International Educational Research; Vol. 8, No. 4; 2025
ISSN 2576-3059 E-ISSN 2576-3067
https://doi.org/10.30560/ier.v8n4p50

School Support for the Sustainable Professional Development of Young Teachers in Rural Primary Schools

Ting Sun[1] & Zhikang Peng[2]

[1] Yangsanmu Hui Nationality Complete Primary School, China

[2] Institute of Language Sciences, Shanghai International Studies University, China

Correspondence: Zhikang Peng, Institute of Language Sciences, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China.

Received: July 12, 2025; Accepted: July 22, 2025; Published: July 23, 2025

Abstract

Teacher professional development is a crucial research and practice topic in the field of education. As a key group in rural education, young teachers in rural primary schools bear the mission of revitalizing rural education, and their professional competence directly impacts educational quality and student development. This study focuses on young teachers from 30 rural primary schools in Huanghua City, China, investigating their professional development status and school support through questionnaire surveys to analyze the influence of school support on professional growth. The findings reveal that cultural support, resource support, and evaluation support significantly positively affect teachers' professional development, while the impact of institutional support is relatively limited. Additionally, certain dimensions of school support still exhibit deficiencies in specific aspects of professional growth. Based on these results, this study proposes targeted support strategies to enhance the professional development of young rural primary school teachers, addressing institutional, resource, cultural, and evaluation dimensions.

Keywords: teacher professional development, school support, young teachers

1. Introduction

Teacher Professional Development refers to the process through which teachers continuously enhance their professional philosophies, knowledge, and skills, while renewing their moral-emotional intelligence, via both formal and informal organizational learning[1]. For teachers, it helps stimulate teaching motivation, enhance pedagogical skills, and improve professional competence; for students, it ensures access to high-quality education and improves learning outcomes; for schools and society, it facilitates the innovation of educational policies and curricula, promotes the overall improvement of education quality, and drives sustainable social development. To advance teacher education in China, the Ministry of Education and seven other government departments jointly issued the "Strong Teachers Plan for Basic Education in the New Era" in 2022. This initiative aims to enhance teachers' professional development in areas such as ethics, teaching ethics, and educational capabilities, laying a solid foundation for building a high-quality education system.

However, the professional development of rural teachers currently faces multiple challenges. Firstly, there is an imbalance in resources between urban and rural teachers. Material conditions in urban schools are significantly superior to those in rural schools, where facilities are often rudimentary and working conditions are harsh. Secondly, rural schools suffer from severe student attrition. Many rural schools experience continuous declines in enrollment, leading to closures or mergers. Thirdly, the evaluation criteria in rural schools are often unreasonable. Some rural schools rely solely on quantitative assessment systems or lack democratic school management practices. Lastly, the rich cultural and community-based resources of rural life remain underutilized. Local knowledge and traditions are not fully integrated into teaching practices or curriculum development[2-4]. These issues have led to insufficient endogenous motivation for the professional development of rural teachers, resulting in developmental deviations in professional identity, ethics, knowledge, competencies, philosophies, and goals. Therefore, the professional development challenges faced by rural teachers urgently require solutions. In addressing these challenges, rural primary schools and young teachers face particularly pressing problems. On one hand, the primary school stage is a critical period for the development of individual behavioral habits (especially learning habits), intellectual growth, and personality formation. The instructional competence and moral integrity of teachers significantly impact students' future development. On the other hand, young teachers serve as the

backbone of rural education revitalization, and their stable growth is vital to building a high-quality rural teaching workforce.

How can we promote the professional development of young teachers in rural primary schools? The social support theory posits that there are close social relationships between people. These relationships can provide individuals with emotional or material support when they face difficulties or threats. Conversely, the emergence of personal and social problems is often due to the breakdown of the social support system[5-6]. For young teachers in rural primary schools, the improvement of their educational philosophy, teaching skills, and other aspects of professional development mostly takes place within the school. Therefore, the school is the primary venue for the professional development of young rural teachers, and school support is the main way to promote their professional growth. Professional development of young teachers in rural primary schools requires the school to provide a harmonious and stable external environment, and they need to seek support and help within the school support system. According to the social support theory, the social support system consists of three elements: the subject, the medium, and the object. For a school, the subject of school support is the provider of support, including school leaders, colleagues, etc. The object of school support is the recipient of support, that is, the young teachers in rural primary schools. The medium is the content or means of school support, which is the bridge connecting the subject and the object of social support. It mainly refers to the specific support measures provided by rural primary schools for young teachers in the process of their professional development.Therefore, it is crucial to understand which dimensions of school support have an impact on teachers' professional development and how they do so.

