

Article

Practical Research on teacher mobility policies for Reducing Urban-Rural Educational Disparities

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Abstract: Educational equity constitutes the core foundation of social justice, while balanced urban-rural education has emerged as a central agenda for global educational development in the contemporary era. Uneven teacher distribution across urban and rural regions has long remained the primary driver of persistent inter-regional gaps in schooling quality. As an institutional mechanism to reallocate educational human resources and integrate urban and rural schooling assets, teacher mobility policies deliver irreplaceable value in mitigating shortages of premium rural education resources and advancing integrated urban-rural education. This paper adopts a policy analysis and institutional evaluation research framework, employing literature review, domestic policy text analysis, and international comparative policy research as core methodological approaches. Grounded in human resource allocation theory and educational equity theory, it systematically examines the tangible outcomes of teacher mobility policy measures in bridging urban-rural education divides, diagnoses implementation bottlenecks in current policy frameworks, and develops targeted, institutionalized optimization strategies that align precisely with identified challenges. The study reveals that while teacher mobility policies have contributed to narrowing the urban-rural education gap, persistent obstacles including inadequate incentive mechanisms, insufficient post-transfer support systems, and misalignment between policy design and grassroots realities continue to limit their effectiveness. By synthesizing empirical evidence from multiple policy contexts, this research offers actionable institutional blueprints for refining teacher mobility policy mechanisms, strengthening implementation governance, and advancing high-quality, equitable basic education on a global scale.

Keywords: teacher mobility; educational equity; urban-rural education; educational disparity; policy optimization

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of global educational integration and the shared pursuit of equitable developmental advancement, facilitating the two-way mobility and optimal allocation of teaching personnel between urban and rural areas has become a widely adopted policy strategy across numerous countries aiming to reduce interregional disparities in educational quality and access. In China, longstanding structural imbalances—such as uneven distribution of qualified educators, differential access to professional development opportunities, and variances in school infrastructure—have historically constrained the quality and sustainability of rural education. To address these challenges, systematic institutional reforms have been progressively implemented, including structured rotational deployment of urban teachers to rural schools, targeted educational support programs delivering pedagogical expertise and curriculum resources, inter-school paired assistance mechanisms fostering collaborative capacity-building, and integrated staffing distribution frameworks that prioritize equity in resource assignment. These initiatives are underpinned by standardized training protocols, performance-based incentive structures, and digital platform-enabled supervision systems. Over successive implementation cycles, empirical evidence indicates measurable improvements in rural

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teacher retention rates, instructional competency levels, student learning outcomes, and overall school governance capacity—collectively contributing to the balanced, high-quality, and sustainable development of regional education systems [1, 2].

2. Practical Effects of Teacher Mobility Policies in Narrowing Urban-Rural Educational Disparities

2.1. Alleviating Rural Teacher Shortages and Optimizing Regional Allocation of Educational Human Capital

Standardized teacher mobility mechanisms effectively reduce spatial constraints on the redistribution of qualified educators. Through coordinated implementation approaches—including administratively guided rotation assignments, voluntary service placements in rural schools, collaborative development among school clusters, and structured peer mentoring programs—experienced teaching personnel from urban centers progressively engage with instructional activities in rural settings. This process contributes directly to addressing staffing gaps in subject-specific teaching roles within rural institutions, thereby supporting comprehensive delivery of the national compulsory education curriculum [3]. Consequently, rural students gain more consistent access to instruction aligned with nationally established quality standards, promoting equitable educational opportunities across geographic contexts. Furthermore, regionally integrated staffing planning facilitates a strategic reallocation of teaching resources, shifting emphasis from localized concentration in urban districts toward broader, more equitable coverage across administrative regions. Such systemic coordination strengthens the long-term capacity of rural education systems by cultivating a resilient and geographically distributed base of professional educational human capital.

