

Perspective on the Current Status and Development Strategies of English Education in Rural Primary Schools

Sha Liao¹, Xihua Chen^{1*}

¹ Guangzhou College of Technology and Business, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

Email Address

qxihua@126.com (Xihua Chen)

*Correspondence: qxihua@126.com

Received: 17 September 2024; **Accepted:** 2 October 2024; **Published:** 23 October 2024

Abstract:

Rural primary school English education is an integral part of primary education, which plays an important role in cultivating students' basic English knowledge and skills, stimulating their interest in learning English, and laying a solid foundation for future English learning. However, rural primary school English education faces challenges such as insufficient family tutoring, inadequate implementation of educational policies, lack of professional training for teachers, and inadequate language environment, resulting in weak English listening and speaking abilities and insufficient learning interest among students. To improve this situation, corresponding development strategies need to be adopted: first, building diversified family counseling channels; second, deepening the implementation of educational policies; third, improving professional training for English teachers; fourth, creating an immersive language environment. Through these strategies, the aim is to improve the quality of English education in rural primary schools, promote the comprehensive development of students' English abilities, narrow the education gap between urban and rural areas, and provide a broader stage for rural children's growth.

Keywords:

Rural Primary Schools, English Education, Development Strategy

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the continuous development of the national economy, a large number of young people have flooded into cities for development, leading to a significant reduction in the rural labor force. The loss of talent further exacerbates the urban-rural gap, with some rural areas not only experiencing economic decline but also stagnant education development. Among them, the development of English education in rural primary schools is particularly slow, far behind urban education. In primary education, English is one of the important language courses, which plays a positive role in improving primary school students' language expression ability, cultivating their cross-cultural communication awareness, and shaping their healthy personalities [1]. However, currently, the comprehensive implementation of English

education in rural primary schools faces a series of problems and challenges. Therefore, this article attempts to explore the development strategies of rural primary school English education through research in order to provide more valuable references and inspirations for the sustainable development of current rural primary school English education.

2. The necessity of English Education in Rural Primary Schools

In the era of deepening globalization, the importance of English education as a universal language for international communication is beyond doubt, especially in rural areas. Strengthening primary school English education has profound strategic significance and urgent practical needs. Firstly, strengthening English education in rural primary schools is beneficial for cultivating children's global perspective. With the rapid popularization of informatization, the world is becoming increasingly "small". By learning English, rural students can have earlier exposure to cultural, economic, technological, and other information from different countries and regions, thereby broadening their horizons and enhancing their global awareness. Secondly, as one of the important subjects in the basic education stage, English is not only a tool for language communication but also a bridge for obtaining information and conducting academic research. Establishing a solid foundation in English during primary school plays an irreplaceable role in the subsequent learning of various subjects, especially information technology, science, and other subjects that require extensive foreign language resources. Once again, strengthening English education in rural primary schools can narrow the educational gap. There is a significant gap in educational resources between urban and rural areas, and the imbalance in English education is particularly prominent. Strengthening English education in rural primary schools can help narrow this gap and ensure that every student can enjoy high-quality educational resources. Finally, strengthening English education in rural primary schools can enhance the comprehensive quality of primary school students. English learning is not limited to improving language skills but also encompasses the cultivation of humanistic literacy, teamwork, self-management, and other aspects. Therefore, strengthening English education in rural primary schools is an important strategic mission that urgently needs to be promoted.

3. Perspective on the Current Situation of English Education in Rural Primary Schools

3.1. Insufficient family counseling

With the rapid development of China's social economy, numerous rural laborers have flocked to cities, forming a huge group of migrant workers. According to relevant statistics, the majority of students in rural primary schools are left behind children. Therefore, in order to improve the current situation of English education in rural primary schools, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of the family situation of rural children. Firstly, intergenerational parenting is common. Under the pretext of "for the sake of their children", most parents in rural families choose to work outside, seemingly creating a relatively affluent living environment for their children on the surface but actually ignoring the importance of their children's spiritual growth. During the primary school stage, which is a period of physical and psychological growth and sensitivity for children, children need more companionship and guidance from their parents. However, parents who are supposed to be guardians

