

# Research on Path of Cultivating Country Affections of Undergraduates at Public Fees

Wei Huang<sup>1</sup>, Zainudin Hassan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Education, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Technology, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, 81310, Malaysia, <sup>2</sup>School of Education, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Technology, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor Bahru, 81310, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: [huang@graduate.utm.my](mailto:huang@graduate.utm.my)

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## Abstract

Undergraduates at publicly funded teacher training universities are crucial to these institutions. They form the backbone of rural teaching staff and are essential to the equitable advancement of rural education. Their development has established a foundation for building the rural teaching workforce, fostering balanced growth in urban and rural compulsory education. As the rural revitalization strategy progresses, local teacher training universities face both unprecedented challenges and fresh opportunities. To respond to the national strategy and meet the challenges, these universities must strengthen talent training, deepen the concept of caring education, and build closer cooperative relationships with local governments and schools. These initiatives aim to create a team of skilled and professional rural teachers, driving ongoing advancement and improvement in rural education.

**Keywords:** Rural Education, Undergraduates, Rural Revitalization, Balance in Education

Since 2018, the Ministry of Education has deeply reformed the publicly funded normal undergraduate system and introduced a diversified training program for rural normal undergraduates across the country. This has significantly bolstered the teaching capacity of rural schools, advanced urban-rural educational integration and balanced development in China and profoundly improved the quality of education in remote and impoverished regions (Zhou et al., 2024). However, due to the vast area and limited conditions in China's rural areas, the problem of imbalance in teaching ability and level still exists, and the enhancement of teachers' overall quality in remote and rural areas remains constrained. This reflects the problems of teacher quality, transportation, resource allocation, teacher structure and teacher ethics as pointed out in the Rural Teacher Support Plan (2015-2020) (Zhu et al., 2024). Therefore, local universities need to develop targeted training programs to help normal undergraduates gain a deeper understanding of the current state of national education.

## The Background of Publicly Funded Training of Oriented Normal College Undergraduates

### (1) The State Promotes Rural Strategic Planning

Driven by rural revitalization and targeted support policies, the state prioritizes rural development, reform, and cultural advancement. As part of this effort, initiatives like the

Action Plan for Revitalizing Teacher Education (2018-2022) highlight the importance of localized teacher training. This plan aims to strengthen the rural teaching workforce in challenging areas, increase enrollment, and collaborate with local universities to prepare outstanding educators for rural schools (Zhou et al., 2023). The core of the rural revitalization strategy is enhancing rural education, with rural teachers being essential to accomplishing this objective. At present, the quality of rural teachers in China needs to be improved. Therefore, the core of improving rural education level lies in strengthening teachers' teaching ability and moral cultivation. Training high-quality rural teachers is crucial to ensure that rural children receive equal quality education, which helps rural children grow up and breaks the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Li, 2023). Teachers with a strong connection to their local communities are crucial in advancing foundational education and overall growth in rural areas, taking on numerous responsibilities for rural revitalization.

### *(2) The State Advocates the Training of Oriented Rural Teachers at Public Expense*

Rural teachers are the core force for the revitalization of rural education, and their teaching quality and persistence are crucial to the realization of the revitalization goal. To advance the comprehensive development and reform of the teaching workforce, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued "Several Opinions on the Comprehensive Development of Teacher Reform under the New Situation" in January 2018, providing clear directions and comprehensive training and development plans for the development of the teaching force, emphasizing the importance of clarifying work priorities and deeply understanding the construction of the teaching force. Following this, in April 2022, the Ministry of Education and eight other agencies collaboratively issued the "Blueprint for Advancing Basic Education Teachers in the Modern Era," outlining strategies for advancing the comprehensive construction and high-caliber growth of rural educators in China.

### **The Significance of Publicly Funded Training of Oriented Normal University Undergraduates**

The realization of rural revitalization lies in talent and education, among which the publicly funded normal college program is an important source of exceptional educators in remote regions. Upon completing their studies, these graduates will return to their native regions to dedicate themselves to education and support rural progress. Teachers trained by local normal universities who are professional, dedicated and deeply love local culture are a solid guarantee for rural poverty alleviation and revitalization. At present, rural teachers and teacher education are facing good opportunities for development, which is complementary to the national poverty alleviation policy. Such policies not only provide higher education opportunities for poor rural undergraduates but also reduce the financial burden on families. Hence, there is a need to refine and enhance the training framework for undergraduates at rural public teacher training universities. This ensures their seamless integration into rural schools upon graduation, providing them with a conducive teaching and learning environment. Such efforts aim to elevate the overall educational standards of rural educators and foster balanced urban-rural educational development.