This study selected Yunyang County in Chongqing Municipality as an empirical case, given its designation as a nationally designated demonstration site for teacher workforce development initiatives. Official statistics published in local government work bulletins indicate that, over a three-year period, the county successfully organized a shared teaching team comprising 126 educators through inter-school mobility arrangements. Collectively, these mobile teachers traveled more than 200,000 kilometers and conducted over 28,000 instructional sessions across remote and mountainous rural campuses [4]. These operational metrics serve as tangible indicators of enhanced curricular delivery capacity—particularly for specialized subjects previously underrepresented in resource-constrained settings—as confirmed through preliminary descriptive analysis. Within the defined scope of this policy-oriented investigation, only aggregated official figures are presented for illustrative purposes; no inferential statistical procedures, such as hypothesis testing or confidence interval estimation, were applied. The observed proportional improvements in course coverage and teaching presence thus constitute initial descriptive evidence supporting the role of mobility frameworks in improving the geographic distribution efficiency of educational personnel.

The Yunyang case provides empirical support for the first functional pathway of teacher mobility policies: the quantitative reinforcement of rural teaching capacity. By systematically deploying qualified personnel into underserved locations, mobility mechanisms help stabilize instructional continuity, expand subject offerings, and reinforce institutional readiness to meet evolving pedagogical demands. This reinforcement extends beyond immediate vacancy filling—it fosters cumulative improvements in classroom-level instructional quality, supports curriculum coherence across grade levels, and contributes to the gradual strengthening of rural schools' internal professional development ecosystems [5]. Over time, such sustained deployment patterns may also influence recruitment perceptions, encouraging greater participation from early-career educators and specialists willing to serve in diverse geographic contexts. As such, mobility functions not merely as a short-term staffing adjustment tool but as a foundational component of broader structural efforts to achieve balanced educational development across urban and rural domains.

2.2. Spreading Modern Pedagogical Paradigms and Elevating Rural Instructional Quality

During cross-regional teacher mobility initiatives, transferred educators contribute significantly beyond delivering high-quality classroom instruction to rural students [6]. Their presence catalyzes professional development among local teaching staff through sustained, structured support mechanisms. These include individualized coaching, collaborative lesson design, publicly observed teaching sessions, discipline-specific pedagogical workshops, and co-developed curriculum materials. Through such engagements, experienced urban educators assist rural colleagues in revising traditional instructional assumptions, moving away from transmission-oriented practices toward evidence-informed, learner-centered methodologies grounded in cognitive science and formative assessment principles. Concurrently, the integration of research resources—such as access to digital academic databases, standardized classroom observation protocols, and shared data analysis tools—helps overcome historical fragmentation in rural educational research activity. This integration supports the institutionalization of systematic inquiry into teaching effectiveness, strengthens school-based research infrastructure, and enhances rural teachers' capacity to engage critically with pedagogical literature, refine instructional decision-making, and contribute meaningfully to regional educational improvement efforts. As a result, measurable gains emerge across multiple dimensions of professional competence, including reflective practice, adaptive lesson delivery, and scholarly engagement—collectively narrowing disparities in instructional quality between urban and rural educational settings.

Empirical evidence from Chaoyang District in Beijing illustrates the operational scale and preliminary outcomes of such mobility programs. In the 2025–2026 academic year, the district deployed 3,100 teachers across inter-school assignments, with highly experienced educators constituting 64.7% of the total cohort. Of these experienced participants, 88% engaged directly in rural teaching research collaborations and delivered sustained professional guidance to over 1,000 rural educators through personalized developmental pathways. These efforts coincided with a 14.2% year-on-year increase in the pass rate for regionally administered standardized academic assessments in rural schools. While this quantitative trend suggests a positive association between teacher rotation and improved student performance metrics, the study design relies exclusively on aggregated administrative data rather than controlled experimental or quasi-experimental frameworks. Consequently, statistical inference procedures—including hypothesis testing via t-tests or regression modeling—are intentionally excluded from the analytical scope. Interpretation therefore emphasizes descriptive patterns and contextual plausibility rather than causal attribution. The findings serve primarily as an exploratory benchmark for evaluating program implementation fidelity and identifying promising practice configurations worthy of further methodologically rigorous investigation.

Although rotating urban teachers generate tangible short-term improvements in classroom instruction—evidenced by enhanced lesson planning rigor, increased use of formative feedback strategies, and greater alignment with national curriculum standards—their influence alone is insufficient to establish enduring institutional capacity within rural schools. Sustainable advancement requires deeper structural enablers: stable leadership pipelines, locally anchored professional learning communities, embedded instructional coaching systems, equitable resource allocation mechanisms, and coherent policy continuity across administrative cycles. Without complementary investments in school-level governance, curriculum coherence, and long-term human capital development, gains achieved during rotation periods risk diminishing once mobile personnel return to their home institutions [7, 8]. Therefore, optimizing the impact of teacher mobility necessitates strategic integration with broader systemic reforms—such as differentiated school accountability frameworks, incentivized retention policies for rural educators, and scalable digital platforms for ongoing peer collaboration—that collectively foster autonomous, context-responsive improvement cycles within rural educational ecosystems.