are replaced by their grandparents, and the parent-child relationship cannot be well interacted with. Children not only lack parental affection but also lack a sense of security and trust [2]. This intergenerational upbringing is also prone to conflict with current educational concepts and methods, further affecting the development of English education in rural primary schools. Secondly, rural parents have limited cultural knowledge. Most rural parents are mainly engaged in farming all year round, and the English education in rural primary schools is backward. The overall cultural level of parents is not high, and there are limitations in educational cognition. When facing the issue of English education for their children, they are at a loss, and coupled with the hardships of life, many parents focus more on the livelihood of the entire family, lacking sufficient time and energy to pay attention to their children's English education and growth. They rely more on school education and have not formed a situation of school-school collaboration in nurturing students. Thirdly, the conditions for family counseling are limited. Compared to urban areas, rural families have a poorer environment for English education. Although some parents realize the importance of English education, due to subjective and objective limitations, they cannot meet their children's needs. For example, there are no tools to play English listening at home and no English dictionary for children to learn and answer questions, which makes it difficult to stimulate their enthusiasm for learning English. On the contrary, if they encounter doubts during learning and cannot answer them in a timely manner, it may lead to their children's boredom and resistance towards English learning.

3.2. Inadequate implementation of education policies

The implementation of rural primary education policies involves multiple aspects such as policy formulation, implementation, supervision, and resource allocation. Firstly, the policy system is not strong. To implement rural primary education policies, it is necessary to systematically and steadily promote them while supporting various mechanisms, such as teacher supplement mechanisms, incentive mechanisms, development guarantee mechanisms, and execution supervision mechanisms. However, current policies often focus on improving one aspect, such as increasing wages or improving the teaching environment, without considering the overall situation, resulting in a lack of synergy in the implementation process and affecting the effectiveness of the policy. Secondly, the implementation of English-quality education is not comprehensive. Quality education is an education that aims to comprehensively improve the basic qualities of all students [3]. However, in the actual implementation process, the support of education managers for English education is often insufficient, and policies have not been fully implemented. For example, many schools still place too much emphasis on Chinese and mathematics grades, neglecting the cultivation of students' English abilities, deviating from the purpose of education, resulting in limited English pronunciation expression ability and a lack of creativity and innovation ability. Thirdly, inadequate management and supervision. There are phenomena of multiple management, unclear rights and responsibilities, mutual shirking, and policy interception in the process of policy implementation, resulting in waste of English education resources and low efficiency. In addition, the current supervision of rural primary school education policies is clearly insufficient, and the general public's awareness of the policies is insufficient, making it difficult to effectively monitor the implementation of education policies, further exacerbating the problem of poor policy implementation. Fourthly, there is an imbalance in the allocation of educational resources. There are significant differences

in educational resources between urban and rural areas, regions, and between public and private schools, especially in terms of hardware facilities, teaching staff, and teaching materials. Primary schools in rural areas are far inferior to those in cities. This uneven resource allocation results in most rural students being unable or unable to enjoy high-quality educational resources, and English education, which is not valued, is even more neglected. Fifth, the education evaluation mechanism is not perfect. The evaluation of rural primary education is mainly based on exam scores, lacking evaluation of students' comprehensive qualities and abilities, resulting in students only focusing on exam scores and neglecting their own development in English learning, leading to problems such as "mute English".

3.3. Lack of professional training for teachers

In rural primary schools, most teachers are older. Although these teachers have accumulated rich experience, their educational methods are no longer suitable for today's information age. Due to the relatively closed information and lack of communication with the outside world in rural areas, the educational concepts of primary school teachers have not kept up with the times, and their educational and teaching abilities are limited [4]. In the face of this situation, the local education bureau has also organized rural primary school teachers to participate in relevant education and teaching professional training, but there are still many problems, mainly reflected in the following four aspects. Firstly, there are few training opportunities. Due to insufficient training funds and conditions in rural areas, as well as limited educational resources, it is difficult to carry out high-quality and high-frequency professional training for English teachers. Therefore, rural primary school English teachers often have fewer opportunities to participate in various types of continuing education or professional training, which also limits their teaching skills and professional knowledge improvement, and affects teaching quality. Moreover, there are few primary school teachers in rural areas, and one teacher may need to undertake teaching tasks for multiple courses at the same time, making it easier to miss training opportunities. Secondly, the training content is disconnected from actual teaching. The existing training content and forms for rural primary school English teachers may not fully integrate the actual situation and needs of rural primary school English teaching, and some training content tends to be theoretical, resulting in teachers being unable to apply what they have learned to practical teaching. Thirdly, the training mode is too singular. Many training activities still rely on traditional lecture methods, lacking necessary interactive and practical elements, making it difficult to ignite teachers' enthusiasm for participation and learning, resulting in poor training outcomes. Fourth, there is a lack of sustainable development mechanisms. On the one hand, the training of English teachers in rural primary schools often presents the characteristics of time uncertainty and short-term nature, lacking long-term and systematic professional development planning and tracking guidance, and being unable to continuously improve teachers' professional competence. On the other hand, although some teachers have learned new teaching methods and concepts during the training process, they lack guidance and support in specific applications, and cannot continuously improve their teaching.