The current study combines the social support theory and taking young teachers in rural primary schools as the research subjects, delves into how school support can promote the professional development of young teachers in rural primary schools. It aims to provide pathways and methods for the professional development of young teachers in rural primary schools from the perspective of school support. At the same time, it seeks to contribute to the education and student growth in rural primary schools and offer references for the professional development of teachers in similar schools.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Participant

This study mainly focuses on young teachers from 30 rural primary schools in Huanghua City, Hebei Province, China. A total of 149 questionnaires were distributed, and 129 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective recovery rate of 86.58%. In this study, young teachers in rural primary schools refer to those who are under 35 years old and teach in rural primary schools at the township level or below. These young teachers show different distribution characteristics in terms of gender, age, educational background, etc., as shown in Table 1. Additionally, this study conducted interviews with eight young teachers in rural primary schools and two school leaders to investigate their views on teachers' professional development and school support, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the professional development of young teachers in rural primary schools and school support.

Table 1. Distribution of Sample Characteristics of Young Teachers in Rural Primary Schools

	Type	Number	Proportion
Gender	Male	11	8.53%
	Female	118	91.47%
Age	<=25	14	10.85%
	26-30	75	58.14%
	31-35	40	31.01%
Teaching Experience	<=2	28	21.71%
	3-5	52	40.31%
	6-9	33	25.58%
	>=10	16	12.40%
Educational Background	Associate Degree and Below	34	26.36%
	Bachelor's Degree	94	72.87%
	Master's Degree and Above	1	0.77%
Professional Title	Not Yet Graded	42	32.56%
	Third-Grade Teacher	2	1.55%
	Second-Grade Teacher	78	60.46%
	First-Grade Teacher	7	5.43%

	Senior Teacher	0	0
Subject Taught	One Subject	75	58.14%
	Two Subjects	41	31.78%
	Three or More Subjects	13	10.08%
Honorary Titles	Not Obtained	63	48.84%
	School-Level	25	19.38%
	County-Level	33	25.58%
	City-Level	8	6.20%
	Provincial-Level and Above	0	0
Class Teacher	Yes	74	57.36%
	No	55	42.64%

2.2 Measures

This study mainly investigated the personal basic information, professional development situation, and school support situation of young teachers in rural primary schools. The personal basic information includes eight items: gender, age, teaching experience, educational background, professional title, subject taught, honorary titles obtained, and whether they are class teachers (the specific situation is shown in Table 1). The professional development situation was mainly investigated based on the "Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers (Trial)" issued by the Ministry of Education of China in 2012. A "Survey on the Professional Development of Young Teachers in Rural Primary Schools" was compiled accordingly. The "Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers (Trial)" is the national basic requirement for the professional quality of qualified primary school teachers, covering three aspects: professional philosophy and teacher ethics, professional knowledge, and professional ability. Professional philosophy and teacher ethics include understanding and recognition of the profession, attitudes and behaviors towards primary school students, attitudes and behaviors towards teaching and education, and personal cultivation and behavior. Professional knowledge involves knowledge of primary school student development, subject knowledge, teaching and education knowledge, and general knowledge. Professional ability includes educational teaching design, organization and implementation, motivation and evaluation, communication and cooperation, and reflection and development. Based on these aspects, this study formed and selected 20 items, with 5 items for professional philosophy and teacher ethics, 7 items for professional knowledge, and 8 items for professional ability. A 5-point Likert scale was used for scoring (1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree" with the level of agreement increasing from 1 to 5). Further reliability and validity analyses revealed that the reliability α coefficient of the scale was 0.950, and the KMO validity value of the exploratory factor analysis was 0.845, indicating that the scale has good reliability and validity.