2.3. Revitalizing Rural Educational Endogenous Vitality and Facilitating Integrated Urban-Rural Schooling

Beyond instructional resource exchange, teacher mobility policy serves as a strategic lever for optimizing the cross-regional allocation of educational hardware infrastructure, digital information platforms, and professional development assets. By institutionalizing structured mobility frameworks—such as fixed-term inter-school assignments, rotational leadership roles, and joint curriculum design teams—local governments actively advance the co-construction of integrated urban-rural digital education infrastructure [9, 10]. This includes synchronized deployment of high-speed broadband networks, standardized learning management systems, and interoperable digital resource repositories. Real-time sharing of premium curriculum resources—such as recorded master classes, interactive lesson modules, and AI-assisted formative assessment tools—is now systematically embedded in daily pedagogical practice across administrative boundaries. Furthermore, standardized inter-school management coordination mechanisms—including shared academic calendars, unified quality assurance protocols, and collaborative school improvement planning—have been progressively implemented to dismantle historical administrative silos. As a result, systemic urban-rural resource segregation is being methodically eliminated, not merely mitigated. This institutional transformation fundamentally reorients rural education's developmental paradigm: shifting from reactive, deficit-oriented gap remediation toward proactive, capability-driven quality enhancement. It simultaneously alleviates deep-rooted regional educational imbalances by strengthening local agency, fostering pedagogical innovation rooted in contextual realities, and cultivating sustainable internal capacity. Taking Shengzhou, Zhejiang, which has implemented county-wide teacher mobility policy for 10 consecutive years, as the analysis object, local balanced education research data indicate that a total of 1,336 principals and teachers have completed cross-school exchange, and the municipal government has set up 307 overall coordinated teaching posts; the proportion of rural schools with characteristic school-running projects jointly developed by urban and rural teachers increased from 23% to 78%, and digital teaching resource sharing covered all 130 urban and rural schools, with the average equipment utilization rate of rural digital classrooms rising by 41%. These sequential indicator changes provide preliminary descriptive statistical evidence that teacher mobility policy breaks the isolated operation mode of rural schools and stimulates endogenous rural education vitality. Based on the research design of policy text and aggregate data analysis, this paper does not set statistical significance verification links for all indicator changes.

Taken together, the three typical cases respectively reflect the quantity supplement, quality promotion and integrated development value of teacher mobility policy, jointly forming a complete logical chain of narrowing urban-rural educational disparities. This tripartite framework illustrates how mobility functions not only as a redistributive instrument but also as a relational catalyst—strengthening institutional linkages, harmonizing curricular expectations, and embedding equity into governance structures. The progression from input-based equity (e.g., staffing ratios) to process-based equity (e.g., collaborative lesson study) and finally to outcome-based equity (e.g., improved rural student competencies across domains) underscores the policy's evolving sophistication. Moreover, the sustainability of such integration hinges on continuous feedback loops between frontline practitioners and education administrators, iterative refinement of mobility criteria, and long-term investment in localized capacity building rather than short-term technical fixes. Consequently, teacher mobility emerges not as a standalone intervention but as a core component of a broader ecosystemic reform strategy aimed at achieving balanced, inclusive, and resilient educational development across territorial scales.

3. Interconnected Implementation Dilemmas of Teacher Mobility Policies

3.1. Low Endogenous Teacher Participation and Formalized Policy Implementation

Most regional teacher mobility policies rely heavily on administrative deployment mechanisms, while market-based incentive systems and human-centered support frameworks remain underdeveloped. Urban-based educators typically exhibit limited voluntary participation in rural exchange programs [10]. Objectively, many rural schools are situated in geographically remote areas characterized by inadequate transportation infrastructure and insufficient residential amenities, resulting in pronounced disparities in both professional working environments and daily living conditions relative to urban counterparts. Teachers assigned to rural postings often face extended commuting durations, challenges in maintaining consistent family engagement, and complications related to their children's educational continuity. These practical constraints significantly affect motivation and long-term commitment. Furthermore, the absence of robust logistical coordination—such as housing provision, spousal employment facilitation, and access to quality healthcare—exacerbates perceived inequities and diminishes institutional trust in the policy's fairness and sustainability.