3.4. Lack of language environment

The current situation of English education in rural primary schools is not optimistic. Firstly, traditional teaching methods still dominate. Teachers often follow the rules

and mechanically impart vocabulary and grammar knowledge in the classroom, rarely using interactive teaching activities. This one-way indoctrination teaching method seriously neglects students' subjectivity and creativity, making it difficult to effectively cultivate students' listening and speaking abilities. Classroom teaching also tends to focus on reading and writing, lacking listening and speaking training, and students have almost no opportunities to practice oral expression and listening comprehension. Secondly, cultural differences constitute another major obstacle. Due to the lack of communication with foreign teachers, rural students are not familiar with the cultural background and social customs of English-speaking countries, which seriously affects their understanding and communication of English. Cultural differences may also lead to confusion for students when understanding English textbooks, making it difficult to accurately grasp the content and context. Furthermore, the lack of a practical application environment is also an issue that cannot be ignored. In rural areas, students have little opportunity to be exposed to real English use scenarios, such as face-to-face communication with foreigners or using English in daily life. Parents or grandparents generally do not understand English and are unable to provide additional English tutoring or create a strong English learning atmosphere for their children. Therefore, most rural students only have the opportunity to learn English in the classroom, while they are almost isolated from English outside of class, which undoubtedly deprives them of the opportunity to naturally acquire language and makes the language environment of rural primary school English education even more scarce.

4. Development Strategies for English Education in Rural Primary Schools

4.1. Building a diversified approach to family counseling

Firstly, the channels for family counseling should be broadened to improve the quality of English education in rural primary schools comprehensively. On the one hand, schools need to raise parents' awareness and work together to create a high-quality educational atmosphere. Parents in rural areas should actively strengthen their connections with schools and teachers and effectively increase their attention to English education. Parents should use scientific methods to guide their children in recognizing the importance of learning English and stimulate their interest in learning English through exploratory learning methods. Parents can lead by example and learn English together with their children, combining textbook knowledge with real-life situations to make English learning vivid and meaningful, thus igniting their children's love for English. Secondly, by utilizing media means, we can make up for the shortcomings of rural families in English tutoring. Given that some rural parents have limited English proficiency, schools should make full use of various scientific and effective English education media to popularize English knowledge in order to improve the overall level of family education and fill the gap in parents' scientific knowledge. At the same time, schools can also teach parents some methods of family education to help students learn English better. Finally, strengthening the cultural development of rural communities is equally crucial. The education department should strive to enhance the English cultural atmosphere in rural communities, such as adding English learning tools and materials, providing more convenient channels for rural students to answer questions and help them explore the mysteries of English, and building a beneficial peripheral learning atmosphere for rural education.

4.2. Deepen the execution of education policies

Firstly, the balanced allocation of educational resources should be strengthened. The education department should enhance its support for the allocation of English education resources in rural primary schools. At the same time, by formulating and implementing relevant policies, it should actively guide and encourage excellent teachers to teach in rural and impoverished areas where educational resources are scarce, ensuring that every child can equally enjoy high-quality English education resources and narrow the urban-rural education gap. Secondly, the funding channels for primary school English education in rural areas should be broadened. The education management department needs to actively call on all sectors of society to participate and work together to promote the progress and development of rural primary school English education. Through diversified fundraising methods, the investment in rural primary school education funds should be increased to further improve the overall quality of rural primary school English education so that rural children can also enjoy the same level of English education as urban children. Finally, the evaluation mechanism for primary school English education in rural areas should be improved. Schools need to establish a more comprehensive and scientific evaluation system for primary school English education. The system should not only consider students' exam scores but also attach importance to the cultivation of their comprehensive qualities, all-round development, and innovative abilities. At the same time, a sound education management system should be established to ensure the rational allocation and efficient utilization of educational resources and promote the steady improvement of the quality of English education in rural primary schools.