For the investigation of school support, we drew on the dimensions of school support identified in previous studies[7-9] and categorized school support into four dimensions: institutional support, conditional support, cultural support, and evaluative support. Based on this, we developed the "Survey on School Support for the Professional Development of Young Teachers in Rural Primary Schools" and selected 23 items. Specifically, institutional support includes incentive systems, training systems, and planning systems, with a total of 7 items; conditional support includes material support, informational support, and temporal support, with a total of 6 items; cultural support includes interpersonal relationships, work atmosphere, and leadership style, with a total of 6 items; and evaluative support includes evaluation subjects, evaluation criteria, and evaluation implementation, with a total of 4 items. A 5-point Likert scale was used for scoring (1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree" with the level of agreement increasing from 1 to 5). Further reliability and validity analyses revealed that the reliability α coefficient of the scale was 0.981, and the KMO validity value of the exploratory factor analysis was 0.852, indicating that the scale has good reliability and validity.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted using SPSS 22.0. Initially, descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the teachers' personal basic information, professional development status, and school support status. Subsequently, demographic information was used as categorical variables, and independent samples t-tests were employed to compare the differences in school support between male and female teachers. Finally, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted between the teachers' professional development status and school support status to further explore how school support is associated with professional development.

3. Results

3.1 Overall Situation of Teachers' Professional Development and School Support

3.1.1 Teachers' Professional Development Status

The specific situation of the professional development of young teachers in rural primary schools in Huanghua City is shown in Table 2. The overall mean of the three dimensions of teachers' professional development is 4.23 (0.50), with the means of professional philosophy and teacher ethics, professional knowledge, and professional ability being 4.39 (0.45), 4.15 (0.59), and 4.19 (0.58), respectively. Overall, the young teachers in rural primary schools in Huanghua City are relatively satisfied with their professional development. The development of professional philosophy and teacher ethics is the best, while professional knowledge has room for improvement compared to the other two dimensions.

Table 2. Comparison of Mean Values of Teachers' Professional Development Dimensions

Dimensions	*M*	*SD*
Professional Philosophy and Teacher Ethics	4.39	0.45
Professional Knowledge	4.15	0.59
Professional Ability	4.19	0.58
Overall	4.23	0.50

3.1.2 School Support Status

The specific situation of school support for young teachers in rural primary schools in Huanghua City is shown in Table 3. The overall mean of the four dimensions of school support is 3.94 (0.94), with the means of institutional support, conditional support, cultural support, and evaluative support being 3.82 (0.82), 3.97 (0.72), 4.00 (0.75), and 4.00 (0.74), respectively. Overall, the school support situation for young teachers in rural primary schools in Huanghua City is relatively good, but there are differences across the dimensions. Relatively speaking, the levels of cultural support and evaluative support are higher, while the levels of conditional support and institutional support are lower.

Table 3. Comparison of Mean Values of School Support Dimensions

Dimensions	*M*	*SD*
Institutional Support	3.82	0.80
Conditional Support	3.97	0.72
Cultural Support	4.00	0.75
Evaluative Support	4.00	0.77
Overall	3.94	0.74

3.1.3 Analysis of the Differences in the Evaluation of School Support Based on Teachers' Gender

Self-reported school support may be influenced by individual differences. Therefore, this study examined the differences in school support among young teachers in rural primary schools based on various personal basic information factors, such as gender, teaching experience, educational background, professional title, whether they serve as class teachers, and school category. The results showed that there were no significant differences in school support among young teachers in rural primary schools in terms of educational background, teaching experience, professional title, whether they serve as class teachers, and school category ($Ps > 0.05$). Significant differences were only found in gender. Further independent samples t-tests revealed that there was a significant difference in institutional support between male and female young teachers in rural primary schools in Huanghua City. Compared with female teachers, male teachers had a lower sense of identification with institutional support (the specific results are shown in Table 4).

Table 4. Gender Differences in School Support

	Male（N = 11)	Female（N = 118)	*t*	*p*
Institutional Support	3.35±0.99	3.86±0.80	-1.990	0.049
Conditional Support	3.76±1.00	3.99±0.69	-0.739	0.476
Cultural Support	3.80±0.97	4.02±0.73	-0.725	0.483
Evaluative Support	3.57±0.97	4.04±0.74	-1.980	0.050
Overall	3.61±0.93	3.97±0.72	-1.531	0.128

3.2 Correlation Analysis between Teachers' Professional Development and School Support

To examine the relationship between the professional development and school support of young teachers in rural primary schools, we first conducted a Pearson correlation analysis between the overall situations of the two and the relationship between each dimension of school support and teachers' professional development. Subsequently, we further conducted a Pearson correlation analysis between the sub-dimensions of each dimension of school support and the overall situation of teachers' professional development as well as each dimension of teachers' development.

