training in educational psychology, and the use of modern teaching tools, to ensure that they are better able to adapt to the requirements of education reform. Rural teachers can be helped to improve their professionalism by regularly inviting education experts to village schools for teaching exchanges and special training. Particular attention should be paid to developing teachers' abilities in such areas as the application of educational technology and innovation in curriculum design.

##### ***4.4.2 Raising the educational level of rural teachers***

Encourage rural teachers to upgrade their qualifications through continuing education by setting up an incentive mechanism for qualification upgrading, and providing incentives or subsidies to rural teachers who upgrade their qualifications through self-study or further training, to ensure that they have sufficient motivation and resources to pursue continuing education. In the appraisal of job titles, rural teachers' qualification upgrading should be included in the scope of the appraisal, and those with higher qualifications can enjoy extra points in the appraisal, enhancing their possibilities for promotion.

##### ***4.4.3 Attention to diversity within the rural teacher community***

Rural teachers work in complex and diverse environments, so their individual differences and actual contributions should be fully taken into account in the preparation of appraisal materials for the evaluation of their titles.[4]

When evaluating titles, rural teachers are allowed to choose evaluation materials according to their actual situation, for example, they can provide analyses of changes in student performance, feedback on communication between home and school, and research reports on rural education as alternatives to scientific research results. The double standard of "teaching assessment+ practical materials" can be adopted, emphasizing the assessment of teachers' practical experience and innovative achievements on the front line of education, rather than relying solely on scientific research results and theses.

A peer review mechanism could be introduced, with teacher representatives from rural schools on the review committee, to ensure that the review process understands the actual work of rural teachers and avoids unfair evaluation criteria. For teachers who have been promoted to , review committees can track their teaching performance and student feedback over time to ensure that the title is not just based on a one-time submission of materials, but is a dynamic and ongoing process.

## **5. Conclusion**

Although the title evaluation system has played a positive role in promoting the professional development of teachers, rural elementary school teachers face many obstacles in the promotion of their titles in the context of the inequality of educational resources between urban and rural areas. These obstacles include lack of resources, limited research opportunities, and impractical evaluation criteria, resulting in rural teachers being at a disadvantage in title evaluation. This paper attempts to analyze the inequities in the title evaluation system, including the problems of insufficient policy inclination, unequal title opportunities between schools, and national uniformity of evaluation standards. In order to solve these problems, suggestions such as the design of differentiated assessment standards, policy tilting and resource support, and optimization of the assessment mechanism are put forward, aiming to enhance the

fairness and adaptability of rural elementary school teachers in title assessment and promote the balanced development of urban and rural education. By analyzing the problems in depth and proposing practical solutions, it tries to provide some references for improving the title evaluation system and enhancing the quality of rural education.

## References

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