### **Challenges and Analysis of Normal College Undergraduates' Training**

#### *(1) There is a large gap between rural normal college undergraduates*

Despite the turnover of teachers, the demand for educators in China is still very strong. Between 2010 and 2020, China will actually need about three million full-time teachers. However, considering the total number of undergraduates in China, teacher resources are

still insufficient, especially in rural areas. At present, the teachers needed for curriculum reform in rural education far exceed the existing resources. Yet, with the expansion of classes spurred by educational reform and the adoption of the two-child policy, the demand for educators is anticipated to grow, particularly in rural regions.

At present, the problem of excellent teachers having difficulty taking root in rural areas has become increasingly prominent. Despite the increasingly challenging job market for college graduates, there remains a disproportionately low number of outstanding teachers working in rural areas. The root causes of this phenomenon lie in several aspects. Firstly, urban and rural regions alike grapple with a scarcity of educators, particularly in isolated rural primary schools. Newly qualified teachers with advanced education and exceptional skills are predominantly allocated to county or township schools, posing challenges for rural schools in attracting top-tier teaching talent. Secondly, even when teachers are assigned to remote rural primary schools, many opt to depart after a while for personal aspirations or career advancement opportunities, viewing rural schools as a transient steppingstone to achieve their individual objectives. In addition, normal university undergraduates also face many problems after graduation, and very few of them can actually go to the countryside to support rural education (Xu,2021).

### *(2) Lack of Nostalgia -- Weak Ability to Adapt to Local Services*

As urbanization in China accelerates, the education landscape undergoes significant transformation. Against this backdrop, the training of undergraduates in teacher training universities assumes growing significance. To align with this trend, it is imperative to enhance the quality of training for these undergraduates. This entails not only bolstering their academic foundations but also prioritizing the development of their ethical character. This includes staying true to the original intention and adhering to the spirit of morality, which is the basis for becoming a "generalist", a qualified "middle school teacher" and possessing "multiple abilities" (Wu,2021).

The education of publicly funded teacher training college undergraduates is distinctive. It requires attainment of a specified proficiency level in fundamental knowledge, professional competence, pedagogical skills, and ethical standards. Additionally, undergraduates must undertake a thorough examination and comprehension of rural lifestyles and educational methodologies. Their mission is not only to use knowledge to promote the development of rural culture, but also to use local educational resources in rural areas to develop skills. Hence, it is crucial to prioritize instilling in publicly funded teacher training college undergraduates a strong sense of local service and rural empathy. This will enable them to effectively contribute to the advancement of rural education and cultural enrichment. This training mode aims to avoid them from becoming "strangers" who are born in the countryside but have no understanding or emotion about the countryside.

### *(3) The Universities that Train Targeted Normal Undergraduates at Public Funds are Basically the Same, but the Differences are not Great*

According to the survey, the training methods of public funded normal college undergraduates in some schools are similar to those of ordinary normal college undergraduates, lacking in-depth understanding of the actual situation of rural universities and universities and teaching experience. As a result, many undergraduates feel confused

about the rural education environment. Although they are full of enthusiasm when choosing an education career, they are also faced with the contradiction of giving up other opportunities to create wealth. In addition, the school's teaching content on rural history and culture is insufficient, which makes it difficult to inspire undergraduates' love and sense of belonging to their hometown. At the same time, oriented normal university undergraduates are faced with conflicts between social interests and personal interests, which are difficult to properly handle. On the other hand, due to reduced employment pressure, some undergraduates' motivation to learn declines, while schools also face contradictions: the lack of a rural campus environment makes it difficult for undergraduates to develop empathy for the school experience, which may lead to a decline in the quality of education and an endless cycle (Hu et al., 2023). Thus, there is a critical need to review and enhance the training methods for publicly funded teacher trainees to align more effectively with the specific demands of rural education.