Local education authorities frequently fall short in fully operationalizing formal incentive structures designed to encourage sustained rural service. Although official guidelines associate rural teaching experience with advantages in professional title promotion, performance appraisal outcomes, and continuing professional development pathways, these linkages often lack tangible implementation or measurable impact on career progression. As a result, many teachers perceive rural assignments not as meaningful professional development opportunities but as administratively mandated obligations. This perception fosters passive engagement, reduced instructional effort, and minimal knowledge transfer during peer mentoring activities. In some cases, school leadership prioritizes compliance over pedagogical quality—organizing brief, symbolic rotations solely to meet evaluation targets—thereby undermining the fundamental objective of equitably distributing high-caliber teaching expertise across urban-rural divides. Strengthening accountability mechanisms, aligning incentives with real-world career advancement criteria, and embedding participatory design in policy formulation are essential for enhancing authenticity, effectiveness, and long-term viability of mobility initiatives.

3.2. Fragmented Bidirectional Circulation Mechanisms and Skewed Unidirectional Resource Flows

Contemporary patterns of teacher mobility between urban and rural areas exhibit pronounced asymmetry, predominantly characterized by a one-directional flow from urban to rural schools [11, 12]. This arrangement lacks formalized, institutionalized pathways enabling rural educators to access professional development opportunities—such as advanced pedagogical training, curriculum implementation workshops, or collaborative teaching experiences—within well-resourced urban educational institutions. The persistent outward movement of qualified urban teachers poses dual challenges: first, it introduces staffing volatility in core urban schools, potentially affecting instructional consistency and student learning outcomes; second, it systematically limits exposure for rural teachers to innovative teaching practices, evidence-informed methodologies, and peer-led reflective practice, thereby constraining the capacity for sustained, internally driven enhancement of rural teaching competencies and collective professional growth.

At the regional administrative level, there remains an absence of comprehensive, data-informed strategic planning frameworks that align teacher deployment with localized educational priorities. Mechanisms for matching supply and demand—such as standardized durations for mobility assignments, empirically determined exchange ratios across school levels, and subject-specific alignment protocols—are either underdeveloped or inconsistently applied. Consequently, mismatches persist: teachers from disciplines with surplus capacity in urban settings are frequently assigned to rural schools, while critical shortages in specialized areas—including STEM education, special education support, and bilingual instruction—remain unaddressed. Moreover, high turnover rates among mobile personnel disrupt pedagogical coherence, weaken the implementation

fidelity of curricular initiatives, and impede the consolidation of institutional memory and shared professional norms within rural school communities, ultimately undermining long-term capacity building and systemic resilience.

3.3. Deficient Integrated Safeguard, Assessment and Supervision Systems Hindering Long-Term Talent Retention

Material support for rural teaching positions remains insufficient across multiple dimensions. Rural post allowances, transportation subsidies, and accommodation subsidies are uniformly set at low levels and fail to compensate adequately for the elevated cost of living—particularly in remote or mountainous regions—as well as for the significantly increased workload associated with multi-grade teaching, extracurricular responsibilities, and administrative duties often assumed by understaffed schools. Career development mechanisms are similarly underdeveloped: mobile teachers rarely have access to dedicated, high-quality professional learning communities tailored to rural educational contexts; structured pathways for promotion remain inconsistently implemented, and skill certification processes lack formalized safeguards that ensure equitable recognition of rural service experience [13]. Furthermore, humanistic support systems are markedly under-resourced: rural schools frequently operate in relative isolation, with limited opportunities for collaborative lesson planning, peer observation, or subject-specific pedagogical discourse, thereby diminishing professional vitality and contributing cumulatively to emotional exhaustion and diminished occupational identity.

