A Survey on the Current Situation of Teacher Motivation in Public Junior Middle Schools in Western China

Peidong Su, Yuanyuan Wang

Institute of Education Science, Wuhan University, Wuhan, China
Email: 1181100567@qq.com

Abstract

Public junior middle school teachers in western China are an important force in building a high-quality education system. Optimizing teacher motivation measures plays an important role in improving teachers' work efficiency and improving the quality of school running. At present, there are relatively few investigations and studies on the implementation of the motivation measures for public junior middle school teachers in western China, which limits the accuracy of improving the motivation measures for teachers to a certain extent. Based on the survey of 551 teachers in western public junior middle schools, it is found that the overall situation of teacher motivation is still good, but there are also problems such as large differences between dimensions, differences between school administrators and front-line teachers in their understanding of teacher incentives, relatively low salary and welfare levels, and poor motivation effect of professional title evaluation system. The research believes that optimizing the salary growth mechanism, implementing the teacher salary standard, improving the teacher evaluation method, reasonably reducing the burden of teachers, emphasizing the development of teachers, enhancing the effectiveness of teacher training, strengthening the democratic management of schools, and improving the sense of ownership of teachers can effectively improve the effect of teacher motivation.

Keywords

Teacher Motivation, Public Junior Middle School in Western China, Survey

1. Introduction

In order to strengthen the construction of the teaching staff, build a high-quality education system, and run an education satisfactory to the people, we must sti-

mulate the initiative and creativity of teachers. From the perspective of education management, effective motivation measures should be implemented according to the needs of teachers, so as to better mobilize the enthusiasm and creativity of teachers (Zhou, Wu, & Xie, 2000). Proceeding from the specific reality, properly applying the teacher motivation theory and optimizing the current teacher motivation measures will stimulate teachers' enthusiasm for work, give full play to their potential and enthusiasm for work, which is not only conducive to the professional growth of teachers, but also conducive to the overall development of students and the improvement of school running level.

The western public junior middle school is an important part of China's education system, and its teachers are an important force in building a high-quality education system. Optimizing teachers' motivation measures plays an important role in teachers' professional development. However, there are relatively few investigations and studies on motivation measures for public junior middle school teachers in western China, which cannot meet the needs of schools to improve motivation measures. At the same time, there are few teacher motivation questionnaires for public junior middle schools in the west, which limits the possibility of precise implementation to some extent. Therefore, it is particularly urgent to scientifically and effectively evaluate the current situation of the western public junior middle school teachers' motivations and use them to implement policies accurately.

2. Literature Review and Concept Definition

The research on teacher motivation at home and abroad mainly focuses on the connotation and dimension of teacher motivation, motivation theory, influencing factors of motivation effect, improvement countermeasures of motivation measures, etc. In China, the word "motivation" means to stimulate and encourage. For example, in the Modern Chinese Dictionary, motivation is defined as "inspiring and encouraging to cheer up". In English, there are two interpretations of motivation. One is "motivation", which comes from the Latin word "mover", meaning "to stimulate someone's internal motivation to take action", and the other is "incentive", which comes from the Latin word "incantare", which means "to stimulate someone externally to take action". Koontz and O'Donnell believed that motivation was a series of chain reactions (Koontz & Weihrich, 1998). Individual needs triggered the goals to be pursued, which made individuals feel nervous (unsatisfied state), urged individuals to act to achieve goals, and finally met their own needs. They define motivation as something that can trigger the pursuit of goals and meet their own needs. Zhu Deyou (2010) believes that the essence of motivation is to combine individual needs with social needs, coordinate individual goals with organizational goals, guide, educate and manage individuals through internal and external stimulation and influence, and transform the content of organizational motivation into the process of individual thinking and behavior, including three factors: internal motivation, external

pressure and target attraction.

Common motivation theories include Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, Alderfer's ERG theory, and McClellan's achievement motivation theory. Maslow (1943) divided human needs into five levels from low to high, namely, physiological needs, security needs, emotional and social needs, respect needs and self-realization needs. Meeting human needs can stimulate motivation. Alderfer (1969) believes that it is more reasonable to divide human needs into three core needs in management practice: first, survival needs, that is, the material conditions for individuals to maintain their survival; second, relationship needs, that is, the needs for individuals to maintain important interpersonal relationships; third, growth needs, that is, the internal needs for individuals to pursue self-development, and multiple needs of individuals will simultaneously produce motivation effects, In management practice, we should make timely adjustments to the countermeasures as individual needs change. In the 1950s, McClellan divides the important motivations of individuals in the work situation into three types: achievement motivation, that is, the motivation to strive for success and hope to do the best, power motivation, that is, the motivation to influence or control others and not be controlled by others, and affinity motivation, that is, the motivation to establish friendly interpersonal relationships with others. These three motivations can stimulate individuals to work efficiently, focus on striving for status, and handle interpersonal relationships well, make individuals have higher career achievements (Guan, 1988).