3.2.1 Relationship Between Teachers' Professional Development and School Support

The overall relationship between teachers' professional development and school support is shown in Table 5. According to Cohen's criteria, a correlation coefficient $r = 0.2$ is considered to indicate a weak relationship, $r = 0.5$ is considered to indicate a moderate relationship, and $r = 0.8$ is considered to indicate a strong relationship[10]. The results show that there is a significant correlation between school support and the overall situation of teachers' professional development, with $r = 0.557$, indicating a moderate relationship. Further analysis by dimensions of school support reveals that the correlation coefficients between cultural support, conditional support, evaluative support, and the overall professional development range from 0.517 to 0.585, indicating moderate relationships. In contrast, the correlation coefficient between institutional support and professional development is 0.484, indicating a weak relationship. This suggests that there is a moderate overall association between teachers' professional development and school support. Compared to the other three dimensions of school support, institutional support has a weaker association with the overall situation of professional development.

Further analysis by dimensions of teachers' professional development reveals that in terms of professional philosophy and teacher ethics, conditional support and cultural support show moderate correlations, while institutional support and evaluative support show weak correlations. In terms of professional knowledge, all four dimensions of school support show weak correlations. In terms of professional ability, only institutional support shows a weak correlation, while the other three dimensions show moderate correlations. This indicates that institutional support contributes less to each dimension of teachers' professional development compared to other dimensions of school support. Moreover, the contribution of school support dimensions to professional knowledge is weaker than that to professional philosophy and teacher ethics and professional ability.

Table 5. Correlation Between School Support and Teachers' Professional Development

	Professional Philosophy and Teacher Ethics	Professional Knowledge	Professional Ability	Profession Development Overall
Institutional Support	0.470**	0.377**	0.478**	0.484**
Conditional Support	0.558**	0.442**	0.550**	0.564**
Cultural Support	0.522**	0.466**	0.597**	0.585**
Evaluative Support	0.494**	0.388**	0.526**	0.517**
School Support Overall	0.530**	0.453**	0.557**	0.557**

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$.

3.2.2 Relationships between Specific Items of Teachers' Professional Development and School Support Dimensions

Next, we will explore which specific aspects of school support are more strongly associated with teachers' professional development based on the sub-dimensions of school support.

The sub-dimensions of institutional support include incentive systems, training systems, and planning systems. The correlation analysis results between these sub-dimensions and teachers' professional development are shown in Table 6. The correlation coefficients between the incentive system and teachers' professional development and its sub-dimensions range from 0.256 to 0.394, indicating weak relationships. The correlation coefficients between the training system and teachers' professional development and its sub-dimensions range from 0.502 to 0.592, indicating moderate relationships. The planning system has a correlation coefficient of 0.495 with professional philosophy and teacher ethics and 0.449 with professional knowledge, both indicating weak relationships, while it has correlation coefficients of 0.502 with professional ability and 0.527 with overall teachers' professional development, indicating moderate relationships. This suggests that the training system plays a more important role in promoting teachers' professional development, while the incentive system has a relatively smaller impact.

Table 6. Correlation between Sub-dimensions of Institutional Support and Teachers' Professional Development

	Professional Philosophy and Teacher Ethics	**Professional Knowledge**	**Professional Ability**	**Profession Development Overall**
Incentive System	0.394**	0.256**	0.366**	0.368**
training system	0.506**	0.506**	0.592**	0.592**
Planning System	0.495**	0.449**	0.502**	0.527**

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$.