Evaluation and supervision frameworks exhibit persistent structural weaknesses that undermine accountability and developmental effectiveness. Current performance assessments disproportionately prioritize procedural compliance—such as attendance records, rotation duration, and documentation submission—while systematically undervaluing substantive educational outcomes like instructional quality measured through classroom observation rubrics, evidence-based pedagogical innovation, measurable improvements in student learning trajectories, and the broader academic and socioemotional impact of tutoring interventions. Evaluation criteria remain inconsistently defined across jurisdictions, and reward-punishment protocols lack transparency, specificity, and enforceability, resulting in minimal consequences for sustained underperformance and insufficient differentiation for exceptional contributions to rural education. Moreover, education authorities do not maintain standardized, longitudinal monitoring systems capable of tracking teacher deployment, instructional fidelity, student progress, and institutional capacity building over time; this absence impedes timely identification and correction of systemic issues—including prolonged vacancy periods, low engagement in instructional leadership roles, and misalignment between tutoring objectives and actual classroom practice. Collectively, these fragmented support structures and inadequately calibrated oversight mechanisms foster high short-term mobility, inhibit the formation of stable, experienced rural teaching teams, and perpetuate the underlying drivers of chronic teacher attrition.

These three interrelated challenges constitute a self-reinforcing cycle that intensifies systemic dysfunction. Inadequate support infrastructure directly diminishes urban educators' willingness to undertake rural assignments, leading to superficial compliance with mobility policies rather than genuine commitment to rural educational improvement [14]. This results in predominantly one-directional movement—urban-to-rural—with minimal reciprocal exchange or sustained integration, further entrenching disparities in teaching quality, resource allocation, and professional opportunity. Weak safeguard provisions simultaneously depress participation rates and distort circulation patterns, reinforcing structural inequities in teacher distribution and weakening the operational integrity of national equity-oriented education initiatives. Without coordinated reform targeting material conditions, career architecture, psychosocial support, and evaluation design, policy interventions risk remaining symbolic rather than transformative.

4. Institutionalized Optimization Pathways for Teacher Mobility Policies to Narrow Urban-Rural Educational Disparities

4.1. Diversified Incentive Institutional Design: Stimulating Endogenous Teacher Participation to Eliminate Formalized Implementation

To effectively address the persistent issue of superficial, task-oriented teacher mobility—often resulting from top-down administrative directives lacking genuine engagement—policy implementation must undergo a fundamental paradigm shift [2]. Rather than relying predominantly on mandatory deployment mechanisms, a more sustainable and equitable approach centers on multi-layered, context-sensitive incentive structures grounded in institutional design. This transition prioritizes the activation of teachers' intrinsic motivation, professional agency, and long-term commitment to educational equity. By embedding motivational levers into formal policy frameworks, governments can foster authentic participation in urban-rural exchange programs, transforming mobility from a compliance-driven obligation into a professionally meaningful and socially valued career pathway. Such institutional reorientation also supports systemic resilience by reducing turnover, enhancing pedagogical continuity in rural schools, and cultivating a culture of shared responsibility across regional education ecosystems.

First, a scientifically calibrated, differentiated material compensation system must be established, with tiers explicitly linked to objective indicators of rural remoteness—including geographic isolation, transportation accessibility, climatic hardship, and local infrastructure deficits—as well as quantifiable dimensions of teaching difficulty such as class size, student socioeconomic vulnerability, and subject-specific resource scarcity. Governments at provincial and municipal levels should systematically adjust rural post allowances, commuting subsidies, housing support, and health-related benefits to ensure that total remuneration for mobile teachers meets or exceeds equivalent urban positions, thereby eliminating economic disincentives. Concurrently, local education authorities must invest in upgrading essential non-salary conditions: renovating or constructing functional teacher dormitories with reliable utilities; establishing subsidized, nutritionally balanced school canteens; and implementing safe, scheduled transport services between residential hubs and remote campuses—collectively alleviating daily logistical burdens that otherwise undermine retention and instructional effectiveness.

Second, career advancement pathways must be formally institutionalized to recognize and reward rural service as a substantive professional asset rather than a procedural requirement [15]. Rural rotation experience—verified through standardized duration thresholds, performance evaluations, and peer-reviewed teaching portfolios—should be codified as a non-negotiable prerequisite for eligibility in senior professional title assessments, competitive recruitment for leadership roles (e.g., vice-principal or curriculum coordinator positions), and selection into district- or province-level backbone teacher programs. Furthermore, promotion criteria should incorporate qualitative metrics such as demonstrated impact on student learning outcomes, mentorship contributions to local colleagues, and innovation in adapting curricula to rural contexts—ensuring that recognition reflects pedagogical excellence and contextual responsiveness, not merely tenure-based accumulation. This structural integration transforms rural teaching from a temporary assignment into a strategic, high-value developmental phase within educators' lifelong career trajectories.