The influencing factors of the existing research on the teacher motivation effect mainly focus on three aspects, namely demographic factors, individual subjective factors and external organizational factors. According to the purpose of this study, it mainly combs the literature on demographic factors and external organizational factors. In terms of demography, the scholar Tampoe (1993) believed that the motivation factors that individuals attach importance to are different in different stages of career development. Employees at the initial stage of career development pay more attention to money income, pay more attention to personal development in the middle, and pay more attention to work achievements in the stable and mature career period. Zheng and Huang (2001) have conducted an empirical study on knowledge workers, which shows that men attach more importance to personal development and women attach more importance to money income; The younger ones pay more attention to personal development and business achievement factors, while the older ones pay more attention to money income factors; The higher the degree is, the more attention is paid to personal development factors, and the lower the degree is, the more attention is paid to money income factors. Yang Jun (2008) found through the research on the personality characteristics of the post-80s knowledge workers (divided into five dimensions: openness to experience, extraversion, sense of responsibility, agreeableness and neuroticism according to the "Big Five Personality Theory" in the personality theory) and the relationship between personality

characteristics and motivation factors (including four dimensions: work tasks, personal growth, work atmosphere and enterprise conditions), that personality characteristics have different effects on each dimension of motivation factors, Openness of experience has a significant impact on personal growth factors and work atmosphere factors; extraversion and responsibility consciousness have a significant impact on work task factors, personal growth factors and enterprise conditions; agreeableness has a significant impact on work atmosphere factors and enterprise conditions; spiritual quality has no significant impact on the four dimensions of motivation factors. Chen and Lu (2010) proposed that in order to ensure teachers' enthusiasm for work, teachers must experience happiness from work and must create a teacher culture atmosphere of love, sharing and cooperation by studying the impact of cultural atmosphere on teachers' professional development. Ni Haidong (2014) believed that the organizational level should aim at the common development of individual needs and schools, and construct a motivation mechanism for teachers' growth with the main path of goal motivation, spiritual motivation, emotional motivation, performance motivation and development motivation. Yu Huajun (2019) summarized and proposed on the basis of combing existing literature that organizational factors include two structures: external motivation and internal motivation. External motivation includes three measurement dimensions: salary motivation (salary, bonus, allowance, welfare, income equity, etc.), assessment motivation (assessment, workload, work pressure, etc.), and promotion motivation (title promotion, position promotion, post level promotion, etc.), Intrinsic motivations include three measurement dimensions: innovation motivations (to satisfy the desire for novelty and truth, to explore knowledge interests, new ideas, new theories, new methods, and to play freely), achievement motivations (to enable them to enjoy success and honor, to achieve career success, to resolve difficulties, and to promote social progress, etc.), and social motivations (trust and respect of colleagues, students, and society, professional recognition, family support, and social activities, etc.).

On the basis of literature research, theoretical application and investigation, scholars put forward some suggestions with practical value. Yan Xuguang (2006) summarized the measures to stimulate the working morale of American primary and secondary school teachers, and put forward some suggestions to improve the working morale of our primary and secondary school teachers, such as "improving the salary system, improving working conditions, reducing teachers' workload, creating a cooperative school culture, and establishing a professional development community". Yang Qiulan (2020), through the investigation of the current situation of the motivation mechanism for young teachers in primary and secondary schools in Zouping City, put forward suggestions such as "improving the long-term linkage mechanism of teachers' salaries in primary and secondary schools, standardizing the educational management system in primary and secondary schools, establishing and improving the educational supervision and

evaluation mechanism, doing a good job in the construction of the school motivation management system, deepening the educational supervision system, promoting the evaluation of government performance, and further improving the internal motivation mode of schools".

