

Research on the Policy Implementation Process of 'Special Post Programme'

Dong Bing Fu

Changsha Normal College, Changsha 410100

ABSTRACT

Over the past 18 years since the implementation of the Special Post Programme, millions of primary and secondary school teachers have been recruited for rural areas in central and western China, which has alleviated the problem of rural teacher shortage to a certain extent. However, there is a certain deviation between the idealised goal of education policy and the reality of policy implementation at the grassroots level. Based on Smith's ITEI model, the article conducts an in-depth analysis of the specific process of county policy implementation, and finds that the interactions and tensions among the grassroots policy implementation subjects, target groups and the policy environment together lead to the complicity between policy implementation and the reality of local education development, which to a certain extent results in the deviation of the policy implementation effect.

KEYWORDS

special post programme; policy implementation process; implementation subject; target group

Since the implementation of the 'special post programme' policy, nearly 1.25 million rural primary and secondary school teachers have been added to the central and western regions of China, which has solved the problem of insufficient teachers in rural areas to a certain extent, and the overall quality of the rural teaching force has been improved ^[1]. Many researchers have studied the implementation effects, problems and dilemmas of the 'Special Post Programme' policy and put forward optimization proposals ^[2], but they have not paid enough attention to the micro-level implementation of the 'Special Post Programme' policy, and the specific impact of the policy implementation process at the county level has not been known. The specific impact of the policy implementation process at the county level is not yet known.

1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

1.1 Literature Review

Existing research mainly focuses on the implementation effect of the policy of 'special post programme', the existing dilemmas and optimization suggestions, mostly quantitative surveys of special post teachers in a certain region in a certain period of time, to find out the problems and put forward suggestions. Li Yuxue and Wu Zhihui suggest adjusting the distribution system of special-post teachers, improving on-the-job training, and improving the treatment and attractiveness of the post ^[1]. Liu Yaowu and others found that special-post teachers have fewer opportunities for professional development, low initiative, and a lack of planning, and suggested that the

effectiveness of continuing education for special-post teachers should be enhanced and the awareness and ability of special-post teachers for independent professional development should be cultivated ^[3]. Some researchers have studied the problems existing in the implementation of the policy of 'special post programme' and put forward relevant suggestions to optimize the policy. According to Zhang Jizhou, in the implementation of the policy of 'special post programme', there are problems such as academic qualification only, supporting formality, and difficulty in professionalisation, etc. It is recommended to improve the adaptability of the rural education life of special post teachers, pay attention to their career, and strengthen the implementation of the policy^[4]. Fan Xiaodong and Feng Xiaoli found that the upper and lower levels of government conspire to cope with the policy, resulting in the implementation of the 'special post programme' policy deviates from the original intention of the policy ^[5].

Comprehensively speaking, the existing research mainly has the following shortcomings: First, the research object is limited to a single target group, ignoring the policy implementation body and the impact of the policy environment. Second, the research methodology is more quantitative research and less qualitative research. The article applies Smith's ITEI model to reveal the specific process of policy implementation in special post counties and excavate the microcosm of policy implementation.

1.2 Theoretical framework of the study

Smith's ITEI model states that the effective implementation of public policy must have a series of relevant prerequisites, namely 'Implementing Organization, Target Group, Environmental Factors, Idealised Policy'. Idealised Policy' are the four important factors involved in the process of policy implementation [6]. Implementing agencies are the units of government agencies responsible for policy implementation; target groups are those who are affected by the policy and must adopt new forms of interaction, who are most directly affected by the policy, and who must respond appropriately in order to comply with the policy requirements; Environmental Factors include those factors in the environment that affect or are affected by the implementation of the policy; and Idealised Policy is the idealised mode of interaction that the policymaker is attempting to steer. model.

The ITEI model is a good illustration of how the implementation of the SGP policy at the grassroots level is affected by a number of factors. On the one hand, the county education bureau is the main implementing agency, which needs to coordinate the systems and opinions of the county editorial office, personnel and financial departments, and take into account the actual needs of rural schools, and on the other hand, it needs to consider the actual difficulties of the special-posted teacher groups working in rural schools, and to deal with the relationship between the special-posted teachers and the development of the rural society. The elements influence each other, and the tension of interaction sustains the implementation of the policy, forming a complex system nested within each other.

2 Research design and process

This study adopts a qualitative research method, mainly through the collection of policy texts and in-depth interviews with 19 selected subjects to collect materials, with the help of Nvivo 12.0 software to categorise and code the original materials. The article takes County Z as the sample county, firstly, the county is a national poor county, with a serious shortage of rural teachers and serious aging, it was selected as a special post county earlier, and the scale of recruitment of special post teachers for more than 10 years has been over 100 people. Secondly, the retention rate of the

county's special-gang teachers after the expiration of their service period reaches 86.8 per cent, which is relatively representative. Based on the principle of purposive sampling and the principle of snowball sampling, a total of four leaders and staff of the Education Bureau, one person in charge of personnel, editorial office and finance of the county, four headmasters of rural primary and secondary schools, and eight representatives of the special-graduate teachers were selected, making a total of 19 subjects for the study.

