
NEWSLETTER

Turnover Intention in Chinese Rural Teachers: An Empirical Study Based on a Survey of 5,342 Rural Teachers in Yunnan Province

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THE shortage of teacher supply and high teacher mobility have long been severe issues in rural China. The State Council's Rural Teacher Support Project (2015-2020) set the goal of building a rural teaching force that are professionally competent and willing to teach in rural areas and initiated comprehensive support measures. This article focused on group differences in turnover intention among rural teachers in an effort to discern what kinds of rural teachers are more likely to quit, and which rural teachers are more sensitive to the new policies.

In this study, factors influencing rural teacher turnover intention were examined in five dimensions: individual characteristics, job characteristics, location characteristics, salaries, and professional experience. The survey was performed in Yunnan Province, combining stratified sampling and random cluster-sampling. The electronic questionnaire "Rural Teacher Mobility and Turnover Intention Survey" was distributed to every rural teacher in the survey area with the help of county-level educational research staff, personnel with teacher training institutions, and school principals. Teachers could choose to respond or not on a voluntary basis. The survey lasted from April to May 2021. A total of 5,342 valid questionnaires were retrieved.

The survey results showed that 26.7% of the polled rural teachers had a strong turnover intention and would quit whenever there was a chance; 51.8% of them had a moderate or above level of turnover intention; 37.8% of them had a weak intention of teaching in rural schools for a long term (over 5 years). Rural novice teachers and those who were separated from their spouses or partners had a stronger intention to quit their teaching jobs in rural areas. From the perspective of job characteristics, rural teachers with junior secondary schools, or in special positions, or holding multiple concurrent positions were inclined to quit. Regarding school location characteristics, the farther the school was away from the urban area and the teacher's hometown, the more determined the teacher was to leave. The lower the salary, the stronger turnover intention the teacher had. In terms of professional experience, teachers with higher work pressures and lower levels of professional

identity were more ready to leave. The research findings demonstrate that rural teachers' turnover intention varies according to their gender, length of service, and marital status; teachers in special positions, or with large-scale boarding schools, or holding multiple concurrent positions had stronger inclination to quit; length of service, school location, salaries, and professional experience can effectively predict rural teachers' turnover intention.

Source: Teacher Education Research, 2022; 34(5):98-107.