4.3. Improve professional training for English teachers

Firstly, improve the training system. The education department and schools should increase investment in rural primary school English education, establish a sound training system, including training objectives, content, methods, evaluations, etc., provide more training opportunities for teachers, regularly organize "grinding" activities, hold teaching competitions, invite excellent teachers to share experiences and carry out inter-school exchanges to improve teachers' teaching abilities. At the same time, schools can continuously adjust and improve the training system based on teachers' feedback and actual needs, ensuring the effectiveness and pertinence of the training. Secondly, pay attention to the practicality of the training content. The training content should be combined with the actual situation of English teaching in rural primary schools, including their existing knowledge level, skill status, and problems encountered in teaching, emphasizing practicality and operability, which helps to develop more targeted training plans. We can invite outstanding teachers and education experts from the front line to participate in curriculum design, making the training content more closely related to actual teaching. Thirdly, adopt diverse training methods. In addition to traditional lecture formats, case analysis, role-playing, interactive discussions, and other methods can be used to stimulate teachers' enthusiasm for participation and learning interest. Meanwhile, online education platforms can be utilized to provide teachers with more learning resources and teaching guidance. Fourth, provide effective follow-up support. Schools and education departments should provide continuous support and guidance to teachers who participate in training, helping them apply the knowledge and skills they have learned in practical teaching. By organizing regular communication and sharing

activities, providing teaching resources and equipment support, etc., teachers can continuously improve their teaching level.

4.4. Creating an immersive language environment

In order to further enhance the effectiveness of English education in rural primary schools, it is necessary to actively create diversified practical activities to create an immersive English learning environment. Firstly, organize rural primary school English teachers to go to cities for learning and communication. Schools should take the initiative to build platforms for face-to-face communication and learning between rural English teachers and urban teachers. By observing the teaching mode and classroom management skills of urban teachers on site, rural teachers can quickly understand the current mainstream teaching trends, reflect on and improve their own teaching methods, and ensure that rural primary school English education can keep up with the times and keep up with the pace of educational development. Secondly, hold English education lectures. Schools should invite renowned education experts to give lectures and bring new teaching experiences to rural students. Education experts should impart efficient learning strategies and tools to rural students, guide them to master scientific and effective learning methods, and make them realize that mastering scientific learning methods can significantly improve learning outcomes compared to the length of study time. Finally, organize diverse English practice activities. To break the inherent notion that “English is only an exam subject”, teachers need to make students deeply understand the wide application of English in daily life. Teachers can combine the unique environment and industries of rural areas to design English activities that are close to students’ lives. For example, setting up scenarios for students to introduce their hometown’s industries in English, or writing promotional language in English to promote their hometown, so that English can be closely integrated with rural life, and students can gradually change their understanding and attitude towards English in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere.

5. Conclusions

The current situation of English education in rural primary schools faces many challenges, but it also points us in the direction of progress. Through continuous exploration and innovation, we can provide higher quality and diverse English education resources for rural primary school students. Although the road ahead is long and difficult, as long as we have firm beliefs and the courage to take responsibility, we will be able to gradually narrow the education gap between urban and rural areas so that every rural child can enjoy fair and quality education. Let us join hands and contribute our wisdom and strength to the prosperous development of English education in rural primary schools and jointly write a new chapter of educational equity. I believe that in the near future, rural primary school English education will usher in a better tomorrow, laying a solid foundation for the comprehensive development of children and the continuous progress of society.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding

This work was supported by the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program for College Students of Guangzhou College of Technology and Business for the academic year 2023-2024 (XJ202313714395).

References

- [1] Chen, H.Y. The Challenges and Solutions of English Education in Rural Primary Schools in the New Era. *Seeking Knowledge Guide*, 2023, 08, 68-70.
- [2] Zhang, L.M.; Zheng, Y.L.; Jing, L.Y. The Enlightenment of Xi Jinping's Important Discourse on Teachers on the Cultivation of Talents in Normal Universities. *Heilongjiang Higher Education Research*, 2023, 41(4), 146-151.
- [3] Yang, C.H. Rural Left behind Children and Boarding Education: An Analysis of the Impact of Lack of Life Experience on Minors. *Nankai Journal (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2018, 2, 80-87.
- [4] Niu, X.J. Several Issues on Quality Education. *Teaching of Ideological and Political Courses*, 2001, 2, 32-33.



© 2024 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)