On the basis of the above contents, combined with policy text analysis, first-line teacher interviews and university experts' suggestions, this study prepared a pre questionnaire to investigate the current situation of public junior middle school teachers' motivation in the west. In this study, "Teacher motivation" is defined as "Education administrators provide teachers with various conditions and take measures to stimulate, guide and standardize their behaviors to promote the whole process of achieving education and teaching goals according to different needs of teachers", and teacher motivation factors are divided into four dimensions: salary and welfare, evaluation and promotion, growth support and cultural atmosphere, with a total of fifteen measurement indicators.

3. Research Design

3.1. Survey Design and Implementation

As mentioned earlier, based on the literature review, this study developed a "Pre questionnaire on the status of teacher motivation" in combination with policy text analysis, interviews with front-line teachers and suggestions from university experts. The questionnaire uses Likert's five points for scoring, and the corresponding scores from "very inconsistent" to "very consistent" are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The respondents fill in the questionnaire according to their own reality and feelings. In order to improve the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, 65 teachers were selected for the questionnaire prediction. After the feedback results were modified and optimized, the "Formal Questionnaire on Teacher Motivation Status" was determined.

This research mainly distributes questionnaires to public junior middle school teachers in Sichuan Province, Shaanxi Province, Chongqing City and other places, which is characterized by convenient research, regional representation and high practical value. A total of 610 questionnaires were collected by snowball sampling in the survey area in the form of questionnaire stars. After removing the samples of "too short filling time, too many consecutive identical answers, and other obvious questions", 551 valid questionnaires were retained, with an effective recovery rate of 90.33%. In the valid sample, 374 female teachers and 177 male teachers; 56 persons with teaching experience of 3 years or less, 127 persons with teaching experience of 4 - 10 years, 115 persons with teaching experience of 11 - 20 years, 185 persons with teaching experience of 21 - 30 years, and 68 persons with teaching experience of 31 years or more; 36 people without professional titles, 176 people with primary professional titles, 239 people with intermediate professional titles, and 100 people with senior professional titles or above; There are 90 people with administrative posts and 461 people without administrative posts. For the current western public junior middle schools, the

sample is in line with the actual situation in terms of the distribution of the teacher structure.

3.2. Interview Design and Implementation

In the interview, the form of "semi open interview" was adopted. The questions of the interview came from the measurement items with low teacher motivation scores in the survey data, so as to carry out the interview with the leading cadres and front-line teachers of L junior middle school, to analyze the causes of the problems and find countermeasures and suggestions.

In this study, L junior middle school teachers in a western public school were selected as the interviewees, including one principal, three middle-level cadres and three front-line teachers. L Junior middle School is a public junior middle school with good school running quality in a prefecture level city in the western region. The level of teachers is relatively high, and there is a relatively complete teacher professional development plan.

4. Research Results and Analysis

4.1. Reliability and Validity Analysis

This study used SPSS software to analyze the reliability and validity of 551 samples of teacher motivation. Cronbach's α test found that the teacher motivation (total) was 0.969, the salary and welfare was 0.854, the evaluation and promotion was 0.950, the growth support was 0.926, and the cultural atmosphere was 0.971, indicating that the stability and consistency of the questionnaire were high. The KMO sample measurement index is 0.961 > 0.9, and the significance of Bartlett's sphericity test is P = 0.000 < 0.05, indicating that the correlation between the measurement items is very high, and the sample is suitable for factor analysis (Wu, 2010). The questionnaire was revised based on the existing mature scale and the actual situation of junior middle school teachers and the consulting results of university experts, ensuring that the questionnaire has high content validity. Through exploratory factor matrix analysis, it is found that when the questionnaire is set as four principal components for verification, it is exactly corresponding to the aforementioned structural dimension division, which indicates that the questionnaire has high structural validity, and the aforementioned structural dimension division and measurement item setting are reasonable and effective.

4.2. Analysis of the Current Situation of Teacher Motivation

SPSS statistical software was used to conduct a basic analysis of the sample data (standard deviation, mean value and dimension mean value, see Table 1 for details), and then to make a preliminary judgment on the current situation of teacher motivation, and analyze the causes in combination with the interview content.

It can be seen from Table 1 that teacher motivation is generally good, but the

Table 1. Basic information of teacher motivation.