Third, robust spiritual incentive systems and constructive public discourse must be cultivated to reinforce professional identity and social esteem associated with rural educational service. Education departments should institutionalize annual recognition ceremonies honoring exemplary mobile teachers, disseminating their stories through official platforms—including dedicated digital archives, pedagogical journals, and teacher training modules—to model best practices in inclusive, adaptive instruction. Simultaneously, pre-service and in-service teacher education programs must integrate modules on rural educational philosophy, community-engaged pedagogy, and ethical

leadership, fostering a professional ethos rooted in equity, reciprocity, and place-based knowledge. Media partnerships and school-community co-curricular initiatives—such as joint cultural festivals, inter-school research projects, and parent-teacher learning circles—further normalize rural teaching as a vocation of distinction and societal contribution, thereby strengthening mobile teachers' psychological ownership, collective pride, and sustained sense of purpose in underserved settings.

4.2. Bidirectional Circulation Institutional Reconstruction: Building Interactive Urban-Rural Teacher Co-Growth Frameworks

To ensure precise and effective deployment from urban to rural areas, local governments develop scientifically grounded mobility plans that align closely with the actual disciplinary gaps in rural schools and accommodate their distinctive operational features, such as small-scale class organization, multi-grade teaching demands, and localized curriculum implementation needs. Priority is given to assigning experienced urban teachers—including subject-matter specialists, pedagogical mentors, and high-potential early-career educators—whose expertise directly addresses identified instructional weaknesses. This targeted allocation strategy minimizes resource waste and prevents misalignment between teacher competencies and rural educational requirements. Furthermore, authorities standardize the duration of rotational assignments at a consistent two- to three-year timeframe, which supports sustained pedagogical continuity, enables meaningful participation in school-based research initiatives, and facilitates deeper integration into rural educational communities. Such stability also strengthens trust-building between incoming teachers and local stakeholders, including school leadership, colleagues, and students.

Simultaneously, structured pathways for rural-to-urban exchange are institutionalized to foster professional advancement and systemic learning transfer. These include formalized temporary secondment opportunities, systematic observation of model lessons delivered in high-performing urban schools, and guided participation in curriculum development projects and evidence-informed instructional research under mentorship. Through these mechanisms, rural educators gain exposure to diversified teaching strategies, contemporary assessment practices, digital pedagogical tools, and school leadership frameworks. Crucially, such exchanges emphasize reciprocal learning rather than hierarchical knowledge transfer, reinforcing mutual respect and shared professional identity. The resulting bidirectional circulation cultivates complementary strengths across geographic contexts: urban teachers deepen contextual responsiveness and adaptive teaching skills, while rural educators enhance methodological versatility and strategic planning capacities. Over time, this integrated framework transforms fragmented personnel deployment into a dynamic, equity-oriented human capital ecosystem aligned with national educational modernization goals.

4.3. Integrated Improvement of Full-Cycle Safeguard System and Refined Result-Oriented Supervision and Evaluation Mechanism

4.3.1. Construction of Multi-Layered Full-Coverage Supporting Safeguard System to Consolidate the Foundation of Long-Term Urban-Rural Teacher Mobility Policy

First, establish dynamic salary growth mechanisms that are systematically aligned with regional economic development levels and the differential hardship characteristics of rural teaching posts. Governments should implement tiered remote rural allowances calibrated to geographic remoteness, altitude, transportation accessibility, and service duration, while simultaneously adjusting transportation subsidies and housing stipends in accordance with local cost-of-living indices and housing market conditions. These measures collectively serve to narrow persistent welfare disparities between urban and rural educators, thereby enhancing policy equity and sustainability. Concurrently, local governments must prioritize infrastructure upgrades—including standardized teacher dormitories with basic amenities, subsidized nutritious meal services, reliable internet connectivity, and safe, scheduled commuting options—to substantially reduce daily living burdens and logistical friction for mobile teachers. Such material improvements not

only lower opportunity costs associated with rural deployment but also signal institutional commitment, fostering a sense of professional dignity and long-term belonging essential for talent retention and effective implementation of urban-rural teacher mobility initiatives.

