

Teachers' Burnout and Primary Schools for Migrant Children

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Abstract—Teaching in migrant children schools is anxious and overwhelmed. Teachers deserve more social attention and should be provided with appropriate care to ensure their welfare and mental health. Although previous teacher burnout studies focused on several variables (e.g. age, gender and experience), studies on migrant children schools are limited. Teachers in these schools face many unusual challenges in other schools. This article aims to explore how school climate, students, parents, and professional development lead to teachers' burnout in migrant children schools. It began with discussing the current situation of migrant children schools with reference to previous studies and reports. Then the findings showed a) that governmental support is limited; b) students are taught under the unified standard; c) the absent role of parents widens the gap of communication in the family and d) teachers in such schools see little hope in the future careers and might even want to resign. In addition, the mental status of the teachers is usually neglected, so that many teachers feel chronic helplessness.

Index Terms—teachers' burnout, migrant children school

I. INTRODUCTION

Ramaswami indicated that the increase of city population strongly ties with the total aggregate GDP and innovation scale [1]. The prosperity of city lives attracts millions of migrant workers packing into developed cities, and the flow of migrant workers contributes to the robust economic growth of many metropolises. Meanwhile, Lu unveils that their children's educational matters lack enough emphasis: the parents of migrant children are often involved in low-status and low-paid jobs and thus experience disadvantageous socioeconomic status [2]. Whether their disadvantages will be transmitted to the next generation largely depends on migrant children's ability to achieve social mobility. The current status of schools for migrant kids and adolescents is a special category that

concerns many people. Most of these schools are located in suburbs or rural areas without enough resources and facilities. One teacher described that the educational facilities in her school are far from satisfactory with only 16 computers so far [3].

As a result, teachers in primary schools for migrant children often complain and feel stressed. In addition, unlike professional title evaluation opportunities open to public schools, the career development space for teachers in migrant schools is very narrow due to a lack of in-service training and peer seminars. All these troublesome situations quickly result in teachers' burnout. The syndromes of burnout, as Freudenberger described, usually include exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of ineffectiveness [4]. In contemporary society, groups with demanding jobs, such as teachers, are often faced with threats of burnout. Sood thought teacher burnout could be attributed to job-related stress caused by reduced personal achievement, inadequate interactions with students and parents, and an unsatisfying working environment [5]. Long-time burnout would unquestionably bring adverse effects. Farber pointed out that teacher burnout could lead to consequences such as feelings of despair and thoughts of job changes [6].

Teachers in suburban areas find it tricky to handle classes effectively because students have varied knowledge bases. The demographic mix is even more complex in immigrant cities, where schools for migrant children are an easily overlooked group. Most of the previous studies have emphasized various external factors affecting teacher burnout, such as comparing teacher burnout between government schools and private schools [7]. However, migrant children schools as special private ones have received little attention. For a long time, public policies have favored urban areas while migrant schools situated in metropolises' suburbs are liable to be given less concern [8]. The local education department does not provide sufficient on-the-job psychological service for teachers in schools for migrant children who feel stressed, pressured, despair, or powerless at work.

Therefore, this paper studied teachers' job burnout in migrant children schools. Similar challenges were found out that teachers faced against such a particular background and analyzed elements with primary influence such as career development, communication with parents, and facilities. On the basis of summarizing the existing research experience, possible solutions were put forward to the job burnout of teachers in migrant children's schools.

II. TEACHERS' BURNOUT

Teachers' burnout is a social issue that has been the subject of many research teams. Although teachers universally experience stress at different levels, the situations vary according to many contributors. Some studies state that burnout is related to teaching experience [9], while others suggest that both genders of a different educational level feel emotional weariness, regardless of years of experience [10]. Despite that experienced teachers are more familiar with handling student-related problems, the degree of burnout is also affected by the characteristics of students and other external factors. Specifically, teaching in primary school could be extremely stressful due to pupil misbehavior. Because of students' young age and incomplete mental development, acts that disrupt the teaching process are more commonly seen in elementary schools. Usually, teachers in Chinese elementary school teacher are responsible for a class for the whole six years. If teachers and students do not establish friendly relations, teachers will be under stress for an extended period of time. If the class were under average ability, regrets for choosing this profession might be stimulated.

In China, rural school teachers suffer more from a poor teaching environment and inadequate resources [11]. The imbalance between urban and rural development has led many rural schools to find it difficult to retain teachers. Besides, the level of burnout is also different in public and private schools. Cordilia suggested that public school teachers experienced higher levels than private school teachers as they dealt with "political pressure, responsibility for persons and unprofitability" [7]. Nonetheless, there are fewer related studies on migrant children schools under complicated circumstances. Often classified as private schools, migrant children schools are set up in suburban areas, with children of varying levels.

III. PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN

A. Lack of Educational Sponsorship and Teaching Facilities

In migrant children schools, teaching conditions are commonly inferior due to the absence of governmental support and awareness. As educational achievement is crucial in motivating teachers, a lack of educational sponsorship could lead to teachers' frustration and even reluctance. On the one hand, local governments play favorites in allocating resources. Wang and Holland researched six migrant children schools of Shanghai. They suggested that the governments in the regions refused to put their official imprimatur on migrant children schools since these schools are registered under the Chinese

Ministry of education (MoE) and beyond the jurisdiction of local governments [8]. Nevertheless, MoE policies for this area are not thoughtfully executed. Despite some local governments trying to solve the problems, administrative barriers and financial constraints hindered the process. Existing research has pointed out that enhancing school financial input is of great importance regarding educational outcomes [12]. Apart from that, most migrant workers are in poor economic conditions, so the funding is quite limited.

On the other hand, many migrant children schools are unwilling to invest in teaching facilities and staff. Consequently, the teachers often felt overwhelmed by pressure caused by a lack of qualified teachers, even with the help of volunteers or retired teachers. Provided that the teachers could not manage to deal with the pressure, burnout became a typical result. Li *et al.* mentioned that many of the teachers they interviewed expressed their worries about the shortage of educational equipment like computers [3]. Without enough facilities and techniques, children's performance might be affected and hence impact a teacher's sense of accomplishment. When a teacher in a migrant children schools notice the inequality between public schools and their school, the urge of job-hopping might be generated.

B. Lack of Professional Training Opportunities

The degree of teachers' burnout in schools for migrant children is positively correlated with career prospects. As Duke illustrated, the opportunity to grow and acquire new work-related skills was a potent motivator for many adults [13]. As a distinct group, teachers are the leaders of teaching and the transfer of knowledge. With the accelerating pace of knowledge renewal, information is updated every two to three years. Teachers' pursuit of knowledge and their needs for disciplinary quality and professional knowledge are also increasing. If teachers' basic right to get fresh in-service training cannot be satisfied, they are prone to "halt" in their area. There is a growing conflict between pedagogical innovation and teachers' demand for on-the-job education, especially in schools for migrant students. Teachers who have been well-educated dare to shoulder the press in personal growth whatsoever, are willing to take the risk, and have a considerably high expectation.

Teachers hold the belief and mission in enlightening younger generations. Therefore, they are more obsessed with updating their fundamental teaching skills and using workable pedagogy in their careers than other individuals. They are hardly exposed to well-organized in-service training partly because they do not belong to the public education system. Educational bureau always saves opportunities for teachers in public schools. A common phenomenon is that teachers serving the public education system prioritize professional training such as listening to expert talks, competitions, and feedback guidance for young teachers. Teachers in schools for migrant children learn more or less about these opportunities for teacher career growth. Given the resources in big cities tending to favor the development of public school teachers and excluding teachers in schools for migrant children,

teachers at a disadvantage are trapped in disappointment and gradually suffer burnout.

IV. STUDENTS AND PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONS

A. Students Mental Health

Teachers' teaching enthusiasm and attitude are affected by students' mental health. The children of migrant workers in primary school move with their parents from their hometown to the city at a young age. In developing countries, to solve the family livelihood, many people choose to migrate from rural areas to cities or from underdeveloped areas to developed areas. However, the impact of this process on the children of migrant workers is profound, no matter whether their parents are around or not [14]. Migrant children feel uncomfortable in a strange environment and become sensitive and anxious. Wong *et al.* studied the risk factors related to the mental health of migrant workers' children in Shanghai. The study found that migrant workers' children scored higher in separation anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, and depressive symptoms related to their unique migration experience [15]. Schools for migrant children are changing as parents frequently move from one workplace to another. This change affects peer relationships and teacher-student relationships and increases their sense of loneliness and belonging. The differences in values and behavior patterns between children of migrant workers and their urban peers lead to social isolation and lack of peer support. These differences are directly reflected in their strong regional accents and outdated clothing. The students' psychological problems are further related to their migrant families, who face social marginalization and exclusion [17].

Unfortunately, the peripheral family status and related volatile and unstable psychological conditions of children are rather stubborn. It cannot be fixed in the short term because the relief of mental issues relies on consistent accompaniment and guidance. Thus, when teachers, especially novice teachers, face these issues, they may feel exhausted in handling students' psychological sensitivity, leading to tension between teachers and students.

B. Students and Parents Disengagement

The low engagement of parents is a common problem in primary schools of migrant children. Teachers in migrant schools found it difficult to help students effectively through timely communication with parents. Migrant workers go to cities because of their livelihood. The parents of these migrant children are busy with work and have little time to care about their children's studies, let alone communicate with teachers. Furthermore, most migrant workers are uneducated and have no special skills [16]. Therefore, sometimes migrant parents even find it challenging to communicate with teachers because they cannot fully understand what teachers mean, which also leads to these parents not wanting to communicate with teachers about students' situations. They think that learning is students' own business. Teachers' efforts without parents' recognition and feedback will reduce their enthusiasm for teaching and affect their motivation for teaching, eventually leading to job burnout. Hence, the

lack of engagement between migrant children schools teachers, students, and parents leads to their work depression, which is an essential factor of job burnout.