The sub-dimensions of conditional support include material support, informational support, and temporal support. The correlation analysis results between these sub-dimensions and teachers' professional development are shown in Table 7. The correlation coefficients between informational support and professional development and its sub-dimensions range from 0.317 to 0.473, indicating weak relationships. Material support has a correlation coefficient of 0.529 with teachers' professional development and 0.549 with professional philosophy and teacher ethics, indicating moderate relationships, while it has correlation coefficients of 0.414 with professional knowledge and 0.499 with professional ability, indicating weak relationships. Temporal support has correlation coefficients of 0.570 with teachers' professional development, 0.506 with professional philosophy and teacher ethics, and 0.579 with professional ability, indicating moderate relationships, while it has a correlation coefficient of 0.461 with professional knowledge, indicating a weak relationship. This suggests that material support and temporal support have a greater impact on teachers' professional development, especially in terms of professional philosophy and teacher ethics and professional ability, while the impact of informational support is relatively smaller and needs to be further enhanced in terms of effectiveness.

Table 7. Correlation between Sub-dimensions of Conditional Support and Teachers' Professional Development

	Professional Philosophy and Teacher Ethics	**Professional Knowledge**	**Professional Ability**	**Profession Development Overall**
Material Support	0.549**	0.414**	0.499**	0.529**
Informational Support	0.473**	0.317**	0.429**	0.441**
Temporal Support	0.506**	0.461**	0.579**	0.570**

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$.

The sub-dimensions of cultural support include interpersonal relationships, work atmosphere, and leadership style. The correlation analysis results between these sub-dimensions and teachers' professional development are shown in Table 8. Interpersonal relationships have correlation coefficients of 0.495 with professional philosophy and teacher ethics and 0.418 with professional knowledge, indicating weak relationships, while they have correlation coefficients of 0.539 with teachers' professional development and 0.552 with professional ability, indicating moderate relationships. Work atmosphere has correlation coefficients of 0.561 with teachers' professional development, 0.512 with professional philosophy and teacher ethics, and 0.574 with professional ability, indicating moderate relationships, while it has a correlation coefficient of 0.437 with professional knowledge, indicating a weak relationship. Leadership style has correlation coefficients of 0.488 with professional philosophy and teacher ethics and 0.474 with professional knowledge, indicating weak relationships, while it has correlation coefficients

of 0.571 with teachers' professional development and 0.580 with professional ability, indicating moderate relationships. This suggests that interpersonal relationships and work atmosphere have a moderate impact on teachers' professional ability and professional philosophy and ethics, while their impact on professional knowledge is relatively weaker. Leadership style also shows its importance for enhancing teachers' professional ability, but its impact on professional philosophy and ethics and professional knowledge is relatively limited.

Table 8. Correlation Between Sub-dimensions of Cultural Support and Teachers' Professional Development

	Professional Philosophy and Teacher Ethics	Professional Knowledge	Professional Ability	Profession Development Overall
Interpersonal Relationships	0.495**	0.418**	0.552**	0.539**
Work Atmosphere	0.512**	0.437**	0.574**	0.561**
Leadership Style	0.488**	0.474**	0.580**	0.571**

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$.

The sub-dimensions of evaluative support include evaluation subjects, evaluation criteria, and evaluation implementation. The correlation analysis results between these sub-dimensions and teachers' professional development are shown in Table 9. The correlation coefficients between each dimension of evaluation subjects and professional development and its sub-dimensions range from 0.368 to 0.483, indicating weak relationships. Evaluation criteria have correlation coefficients of 0.505 with teachers' professional development and 0.520 with professional ability, indicating moderate relationships, while they have correlation coefficients of 0.472 with professional philosophy and teacher ethics and 0.379 with professional knowledge, indicating weak relationships. Evaluation implementation has correlation coefficients of 0.518 with teachers' professional development, 0.509 with professional philosophy and teacher ethics, and 0.524 with professional ability, indicating moderate relationships, while it has a correlation coefficient of 0.383 with professional knowledge, indicating a weak relationship. This suggests that evaluation criteria and evaluation implementation have a relatively significant impact on teachers' professional development and its sub-dimensions, especially in terms of professional ability; whereas the impact of evaluation subjects is relatively weaker. This indicates that educational administrators should pay more attention to the effectiveness of evaluation criteria and implementation in the process of optimizing teachers' professional development, ensuring that these evaluation mechanisms can effectively promote teachers' professional growth and ability enhancement.