3 Conclusions of the Study

3.1 Implementing agencies: differentiated behaviours of each implementing subject

The implementation of the 'Special Post Programme' policy in the county depends on the understanding of the policy and the real actions of each implementing body. The county education bureau is the main implementing body of the 'Special Post Plan' policy, but it is subject to the constraints and management of the county editorial office, human resources and social services, and financial departments in terms of submitting plans, formulating programmes, arranging posts, implementing the establishment, promoting titles, and enhancing treatment, while at the same time, it also has to take into account the actual teaching needs of primary and secondary schools in rural areas.

The management functions of each department and unit are different, and the aspects to be considered are not the same. The main function of the county editorial office is to approve the county's primary and secondary school teachers' establishment, and is responsible for the regularisation of teachers in the special network after a three-year appointment period; the county human resources and social welfare bureau is responsible for the validation of the number of posts, the distribution of wages and income, and social insurance; and the county treasury is mainly responsible for the payment of wages and benefits. Rural schools are required to report their annual job plans according to their teaching needs. Stakeholders in the implementation of the above 'special post programme' policy, out of consideration of their own interests, will have different interests and demands and in the process of realisation of the game, together affect the implementation of the policy process.

3.2 Target group: passive choice in the face of practical difficulties

College graduates are the target group of the Special Post Programme, but college students are more inclined to urban jobs and pursue the realisation of their self-worth, and only in the case of urban employment difficulties and pressure of survival will they choose to go to rural areas for employment and apply for the Special Post Teachers. According to the statistics of Z County Education Bureau, among the 2,735 special-gang teachers recruited, about 41% of them moved to teach in urban schools, 34% stayed in township central schools, and only about 12% remained in small rural schools, and about 13% have already left the profession. Teachers with special posts lack a sense of identity as rural teachers, and are trying to find ways to transfer out of rural schools or leave the teaching force, with only a small number of those who have no connections and whose personal abilities are not outstanding passively remaining in rural schools.

3.3 Policy environment: from quantitative demand to qualitative improvement

In the 18 years since the implementation of the 'Special Post Plan' policy, the proportion of China's urban population has increased from 43% to 65% of the total population, and the rural

population has decreased from 800 million to 500 million, with hundreds of millions of people leaving the countryside on a large scale, and the main labour force of the countryside has flowed to the cities, with the remaining old people and children, and the flow of excellent teachers and high-quality students from the rural schools has continued to flow to the cities, increasing the gap between the quality of education in urban and rural areas. From 2006 to 2022, China's college graduates will grow from nearly 4 million to about 10 million, and the pressure on employment will increase dramatically. College graduates place the highest value on salary, stability and commuting distance when choosing a job, and jobs in big cities are their first choice, with more attention paid to their personal career development. The form of domestic economic development, employment policies and the impact of the new crown epidemic all have an impact on the employment choices of college graduates.

4 Idealised policy: interaction and tension between elements

The implementation of education policy in China is top-down, with the education administration being the main implementing agency. However, due to the fragmentation and intersection of human, financial and administrative rights, education administrations are often hamstrung by personnel and financial departments when exercising their authority. The construction of rural teacher teams in counties means that they have to conform to the county human resources and social affairs bureau's management of career staff, and they are also subject to the constraints of the county's ability to invest in financial resources, and the county editorial office's management of career staffing also constrains the scale of construction of rural teacher teams to a certain extent. In addition, county education bureaus should also give comprehensive consideration to the actual needs of rural schools when recruiting special-grade teachers. From their respective management and education functions, the county education, personnel, finance, editorial office and rural schools, through communication, consultation and games, jointly influence the recruitment, use and management of teachers on special post, as well as the working environment, career development and title promotion of teachers on special post, and determine whether teachers on special post are 'able to go, stay and teach well'. It determines whether teachers on special post 'can go, stay and teach well'.

5 Discussion and Suggestions

Undoubtedly, the 'special post programme' is a major initiative to innovate the mechanism of replenishing teachers in rural schools, attracting highly educated talents to engage in rural compulsory education, and also a practical action to guide and encourage college graduates to go to remote and poor areas in the west for employment. However, the 'Special Post Programme' has been affected by many factors in the course of its implementation, and has deviated from the idealised policy, giving rise to such problems as the structural shortage of rural teachers and the inability of professional competence and quality to meet the development of rural education. In order to solve these problems, it is necessary to further optimise the policy support measures, work with the various implementation bodies, improve the treatment of the target groups, enhance the attractiveness of the rural teaching profession to college graduates, and at the same time strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of the post-service training of teachers on special posts, improve the working and living environments of teachers on special posts, and continually enhance the core competitiveness and professional development of teachers on special posts.

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About the Author

Dong Bing Fu, male, Lecturer of Changsha Teachers College, Research Direction: Basic Education Reform; Contact Address: No. 9, Teli Road, Xingsha Economic Development Zone, Changsha, 410100, Tel: 15116120027, E-mail: dongbingschool@163.com.

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