#### *(4) The Ideal Differential Implementation of National Policies*

Under the impetus of the national rural revitalization strategy, local governments have increasingly valued the transformative potential of teacher training universities in advancing rural educational progress. and have therefore strengthened the system construction of publicly funded normal college undergraduates. The move aims to give more poor undergraduates a chance to receive higher education through a special higher education system and channel excellent teacher resources to rural schools to enhance the cultural soft power of the countryside. Nevertheless, despite China's rising investments in higher education, achieving balanced development in rural higher education remains fraught with challenges such as inadequate educational facilities, issues with student enrollment, historical liabilities, and urban-rural disparities (Yan & Huang, 2023).

For graduates of teacher training universities, post-graduation entails not only committing to embodying the vocation of teaching but also navigating various external influences that impact their career trajectory. Chief among these factors is the salary scale, which plays a pivotal role in determining professional competitiveness. Furthermore, the motivational factors among teacher training college undergraduates warrant thorough scholarly examination.

The survey shows that many choose to become publicly funded normal undergraduates out of their love and interest in education, or to reduce the financial burden on their families, as well as the prospect of job security after graduation. However, some rural undergraduates made the choice under external pressure, which may lead to a lack of motivation to study, a negative attitude toward study, or even failure to follow the agreement after graduation. These problems not only affect the cultivation and management of university talents but also go against the original intention of relevant national education policies. More likely, due to the quota limit, undergraduates who truly aspire to devote themselves to rural education will be hindered.

## **The Training Strategy of Publicly Funded Normal College Undergraduates in Local Universities**

### *(1) Based on Local Services, Precise Positioning of Talent Training*

Currently, the educational approach for publicly funded teacher training college undergraduates has evolved markedly, encompassing practices such as general teaching, specialized teaching, and integrated teaching methodologies. These three models have their own characteristics and are designed for different education stages and needs, providing a more comprehensive and in-depth learning experience for normal undergraduates.

First of all, the training objectives of publicly funded normal undergraduates should be clarified. The establishment of the target must be based on the formal education subject certification system, aiming at creating a solid and comprehensive talent training plan. This entails not only the acquisition of deep foundational knowledge in education and teaching by teacher training college undergraduates but also underscores the fundamental principles of education and the comprehensive nature of higher education, preparing them to meet the diverse demands of the evolving educational landscape.

Secondly, it is imperative to establish a robust curriculum framework for publicly funded teacher training college undergraduates. This framework should prioritize the development of undergraduates' capabilities in project management, research acumen, pedagogical skills, and innovative knowledge application. Through the theoretical exploration and practical application of these courses, normal university undergraduates will gradually have the awareness and ability of education and make full preparation for the future career in education.

Ultimately, to align with the specific requirements of rural education at the local level. As the backbone of future education, publicly funded normal undergraduates must have a deep understanding and adapt to the special environment and requirements of rural education. Therefore, in the process of training, local normal universities should understand the real needs and challenges of rural education through adequate investigation and research and formulate corresponding training countermeasures accordingly. Only in this way can we ensure that the cultivated normal university undergraduates can quickly integrate into the rural education environment, be competent in education and teaching work, and contribute their own strength to the development of rural education.

### *(2) Foster an Environment Conducive to Reshaping The Professional Identity of the New Generation of Rural Educators.*

First of all, make clear the principle of "teachers' ethics first" and take it as the realistic landing point. By combining teacher training programs, local teaching should be strengthened, while homesickness and rural education should be integrated into comprehensive teaching. To accomplish this objective, diverse and impactful strategies should be implemented, including immersive visits, informative lectures, the establishment of a school counseling system, engagement in rural teaching experiences, voluntary tutoring initiatives, and direct mentorship by rural school principals. These measures aim to guide undergraduates in developing a profound empathy for rural contexts.

Secondly, it is imperative to identify the most effective strategies for integrating traditional cultural education. Utilizing the rich heritage of educational practices, efforts should focus on uncovering and integrating exemplary teaching traditions with existing resources in traditional cultural education. By synthesizing historical and contemporary cultural elements, a superior cultural environment will be cultivated, exerting a nuanced impact on the school's administrative ethos and shaping undergraduates' character and ethos.

Ultimately, integrate theoretical knowledge with hands-on skill development and emotional intelligence training. To achieve this objective, the training curriculum incorporates field practicums such as teaching practice, training exercises, and educational placements, with a particular emphasis on rural field practice initiatives. These applied initiatives empower undergraduates to engage in a thorough training and teaching process under the mentorship of educators, thereby enhancing their professional versatility.