Table 9. Correlation between Sub-dimensions of Evaluative Support and Teachers' Professional Development

	Professional Philosophy and Teacher Ethics	Professional Knowledge	Professional Ability	Profession Development Overall
Evaluation Subjects	0.468**	0.368**	0.483**	0.483**
Evaluation Criteria	0.472**	0.379**	0.520**	0.505**
Evaluation Implementation	0.509**	0.383**	0.524**	0.518**

Note: ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$.

3.3 Analysis of Interview Results

We further conducted interviews with eight teachers and two leaders to gain further insights into the issues regarding how school support affects teachers' professional development.

In the survey conducted in rural primary schools in Huanghua City, teachers generally reported facing severe challenges in their professional development. Several teachers candidly pointed out: "When attending training, there are course conflicts, and the principal just asks us to keep the computer on and continue teaching" (Teacher YT). This kind of formalistic approach severely affects the effectiveness of the training. More worrying is that some teachers admitted: "After working for these years, not only has my teaching ability not improved, but even my basic language expression skills are deteriorating. I feel like I'm being left behind by this era" (Teacher DM). This regression in professional ability directly leads to a crisis in teachers' professional identity. The survey data shows that teachers' "willingness to stay for five years" is rated as low as 3.89 points (out of a full score of 10).

The imbalance in resource allocation by schools is also a prominent issue. Teacher DM reflected: "The school can spend a lot of money to rebuild the toilets from scratch, but it is stingy in investing in teacher training." This kind of misplaced investment severely restricts teacher development. Principal QY's words were even more to the point: "Higher authorities mainly check the hardware facilities, so we spend most of our energy on face-saving projects." More seriously, there is a misallocation of human resources. In a school with only 11 staff members, five of them are administrative officials who do not undertake teaching tasks, while front-line teachers have to "teach multiple subjects at the same time, deal with various inspections, and working 12 hours a day has become the norm" (Principal QY).

The lack of campus culture construction is equally worrying. Director SY stated: "Leaders think that organizing teacher activities is both time-consuming and laborious, and it's better to let everyone rest more," which leads to a lack of necessary professional communication among teachers. Under the heavy pressure of assessment, Teacher WYF voiced the sentiment of many teachers: "As long as students don't get into trouble and the exam results are good, that's a good teacher. Campus culture is just rhetoric for inspections." This utilitarian evaluation orientation has completely stripped campus culture of its function in promoting teachers' professional development, turning it into a mere formality for dealing with inspections.

4. Discussion

The current study finds that there is a moderate overall correlation between school support and teachers' professional development. Specifically, cultural support, conditional support, and evaluative support play a greater role in teachers' professional development, while institutional support has limited impact. Within institutional support, the sub-dimensions' impact on teachers' professional development is ranked as follows: training system > planning system > incentive system. In conditional support, the ranking is: temporal support > material support > informational support. For cultural support, the order is: leadership style > work atmosphere > interpersonal relationships. In evaluative support, the sequence is: evaluation implementation > evaluation criteria > evaluation subjects.

Moreover, regarding the specific dimensions of teachers' professional development, school support generally has a weaker effect on professional knowledge. In terms of professional philosophy and teacher ethics, areas where school support falls short include the incentive system, planning system, informational support, interpersonal relationships, leadership style, and evaluation subjects. For professional knowledge, the areas of insufficient school support are the incentive system, planning system, material support, temporal support, informational support, interpersonal relationships, leadership style, evaluation criteria, evaluation implementation, and evaluation subjects. As for professional ability, the areas where school support is lacking include the incentive system, material support, informational support, and evaluation subjects. So, how can we improve and enhance these areas of insufficiency?

4.1 Institutional Support—Stimulating Internal Motivation and Establishing Professional Goals

A scientific and rational school system is a driving mechanism to encourage teachers' sustainable development. This study found that the incentive system is weakly correlated with all three sub-dimensions of professional development. To address this, schools should stimulate teachers' internal motivation for professional development and help them establish the concept of lifelong learning. On the one hand, schools can use material incentives to boost teachers' enthusiasm in the short term, making them understand that effort will be rewarded. On the other hand, in the long run, school administrators should gain a deep understanding of teachers, identify the strengths of young teachers in rural primary schools, and offer positive affirmation, allowing them to experience the joy of success in their work. In this way, young teachers in rural primary schools can continuously gain motivation, pursue higher goals, and constantly break through and surpass themselves.