Dimension	Measurement Items	Number	Standard deviation	Mean	Mean
Salary and welfare	In recent two years, the salary and bonus can meet the needs of teachers	551	1.08	2.76	
	In recent two years, school holidays and working meals have been arranged reasonably	551	1.00	3.25	3.03
	In recent two years, the school has been fairly allocating teachers' income and materials	551	1.08	3.09	
Evaluation and promotion	The current assessment measures can help teachers reflect and improve	551	1.05	3.12	
	The current professional title evaluation system can make teachers full of work motivation	551	1.12	2.95	3.06
	The current post arrangement policy can enable teachers to give full play to their talents	551	1.03	3.11	
Growth support	The school has complete and advanced hardware and software for work	551	1.04	3.19	
	The school has formulated a detailed professional development plan for teachers	551	0.99	3.15	
	When the leader arranges the work, the workload is allocated reasonably	551	1.00	3.24	3.29
	When the leader arranges the work, the goal is clear and the responsibility is specific	551	0.95	3.47	
	The school gives teachers relatively full autonomy in their work	551	0.97	3.40	
Cultural atmosphere	Leaders can promote teachers' teamwork and democratic participation in management	551	1.05	3.41	
	Leaders can promote mutual care and appreciation among teachers	551	1.03	3.41	
	Leaders can promote teachers to recognize each other's efforts in work	551	1.05	3.40	3.42
	The competition atmosphere of various competitions and evaluation activities in the school is good	551	1.02	3.47	

dimensions are unbalanced. The average value of each measurement item is 2.76 - 3.47 (mean 3.20), salary and welfare 2.76 - 3.25 (mean 3.03), evaluation and promotion 2.95 - 3.12 (mean 3.06), growth support 3.15 - 3.47 (mean 3.29), and cultural atmosphere 3.40 - 3.47 (mean 3.42). This result shows that the western public junior middle schools have done relatively well in cultural atmosphere and growth support, while wages and benefits and evaluation and promotion need to be strengthened. At the same time, the scores of "salary bonus" and "title evaluation" are obviously low, indicating that there are many problems in these two aspects; The leaders scored higher in many aspects such as "arranging work, promoting teachers' unity, and caring for each other", which is closely related to the higher professional level of the school leaders.

For some measurement items with low average scores, the interview method was used to analyze the causes, and the results are summarized as follows.

1) In view of the low score of "salary bonus" in salary and welfare, the main reason is "From the perspective of social comparison, the salary level of public

junior middle school teachers in the west is lower than that of local private junior middle schools. They are also teaching and educating people, but the difference within the industry is also very obvious. Compared with the local house price, the salary level is low, especially for young teachers, buying a house is a very important burden. Compared with the local price, the salary of teachers is not high. Although the local price is at the middle level, it is necessary every month. You can't save money beyond spending".

2) In view of the decrease in the score of "title review" in the evaluation and promotion, the main reason is "Judging from the bonus items of professional title evaluation, teachers' teaching years, teaching awards, activity awards, project research and awards, participation in training, teaching support experience, etc. are all bonus items. However, because some projects are non-teaching tasks, which seriously squeeze teachers' teaching task time, making teachers tired of coping with it; some older teachers who have obtained senior professional titles may not be so interested in professional title evaluation, so It will not be full of work motivation".

3) In view of the low score of "professional development plan" in growth support, The main reason is that "from the different views of school administrators and front-line teachers, school administrators believe that the teacher professional development plan is relatively complete and detailed, but front-line teachers feel that it is not complete and detailed, which reflects that school administrators and front-line teachers have different views on teacher training, and they need to discuss more and listen to the real ideas of front-line teachers".

4.3. Analysis under Different Group Characteristics

Based on 551 samples, this study uses SPSS software to analyze the differences of the "real perception" of the western public junior middle school teachers on motivation measures under different group characteristics (gender, teaching age, professional title, whether there is an administrative position). The study found that there was no significant difference in "gender", "teaching experience" and "professional title", except that "whether there is an administrative position" had significant differences (in all dimensions of teacher motivation, those who have an administrative position were significantly higher than front-line teachers). On the one hand, it shows that the teacher motivation measures of western public junior middle schools are similar in the "specific facts" level, so there is no much difference in the "real perception" level of teachers. On the other hand, the personnel who hold administrative positions take more responsibilities than front-line teachers, and need to invest more time and emotion in teacher motivation measures, so they will have a higher evaluation of teacher motivation measures.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