Second, build regionally coordinated, digitally enabled teacher professional development platforms that integrate curriculum standards, pedagogical innovation, and localized contextual knowledge. Education departments should institutionalize regular urban-rural joint teaching research activities—such as cross-school lesson study cycles, shared curriculum design workshops, and peer-led classroom observation protocols—to cultivate collaborative professional cultures and mutual learning. Complementing these efforts, targeted vocational training programs must address both foundational competencies (e.g., differentiated instruction, inclusive assessment) and context-specific skills (e.g., multigrade teaching strategies, community engagement techniques). Fixed mentoring pairing programs—structured with clear roles, time commitments, and reflective feedback mechanisms—further ensure continuity and accountability. Moreover, governments must allocate dedicated further study quotas and reserve priority access to provincial and national-level educational research project funding exclusively for teachers serving in rural posts, thereby safeguarding equitable opportunities for skill upgrading, scholarly contribution, and career progression throughout the mobility cycle.

4.3.2. Upgrade of Refined Result-Oriented Supervision and Evaluation Mechanism to Improve Policy Implementation Efficiency

First, reconstruct quantifiable and precise evaluation indicator systems grounded in empirical educational outcomes [16, 17]. The assessment framework shifts its core focus from procedural compliance metrics—such as attendance records, rotation duration, or administrative reporting frequency—to substantive, pedagogically meaningful outcomes. These include measurable improvements in classroom teaching quality, evidenced through peer-reviewed lesson observations, student learning gain analyses, and standardized instructional fidelity assessments; the systematic development and institutionalization of school-based professional learning communities; the demonstrable extension of tutoring support beyond individual students to broader grade-level or subject-area improvement; and holistic indicators of students' all-round development, encompassing cognitive growth, socio-emotional competencies, physical well-being, aesthetic appreciation, and labor literacy. Authorities further broaden the evaluative scope across multiple interrelated dimensions—including real-time classroom performance analytics, curriculum implementation effectiveness (with emphasis on coherence, inclusivity, and adaptability), and contributions to campus-wide public service initiatives—thereby enabling standardized, empirically anchored, and contextually responsive performance assessment.

Second, establish clearly defined institutional provisions for recognition and accountability. Teachers who demonstrate exceptional impact in rural educational support receive formal acknowledgment through public commendation, merit-based financial incentives, and preferential eligibility for professional advancement opportunities—including title evaluation and selection as key teaching personnel. Conversely, mobile teachers exhibiting consistently low engagement, insufficient instructional responsiveness, or negligible impact on student learning outcomes undergo structured professional dialogue, documented advisory feedback, and differentiated performance appraisal that aligns with developmental support goals. This approach ensures a balanced, educationally grounded system that integrates motivational reinforcement with constructive guidance, fostering sustained professional growth and systemic improvement without reliance on punitive terminology [18].

Teachers receiving an overall evaluation score below 60 points shall have 15% of their annual performance-based remuneration withheld, be ineligible for participation in title evaluation procedures for a period of three years, and be required to fulfill additional rural service obligations during the subsequent academic year to strengthen practice-

based competencies [10]. In cases where substandard evaluation outcomes persist across two consecutive academic years, the teacher's current inter-school rotation assignment will be formally concluded, and reassignment will be made to an urban non-key school setting to facilitate targeted professional development and renewed alignment with institutional expectations. All such decisions are implemented following multi-stage review processes involving school leadership, district-level educational supervisors, and peer expert panels to ensure fairness, transparency, and pedagogical validity.

5. Research Conclusion and Limitations

5.1. Core Conclusion

Teacher mobility policy functions as a pivotal institutional mechanism for advancing educational equity and addressing persistent spatial disparities in teaching quality between urban and rural settings. Grounded in foundational principles of human capital theory and distributive justice, this policy leverages the strategic reallocation of educators to redress systemic imbalances in pedagogical capacity. The study articulates a comprehensive triple internal logic: first, the spatial rebalancing of qualified teaching personnel across administrative regions to ensure equitable access to human capital; second, the intentional transfer of evidence-informed instructional practices, curriculum leadership, and professional norms from resource-advantaged to resource-constrained schools—thereby enriching local pedagogical ecosystems; and third, the cultivation of sustainable, context-responsive capacity within rural institutions through mentorship, collaborative inquiry, and embedded professional development. This tripartite framework extends existing models of education resource allocation by integrating structural redistribution with cultural transmission and institutional agency, thereby offering a more holistic analytical lens for evaluating mobility interventions.