The planning system shows weak correlations with professional philosophy and teacher ethics, as well as professional knowledge. Career planning is an overall strategy for teachers' development, which can help young teachers clarify their professional direction, improve the accuracy of their development, and plays an important guiding role in firming up educational beliefs and achieving professional ideals[11]. To this end, after starting their jobs, schools should guide young teachers to set reasonable professional development goals and divide these goals into modules, specifically including three dimensions: teacher ethics and philosophy, professional knowledge, and professional ability. Teachers need to identify their own shortcomings and develop methods for improvement. In addition, schools can divide career development into different stages: the first two years focusing on learning the required professional knowledge and excellent teaching experience, and the third to fifth years engaging in teaching research to enhance professional ability, ultimately leading to the improvement of professional

philosophy and teacher ethics. By scientifically planning their professional development, young teachers in rural primary schools can effectively reduce their developmental confusion.

4.2 Conditional Support—Ensuring a Developmental Environment and Transparent Information

Conditional support is a necessary prerequisite for teachers' professional development. This study found that material support shows weak correlations with professional knowledge and professional ability. In recent years, although the government has increased its support for rural schools, material support for young teachers in rural primary schools is still insufficient due to limited communication and feedback channels. To address this, the following measures are suggested: On the one hand, strengthen hardware support. Schools should allocate special funds for teachers' professional development and establish feedback mechanisms. By recording equipment maintenance and learning material needs through teacher usage logs and regularly summarizing and addressing the issues raised by teachers, schools can better meet their needs. On the other hand, improve software support. Given the constraints, it is difficult for rural schools to independently establish resource libraries. Instead, they can select capable young teachers from each township for centralized learning. At the same time, enhancing communication and collaboration among different rural areas, consolidating resource needs, and creating a public resource library shared by all rural teachers in the city can be effective strategies. By improving the physical environment and resource allocation, schools can directly impact teaching effectiveness and teacher work efficiency. Knowledge sharing, skill enhancement, and information exchange can indirectly influence teachers' professional development and teaching quality. With the dual promotion of hardware and software support, better conditions can be created for expanding professional knowledge and improving professional ability.

Temporal support shows a weak correlation with professional knowledge. In addition to their daily teaching tasks, young teachers in rural primary schools also have to handle administrative affairs, which leaves them with little time for teaching reflection and learning new knowledge. Moreover, the common phenomenon of teachers teaching multiple subjects and the high workload further compress the space for professional development. To enhance teachers' professional ability, schools should take effective measures to reduce their burden. On the one hand, schools should reasonably set up teaching positions, fully considering teachers' professional knowledge and abilities to ensure that they are in suitable positions. On the other hand, to address the issue of cumbersome administrative affairs, schools should make full use of the township center schools to coordinate work and resources, thereby saving teachers' time.

Informational support shows weak correlations with all three sub-dimensions of professional development. In rural primary schools in Huanghua City, training and competition activities are communicated through a hierarchical system from the city to the township, school, and individual levels. Sometimes, information about high-quality class competition activities is concealed or unfairly allocated by middle and senior-level leaders. To provide informational support for young teachers in rural primary schools, first, information should be made public and transparent, which can be achieved through public account announcements. Second, teachers who are interested in participating in activities or learning should be encouraged to actively sign up, and competitive selection should be conducted based on actual conditions. Finally, to ensure the smooth implementation of informational support for young teachers, a separate evaluation channel can be established for them to safeguard their developmental rights.

4.3 Cultural Support—Improving Leadership Styles and Enhancing Peer Communication

Teacher culture reflects the value concepts and ideological norms of the specific group of teachers[12]. This study found that leadership style shows weak correlations with professional philosophy and teacher ethics, as well as professional knowledge. To address this, school leaders should fully understand the needs of young teachers and integrate individual development with school goals to motivate teachers. At the same time, schools should create a democratic management atmosphere, involve teachers in management, and encourage young teachers to participate in matters such as school development positioning and resource utilization.

