

## Research on the Construction of a Friendly Educational Evaluation Mechanism for Rural Preschool Teachers

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**Abstract:** The construction of a "friendly" educational evaluation mechanism for rural preschool teachers essentially involves shifting the focus of preschool education evaluation from "management and judgment" of the labor group to "development and empowerment" of individual teachers. And from this crucial entry point, fully understand and respect the uniqueness and challenges of the work of rural preschool teachers. Through the construction of this "friendly" evaluation mechanism, to stimulate the internal motivation of teachers, promote their professional growth, and ultimately benefit every rural child. This research will focus on this core and conduct a systematic discussion from aspects such as the concept, challenges, reform directions and implementation paths.

**Keywords:** "Friendly" Evaluation Mechanism; Educational Evaluation; Rural Preschool Teachers

### 1. Introduction

In the early stage of development of modern rural public preschool education institutions, their welfare purposes are better than educational purposes, and they are committed to reducing the parenting pressure of mothers and freeing the social labor force [1]. Therefore, during that period, the educational evaluation standards for all preschool teachers were largely in a fragmented state, mainly focusing on care and upbringing.

After the 20th century, public preschool education gradually became integrated into basic education and became an integral part of the school education system. Whether it is for individual development or for social progress, the value of preschool education has been fully demonstrated in various countries around the world [2]. The educational functions of preschool institutions have gradually become

more prominent. From emphasizing welfare to highlighting education, this is undoubtedly the greatest recognition of the value of preschool education.

With this trend in place, corresponding reforms in preschool education evaluation have been repeatedly carried out. Therefore, over the past two decades, starting with the preschool teacher group and through educational evaluation reforms, efforts have been made to improve the quality of preschool education, intervene in early education as early as possible, and strive to achieve educational equity, which has become a common consensus among all [3]. However, this consensus is difficult to be verified in rural kindergartens and rural teachers who are in disadvantaged situations. However, this consensus is difficult to be verified in rural kindergartens and rural teachers who are in disadvantaged situations. Because, during the process of continuously constructing the new evaluation system, most of the reference baseline is based on various experimental parks and demonstration parks in the cities [4]. For a long time, this kind of preschool education evaluation system has been the mainstream, which is not friendly to rural preschool teachers and even leaves them at a loss. As for the rural areas with a relatively large coverage area, the preschool teachers there often feel frustrated when facing the evaluation criteria in education assessment. This situation even affects their own professional development, and the problem has not been completely resolved to this day. This research aims to analyze and explore feasible and friendly educational evaluation mechanisms that are beneficial to the development of rural preschool teachers, so as to prevent educational evaluation from becoming a constraint for this group, and provide more perspectives for the establishment of future educational evaluation systems.

### 2. The Core Concept of "Friendly"

### **Educational Evaluation**

In this era, it can be observed that the discovery and reinforcement of the economic benefits of early childhood education by educational economics have played a crucial role in changing the government's attitude towards and support for early childhood education. More and more countries and governments have set the future reform of preschool education on the intervention for rural children and the promotion of educational equity. This is also the reason for the government's investment and support [5]. However, the compensation and support for rural preschool education should not merely focus on the material level. It is also necessary to establish an external evaluation system that can help rural preschool education operate smoothly, especially an educational evaluation mechanism that can guide and motivate teachers.

Such a "friendly" evaluation mechanism should incorporate four core concepts: developmental, supportive, situational, and subject-oriented. First of all, educational evaluation should emphasize its developmental nature rather than punitive nature towards teachers. That is to say, it is necessary to clearly understand that the primary purpose of the evaluation is not to rank or label teachers, but to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses, and to provide them with a growth path and support that can be applied in rural areas. Secondly, educational evaluation should place more emphasis on providing support rather than imposing pressure on teachers. The evaluation process should focus on helping relatively disadvantaged rural teachers obtain more resources, alleviate unnecessary burdens, rather than creating anxiety and increasing additional workloads. Furthermore, educational evaluation should take into account the contextual differences across various regions. The evaluation criteria should fully consider the unique circumstances of rural areas, such as local culture, resource conditions, class size, and the proportion of left-behind children. It should avoid blindly applying "urban-centric" approaches. Furthermore, educational evaluation should also mobilize the subjectivity of teachers. Teachers should not be passive recipients of evaluation but active participants in the evaluation process, and even negotiators in the formulation of evaluation standards. They should have the right to explain and reflect on their own work.