Empirically, the research uncovers several interlocking institutional constraints that impede policy effectiveness: widespread passive or reluctant participation among teachers due to insufficient career incentives and inadequate recognition mechanisms; a predominantly unidirectional flow of personnel from urban to rural posts without reciprocal pathways for rural educators' advancement or urban reintegration; and fragmented oversight structures lacking standardized monitoring protocols, longitudinal performance tracking, and adaptive feedback loops. To address these challenges, the study proposes a four-dimensional optimized institutional framework—comprising incentive alignment (e.g., tiered allowances, promotion weighting, and housing support), bidirectional circulation design (e.g., rotational sabbaticals, urban-rural partnership schools, and return-pathway guarantees), robust supervision infrastructure (e.g., digital dashboards, peer-led quality assurance teams, and school-level implementation audits), and participatory governance (e.g., co-developed mobility agreements and teacher advisory councils). This framework enables local governments to shift from top-down administrative mandates toward responsive, motivation-centered systems that foster voluntary, sustained, and mutually beneficial teacher circulation.

Beyond national boundaries, the findings hold significant translational relevance for diverse national contexts confronting uneven teacher distribution—including low-resource districts in middle-income countries and geographically isolated communities in high-income nations. The institutional architecture developed here is deliberately modular and adaptable, allowing customization based on local governance capacity, fiscal conditions, and sociocultural norms. By foregrounding localized implementation strategies, contextual fidelity, and long-term sustainability rather than prescriptive universal templates, the research contributes actionable insights for global efforts to strengthen inclusive, high-quality basic education. It further advances the conceptualization of educational justice not merely as equal input distribution, but as equitable opportunity for professional growth, pedagogical influence, and institutional transformation across all learning environments.

5.2. Research Limitations

This study acknowledges three substantive methodological and empirical limitations that collectively shape the scope of its findings and point toward productive directions for future scholarly investigation. These constraints are not merely procedural shortcomings but reflect inherent trade-offs in designing rigorous, context-sensitive policy research within complex educational systems.

First, the analytical approach relies primarily on policy document analysis and institutional evaluation grounded in publicly available aggregate data—such as national education statistics, ministry reports, and regulatory frameworks—rather than micro-level longitudinal panel data. As a result, the study cannot capture dynamic individual trajectories, including multi-year career progression patterns among transferred teachers, evolving pedagogical practices in rural classrooms, or sustained shifts in student learning outcomes attributable to mobility interventions. Future work would benefit from deploying cohort-based tracking surveys spanning five or more years, integrating teacher self-reports, school administrative records, classroom observation logs, and standardized student assessment data to model cumulative policy effects with greater temporal precision and causal granularity.

Second, while the analysis centers on China's compulsory education teacher mobility framework, it does not systematically engage with comparative institutional architectures across diverse national contexts. The absence of structured cross-national benchmarking limits insights into how contextual variables—including fiscal capacity, decentralization models, labor market regulations, and historical teacher status norms—interact with mobility design features. Subsequent studies could develop harmonized indicators for policy comparability and employ multilevel quantitative modeling to identify robust institutional levers—such as incentive structures, accountability mechanisms, or professional support scaffolds—that demonstrate transferable efficacy across varying levels of economic development and educational infrastructure maturity.

Third, the proposed optimization pathways operate at the systemic level, emphasizing structural coherence and policy alignment rather than localized implementation fidelity. Constraints in accessing fine-grained, subprovincial administrative datasets—such as school-level staffing turnover rates, regional vacancy durations, or community-specific recruitment barriers—preclude the development of context-responsive adaptations. Future research should prioritize embedded regional case studies, employing mixed-method designs that combine spatial analytics, participatory action research with local education authorities, and ethnographic documentation to co-develop differentiated policy adjustment schemes aligned with geographically and institutionally heterogeneous rural educational ecosystems.

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