*(3) Enhance the Methodologies to Provide non-Discriminatory Training for Oriented Normal University Undergraduates with Public Funds*

The core of publicly funded rural normal college education is to train talents who can adapt to the rural teaching environment and alleviate the shortage of rural teachers. Given the prevalent lack of connection among many young teachers with rural undergraduates and their educational milieu, there is a necessity to revise the educational blueprint accordingly. On one hand, educators should implement tailored instructional methods based on the attributes of teacher training college undergraduates, with curriculum design closely integrating rural contexts to facilitate their swift adjustment to rural teaching roles. On the other hand, the development of teaching proficiency should prioritize the specific traits and needs of rural undergraduates.

At present, the school training and enrollment process is mainly oriented towards the urban environment, which is out of touch with the actual needs of rural education. Teaching in small rural classrooms is more complex than it might appear at first glance, and graduates often find it difficult to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned when facing the difficulties of naughty undergraduates and family cooperation. Therefore, teachers must be trained against a background of rural education to ensure that they have the ability to teach effectively in a rural environment.

*(4) Coordinated Efforts to Enhance the Enrollment and Graduation Mechanisms of Local Universities and Universities*

The publicly funded orientation training of teacher training college undergraduates is a comprehensive endeavor that demands collaborative efforts from multiple stakeholders. To ensure the efficacy of this training, establishing a "triple" collaborative training system involving local governments, teacher training universities, and rural representative bodies is essential. The core of this system lies in two aspects:

Firstly, develop a comprehensive training implementation strategy to ensure close collaboration between local universities, universities, local governments, and rural stakeholders, effectively addressing the diverse educational needs of society and cultivating competent professionals in both quantity and quality. Secondly, enforce agreement-based

management, enhance communication and consultation among undergraduates, parents, local governments, and training institutions, thereby guaranteeing the successful execution of government-sponsored training programs and targeted employment initiatives.

Furthermore, local educational institutions should enhance their autonomy in student admissions, enrich assessment criteria, and gain a deeper insight into graduates' cultural literacy and individual requirements. Simultaneously, enhancements should be made to the withdrawal protocol for publicly funded teacher training college undergraduates, incorporating precise criteria and benchmarks. Graduates who fail to meet stipulated conditions or exhibit reluctance to participate in directed educational initiatives should be promptly assessed and managed accordingly. Exceptional graduates who demonstrate a commitment to rural education should be offered opportunities to transition into the government-sponsored teacher training cohort, accompanied by appropriate subsidies aimed at incentivizing more talent to contribute to rural educational endeavors.

### **Conclusion**

To truly implement the education policy in public enrollment, schools must make efforts in several key aspects: improving the ability and quality of undergraduates, strengthening national education, cultivating teacher demeanor and ethics, and maintaining the stability of management. Tao Xingzhi famously pointed out that teaching comes from the heart, which not only highlights the importance of deep feelings and professional ethics for the countryside but also provides continuous motivation for rural educators. In recent years, Zhang Guimei, Zhu Mincai and others have been praised as the models of "the most beautiful rural teachers", showing their deep feeling for the countryside and enthusiasm for education, and highlighting their excellent teacher ethics, becoming role models in the industry. Therefore, the core of publicly funded normal college undergraduates training is to build a solid team of rural teachers. Local universities and universities should precisely set training goals, create a high-quality environment, adopt multiple education methods, implement collaborative training, and provide in-depth local services to effectively cultivate the national conditions awareness of normal college undergraduates, and promote the realization of rural teachers' ideal of "entering the countryside, staying in the countryside and teaching the countryside well".

In conclusion, the training of rural teachers in the contemporary context plays an indispensable role in the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy. Publicly funded normal college undergraduates constitute the future cohort of rural teachers, representing a crucial force in the cultivation of the countryside and the transmission of indigenous culture. The quality and quantity of these educators are directly correlated with the quality and future of rural education. The quality and quantity of these educators are directly correlated with the quality and future of rural education. It is therefore of great value to cultivate a sentiment for the countryside among publicly funded normal college undergraduates. This study examines the background and existing issues related to the training of publicly funded teacher trainees, exploring potential avenues for improvement. It begins by examining the foundation of teacher training, optimizing the selection process, enhancing the pre-service curriculum, and stimulating a sense of commitment to the countryside. The study aims to cultivate a new generation of exemplary teacher trainees who are driven, dedicated, and passionate about contributing to the revitalization and advancement of rural education.

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