### **3. Traditional Educational Evaluation and the Current Challenges Faced by Rural Preschool Teachers**

Teachers, as the core force driving the development of rural preschool education, determine the quality of rural preschool education [6]. However, with the acceleration of the urbanization process, there are objective factors such as the imbalance in the allocation of educational resources between urban and rural areas and the imperfect education evaluation mechanism. As a result, rural preschool teachers face multiple practical difficulties in their professional development [7]. On the one hand, the professional development of rural kindergarten teachers is confronted with inherent practical difficulties. The main issues include lagging professional concepts, rigid and narrow professional knowledge structure, weak professional development awareness, insufficient professional autonomy and critical thinking, and even a crisis of self-identity [8]. On the other hand, the professional development of rural kindergarten teachers is confronted with external practical difficulties. Although various related training activities for educational evaluation reforms have been promoted in different regions in recent years, they have to some extent broadened the learning channels for these teachers. However, most of the regular training programs tend to be merely formalistic and lack customized development designs specifically tailored to the actual professional development needs of rural preschool teachers. Moreover, as a top-down transformation and motivating force, educational evaluation is absent in rural preschool education, and its effect on enhancing teachers' professional skills is not satisfactory. It is also unable to bridge the gap between teachers' professional development paths and the transformation of educational practice.

The traditional evaluation standards compare rural preschool teachers with the evaluation criteria used for urban teachers, such as the use of multimedia teaching materials, the operation of high-end teaching aids, and the organization of large-scale activities, etc. This often leads to a sense of frustration for them, and even exacerbates their professional stress and burnout [9]. Even so, in some rural kindergartens, in order to meet the assessment requirements, the teachers' workload was exacerbated. The numerous evaluation materials such as forms,

documents, and file organization occupied the time that the teachers could have used to interact with the children and conduct teaching research, leaving them overwhelmed and struggling to cope. What worries rural preschool teachers even more is that the traditional evaluation results are often directly linked to their work performance, awards, and commendations. However, in rural kindergartens where resources and research facilities are limited, this kind of linkage often leads to internal conflicts among the teaching staff due to unfairness, or loses its motivating effect due to overly strict and unrealistic standards.

In addition, the traditional educational evaluation system lacks the guidance and reference functions for teachers' professional growth. In other words, after the evaluation, experts usually only provide scores and grades, lacking specific and actionable suggestions for improvement as well as continuous professional development guidance. The teachers in rural areas are already constrained by their own shortcomings in professional skills, and thus cannot achieve growth from such superficial evaluations. One of the most notable points is that traditional educational evaluation has largely overlooked the "emotional labor" that rural teachers have to undertake. Especially when dealing with a large number of rural children without parental supervision, teachers bear a heavy burden of "emotional labor", such as acting as surrogate parents and providing psychological counseling, etc. However, traditional evaluations only focused on "teaching and care skills", neglecting this crucial contribution. Therefore, it is urgent to explore an evaluation system that is in line with the actual needs of rural preschool education.

#### **4. The Reform Directions of the "Friendly" Evaluation Mechanism**

The reform of a friendly evaluation mechanism that is conducive to the development of rural preschool teachers can be carried out from the following four aspects.

##### **4.1 Reconstruct the Evaluation Criteria Content for Ruralization**

It is unrealistic to expect a significant improvement in the limited resources of rural kindergartens in the short term [10]. Educational evaluation should reduce the weight given to "hardware" aspects and instead increase the

weight of "soft power" factors. That is, reduce the assessment of the fixed facilities and ready-made teaching aids in kindergartens, and increase the evaluation of teachers' ability to utilize natural materials and local resources, such as leaves, stones, crops, folk games, etc. It is also advisable to appropriately incorporate indicators related to local sentiments and family co-education. These indicators should focus on evaluating whether teachers understand and integrate into the local community culture, whether they have established effective communication with parents who may have a lower educational level, and whether they provide necessary emotional support for children left behind by their parents. In addition, according to the size of rural kindergartens, the comprehensive ability of teachers should be recognized, because rural teachers often have to perform multiple roles, such as teaching, childcare, security, finance, etc., and the evaluation should recognize the complexity and multi-faceted nature of their work.