It can be seen from the above research that the salaries of public junior middle

schools in the central and western regions are relatively low, which cannot better meet the teachers' living expenses, and the items and details involved in assessment and evaluation are relatively complex, which makes teachers' "real perception" of salary, welfare and evaluation and promotion relatively low, which is consistent with the conclusions of existing research (Li & Gai, 2022). In the process of growth support, the teacher professional development plan formulated by the school is "relatively complete and detailed" for school administrators, but from the sample, front-line teachers feel "not complete and detailed", which reflects the different views of school administrators and front-line teachers on teacher training and needs to increase communication. At the same time, the cultural atmosphere of western public junior middle schools is relatively good, which needs to be maintained and strengthened. Therefore, the following suggestions are put forward in this study.

1) Optimize the salary growth mechanism and implement the salary standard for teachers

The study found that the actual role of current salary and welfare on teachers' professional development is limited. One important reason is that the mechanism of teachers' salary growth is in failure. The education management department should give schools greater autonomy in the distribution of teachers' performance pay, and establish a salary distribution and growth mechanism based on teachers' teaching achievements, teaching research achievements, competition awards, etc. At the same time, teachers' salaries should take full account of the local price level and living cost, and build a salary growth mechanism with reference to the local price rise, relevant laws and regulations, salary levels of other industries and teachers' educational background (Xue & Tang, 2017). The local government shall, in accordance with the explicit provisions of the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China that "the average salary level of teachers shall not be lower than the average salary level of local civil servants", serve as the legal guarantee for the implementation of the standard of salary treatment for primary and secondary school teachers. The relevant departments should realize that the average salary level of public junior middle school teachers in the west has not yet met this provision, and the actual salary treatment needs to be improved. In addition, it is also necessary to be open and transparent to the society according to the actual situation, so that the society can become a powerful helper to promote the implementation of teacher compensation policies.

2) Improve the methods of teacher evaluation and reasonably reduce the burden on teachers

The study found that the current teacher evaluation methods cannot effectively enhance the enthusiasm of teachers. Therefore, the school should establish an effective teacher evaluation mechanism and give an objective and fair evaluation of teachers' work according to the actual situation of the school, instead of one-sided emphasis on students' examination results and entrance examination

as the only evaluation criteria. Schools should pay attention to the use of multiple evaluation mechanisms to promote the common development of teachers and students, stimulate teachers' enthusiasm for teaching and educating people, and let teachers actively participate in teaching activities, class management, performance management, and home school cooperation education. At the same time, in view of the heavy workload of teachers, it is necessary to comprehensively clean up and standardize the various inspection, form filling, assessment and evaluation activities existing in the school, explore and implement the system of teacher task list. Tasks not included in the list or not reviewed and approved should not be carried out, so as to free teachers from various "form filling" tasks. In addition, special personnel shall be arranged to regularly supervise and inspect the burden reduction of teachers to avoid assigning tasks to schools and teachers at will.

3) Emphasize the development of teachers and enhance the effectiveness of teacher training

Teachers' professional development plays an important role in the development of students, the improvement of school running level and the establishment of high-quality education system. Therefore, school leaders and front-line teachers should first establish the concept of "teacher development orientation", meet the internal growth needs of teachers, stimulate and maintain the enthusiasm of teachers to constantly improve their own quality. By integrating teacher training resources, focusing on teachers' professional development needs, according to the specific problems in teaching practice, determine the training theme, develop training plans, design courses from four aspects of knowledge, ability, practice and experience around the training theme, and organize the implementation of training plans (Wang & Cai, 2013). School administrators should make detailed plans for their professional development according to the actual situation of individual teachers, clearly list the long-term goals and phased goals, stimulate the enthusiasm of teachers to pursue and achieve the phased goals, so as to improve the timeliness of teacher training.

4) Strengthen democratic management of schools and improve teachers' sense of ownership

School leaders should attach importance to providing teachers with more opportunities to participate in school management, actively encourage teachers to participate in various beneficial collective activities of the school, and build the school into a harmonious family. School leaders should timely understand and discover the tension between teachers, quickly deal with disharmony, especially conflict factors, timely eliminate psychological barriers between teachers, promote good cooperation, and promote the formation of a good interpersonal atmosphere in the school. At the same time, the school should implement the strategy of implementation according to law, hold regular meetings of the teachers' representatives, fully carry forward the democratic spirit, pool ideas, and work together to improve teachers' sense of ownership.

Funding

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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