Interpersonal relationships show weak correlations with professional philosophy and teacher ethics. The complexity of the teaching profession exposes teachers to multiple pressures. Particularly when they work hard but fail to see progress, they may experience negative emotions. In such cases, the care and support from colleagues and leaders are especially important, as they can provide comfort and enhance teachers' sense of belonging. First, leaders should offer care and guidance to young teachers in both their work and personal lives. Second, schools should create conditions to promote communication and interaction among teachers. For instance, establishing mentor-mentee relationships and strengthening the sharing of experiences between young and experienced teachers can be effective strategies.

4.4 Evaluative Support—Improving Evaluation Criteria and Diversifying Evaluation Subjects

Teacher evaluation is not only an important safeguard for establishing good teacher ethics and conduct, but also a guiding indicator for teachers' professional development. This study found that the evaluation criteria show weak correlations with professional knowledge. To address this, on the one hand, it is necessary to change the traditional teacher evaluation concept and avoid evaluating teachers solely based on scores and achievements. On the other hand, there are significant individual differences among teachers, with different areas of expertise and stages of development, so it is important to establish personalized evaluation channels for teachers.

Evaluation subjects show weak correlations with teachers' professional development and its three sub-dimensions. In rural primary schools in Huanghua City, the issue of single evaluation subjects affects the objectivity of the assessment results. To address this, a multi-subject teacher evaluation model should be established, including teacher peers, school leaders, students, and parents. For example, student feedback can be used to understand teachers' daily teaching and its effectiveness, parent feedback can provide insights into teachers' teaching effectiveness and communication skills, and peer feedback can offer perspectives on teachers' professional ethics and abilities. Finally, leaders should provide a comprehensive evaluation of teachers based on their work performance and suggestions from other evaluation subjects.

5. Conclusions

School support has a positive effect on the professional development of young teachers in rural primary schools, showing a trend of cultural support > conditional support > evaluative support > institutional support. To address the professional development issues of young teachers in rural primary schools, it is necessary to effectively promote their development through measures such as strengthening training and policy support, improving working conditions, paying attention to individual needs, and optimizing the evaluation system. This will help improve educational quality and promote overall progress in rural education.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

References

[1] Day, C. (2002). Developing teachers: The challenges of lifelong learning. Routledge.

[2] Azano, A. P., & Stewart, T. T. (2016). Confronting challenges at the intersection of rurality, place, and teacher preparation: Improving efforts in teacher education to staff rural schools. *Global Education Review, 3*(1), 108–128.

[3] Preston, J. P., Jakubiec, B. A., & Kooymans, R. (2013). Common challenges faced by rural principals: A review of the literature. *The Rural Educator, 35*(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v35i1.355

[4] Sealander, K., Eigenberger, M., Peterson, P., Shellady, S., & Prater, G. (2001). Challenges facing teacher educators in rural, remote, and isolated areas: Using what we know and what we have learned. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 20*(1–2), 13–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/8756870501020001-204

[5] Barrera Jr, M., Sandler, I. N., & Ramsay, T. B. (1981). Preliminary development of a scale of social support: Studies on college students. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 9*(4), 435–447. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00918174

[6] Uehara, E. (1990). Dual exchange theory, social networks, and informal social support. *American Journal of Sociology, 96*(3), 521–557. https://doi.org/10.1086/229571

[7] Gutiérrez, M., Tomás, J.-M., Romero, I., & Barrica, J.-M. (2017). Perceived social support, school engagement and satisfaction with school. *Revista de Psicodidáctica (English ed.), 22*(2), 111–117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psicoe.2017.05.001

[8] Lam, S.-F., Cheng, R. W.-Y., & Choy, H. C. (2010). School support and teacher motivation to implement project-based learning. *Learning and Instruction, 20*(6), 487–497. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2009.07.003

[9] Wang, M. T., & Eccles, J. S. (2012). Social support matters: Longitudinal effects of social support on three dimensions of school engagement from middle to high school. *Child Development, 83*(3), 877–895. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01745.x

[10] Cohen, J. (1992). Quantitative methods in psychology: A power primer. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*, 155–159. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.112.1.155

[11] Lartey, F. M. (2021). Impact of career planning, employee autonomy, and manager recognition on employee engagement. *Journal of Human Resource and Sustainability Studies, 9*(2), 135. https://doi.org/10.4236/jhrss.2021.92010

[12] Matsumoto, D. (2023). Teaching about culture. In Getting culture (pp. 3–10). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003445005-2