##### **4.2 Implement the Empowerment-based Evaluation Process and Method**

The expert group and research team should go to the countryside for investigation, advocate observation-based assessment, and shift from sitting in the office to review files to observing the actual educational scene on the ground. To ensure the rigor of the evaluation, the assessors should thoroughly visit the class, observe the interaction between teachers and children, as well as the support provided for games, and provide equal and conversational feedback to the teachers. In addition, it is necessary to further enrich the evaluation channels, that is, to shift from a single external evaluation to a combination of self-evaluation and collective evaluation. In order to obtain a more objective understanding of the actual situation, it is necessary to consider introducing teachers' self-evaluation and encouraging them to establish personal professional growth records. At the same time, peer review can also be introduced, forming a teaching and research community within the township central kindergarten, where teachers can observe and learn from each other. Specific measures could include promoting the use of growth portfolio assessment methods, and encouraging teachers to collect key materials that demonstrate their progress, such as effective home visit records and typical cases of children's

development, etc., in order to showcase the dynamic professional growth of teachers.

#### **4.3 Strengthen the Application of Developmental Evaluation Results**

In terms of the evaluation results, they should first be used to tailor training, learning and promotion opportunities for teachers, with a strong connection to their professional growth and a weak connection to material rewards and punishments, in order to stimulate internal motivation. For instance, if during the evaluation it is found that a certain teacher is relatively weak in observing children's games, then this teacher can be given priority to attend relevant training. This way, we can further address the professional shortcomings of rural preschool teachers and also provide them with personalized feedback and support. This requires that each evaluation feedback must be specific, descriptive, and include feasible improvement suggestions. The higher-level departments or the central kindergarten can also, based on the previous evaluation results, offer targeted guidance or provide resource links. As a result, in the future, the evaluation results can even serve as a reference for local governments and education-related departments when allocating resources. By identifying the outstanding practices and common needs of rural teachers through the evaluation, it can become an important reference for higher-level managers when distributing resources such as teaching aids, books, and training quotas, making the evaluation a channel for teachers to seek support rather than an obstacle.

#### **4.4 Adopt Digital Intelligence Tools for Enhancing Efficiency**

In the past three years, the world has witnessed an explosive growth in AI, digital technologies, and smart education. In the next decade, leveraging digital smart technologies may be an important opportunity to narrow the gap in preschool education between urban and rural areas. The key lies in using appropriate digital tools to assist teachers rather than adding to their burden. Some researchers have proposed that the government could lead enterprises to develop convenient apps, enabling rural preschool teachers to take photos and record audio of children's activities at any time, automatically generating observation notes and educational cases, thereby eliminating the cumbersome

process of handwritten materials and allowing parents to access the children's growth trajectories in real time by sharing the data. In addition, as rural areas are mostly scattered and located in remote areas, the network can break the spatial barriers. By establishing online learning and communication platforms, as well as building a big data-based online teacher community, the evaluation standards, excellent cases, and training resources can be shared, enabling teachers in remote areas to receive timely professional support, thus forming a cloud-based teaching research community.

#### **5. Implementation Path of the "Friendly" Evaluation Mechanism**

Any educational evaluation system is not completed once it is designed. Instead, this is merely the beginning of implementing the evaluation mechanism. For a "friendly" evaluation mechanism for rural preschool teachers, the implementation path should also be adapted to the actual conditions of the countryside. The top priority is to train qualified evaluation teams. We must change the concepts of supervisors, educational researchers, and principals, enabling them to master new and developmental evaluation concepts and methods. Otherwise, the reform is likely to deviate from its original intent at the implementation stage. In addition, in the actual operation, the relevant coordinators must make clear the reform and construction of the evaluation system, and should not be rushed. They should proceed step by step. Several rural areas should be selected as pilots first, and localized evaluation indicators should be formulated jointly with front-line teachers, which should be constantly improved in practice, summarized experiences and lessons, and then gradually promoted. In addition to top-level planning, local governments at the grassroots level should also be involved in innovation or provide ideas. Through multi-party cooperation, the provincial level should set out principles and bottom-line requirements, grant a certain degree of autonomy to rural areas and kindergartens, and encourage them to explore evaluation schemes that are most suitable for local conditions. On the other hand, it is also necessary to simultaneously enhance the remuneration and social status of rural preschool teachers. The evaluation reform must be combined with practical measures such as improving the material guarantees for rural

teachers, so as to retain outstanding talents and ensure that the evaluation reform is truly implemented.

### **6. Conclusion**

A friendly evaluation mechanism for rural preschool teachers aims to enable them to feel respected, witness their own growth, and obtain support. When teachers shift from being the objects being evaluated to the subjects engaged in professional growth, their inherent creativity and sense of responsibility will be truly stimulated. Strive to prevent them from feeling inferior due to past evaluation results, and instead make them proud that rural preschool teachers can also create irreplaceable educational value. Such kind of evaluation mechanism would truly stabilize the foundation of rural preschool education, attract and retain more outstanding talents to settle down in the countryside, and use education to illuminate the future of rural children.

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