In addition to the psychological problems mentioned in the previous section, migrant children are demotivated in school. Students' learning materials in their hometown schools have relatively high prerequisites and lack basic knowledge, challenging their motivation to continue learning without learning primary content. For teachers, they are confused handling with learning paces of different students. Balancing the teaching difficulty is a crucial challenge for teachers in migrant children schools. Over time, teachers will feel tired and frustrated in the face of students' learning differences and the difficulty of teaching. According to Atmaca *et al.*, there is a correlation between in-service teachers' mood, burnout, and job satisfaction [17]. Consequently, the frustration of migrant school teachers gradually leads to job burnout.

V. TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

Teachers in migrant schools have difficulty shaping the role of who they are and what they are becoming. Private migrant primary schools that they reside in literally have no endeavor in setting up some provoking title assessment on their own to stimulate teachers' professional identities, let alone being excluded from the professional title evaluation.

Specifically, primary schools for migrant children are typical metropolises whose economic development mainly depends on migrant residences. An undeniable situation is that the educational resources here rank almost the least among the whole country. However, these primary schools for migrant children are separated from the public school system and couldn't equate with private schools requiring high tuition. Faculty serving for public school system can access a variety of opportunities in professional title assessment, which means public schools are great stages to appreciate teachers' dedication in his or her teaching career. It is a pity to point out that the primary schools for migrant children are experiencing "chronic sick," which is elusive and has been ignored by some in modern migrant cities. The primary schools for migrant children fail to afford powerful and organized career ladders, and the aftermath is a peaceful disaster. As Bouffard said in the pilot study results, childcare workers in centers with career ladders had higher could notation rates, exhibited higher morale, and were more likely to complete higher education courses than childcare workers in centers without career ladders [18]. Professionalizing teachers' career is crucial in schools' regulation, and by means of the career ladders such as professional title evaluation primary schools for migrant children would be able to strengthen the unity of the schools and acknowledge teachers' dedication in teaching.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the burnout of teachers in migrant primary schools mainly derives from the immature characteristics of pupils. Students' backgrounds are complicated, making classroom teaching tough to balance.

In terms of school construction and system, the primary schools for migrant children lack management and financial support from the local education bureau. The campus facilities are outdated and there is no smooth multimedia teaching, so innovative teaching ideas can not be practiced. Meanwhile, migrant primary schools' internal management neglects the development of in-service teacher training programs and research activities, regardless of teachers' strong willingness of schools to successfully help teachers enhance teaching ability.

Second, the particularity of the source of students and parents in migrant primary schools also indirectly leads to teachers' job burnout. The school education of teachers and the family education of students cannot form synergy. Students come to a strange city with their parents, passively adapt to the new school, and are relatively sensitive. Worse, their parents are busy with work and ignore their children's feelings in school, so teachers do not know how to help them and sink into self-blame and burnout.

Third, the burnout of teachers in migrant primary schools comes from the fact that they are confused with their identities when viewing the whole education system. Migrant primary schools are situated in modern cities with various chances for title assessment, but teachers who do not serve public schools are hardly exposed to such acknowledgment.

To alleviate teachers' job burnout in migrant children schools, we should start from the attention of all social parties to such schools. Such social concerns can provide necessary financial support for migrant children schools from a material level and make teachers feel that their work is valuable and respected. When migrant schools receive financial support, school facilities can catch up with local urban schools, so teachers' frustration with facilities will be lessened, and they will be able to try more innovative teaching methods. At the same time, teachers in migrant schools need to be given fair opportunities for career advancement. Relevant departments should reasonably allocate training opportunities and the number of professional titles according to the actual situation of teachers in local schools. As a result, teachers' enthusiasm for their work will be aroused, they will feel the charm of the teaching profession, and they will be more willing to keep learning and reflect on their teaching.

Besides, social concerns can help migrant children and their families feel that the cities they live in are inclusive. Social tolerance will reduce students' sense of insecurity. They will be more willing to communicate their authentic ideas with teachers and parents, attracting the school atmosphere and engaging with teachers' classes. Therefore, teachers feel a sense of accomplishment when students are more involved in class, ultimately reducing teacher burnout over time. The stable operation of migrant children schools and teachers' enthusiasm need the cooperation of all departments and positions to achieve the vision we expect.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed equally to literature research, data analysis and the writing of this paper. Tingyi Lou focused on the background of migrant city, career training and the professional title evaluation of teachers; Yang Lu focused on the relationship between students, parents and teachers, and introduced the influencing factors of teachers' professional identities; Peiran Yang focused on the general introduction of teacher's burnout and the basic information about migrant children schools. All authors had approved the final version.

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