

A Qualitative Study of Rural School Girls' Perspective of Dropping Out of Secondary Vocational Schools in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (GZAR) in China

Wenling, Li, Mohd Mokhtar Muhamad, Fathiyah Mohd Fakhruddin

Faculty of Educational Study, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400, Serdang, Malaysia

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Abstract

Secondary vocational education has always been the focus of national education. China vigorously develops secondary vocational education and even encourages secondary vocational students to complete their studies through tuition reduction or exemption. However, the phenomenon of school dropout has not yet been resolved, which has seriously affected the normal development of secondary vocational education in our country. In rural China, many girls drop out of school at the secondary vocational level, and their reasons are also different. This study used a qualitative research method to study three secondary vocational school dropout girls in P village. It explores and analyzes the various factors that affect and restrict their dropout to suggest solving secondary vocational school dropout in rural areas. This study used semi-structured interviews to collect data and used Nvivo for data analysis. The research found that the reasons for female secondary vocational school students dropping out include (a) secondary vocational girls are susceptible to interference from the external environment, (b) secondary vocational female students have poor resistance to frustration, and (c) indulging in games—entertainment activities.

Keywords: Rural Areas, Secondary Vocational Girls, Dropouts, Qualitative Approach

Introduction

China's education reform calls for increasing rural secondary vocational education (Piao & Pu, 2013). Vocational education is a kind of cross-industry education. As the type of education that is most closely connected with the economy and Society, it has delivered many technical and technical talents for developing my country's economy and society. Promoting the development of vocational education is of great significance for improving the level of economic and social development and the country's overall competitiveness (Pu, 2014). The "National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan Outline (2010-2020)" promulgated in 2010 pointed out: "The country must vigorously develop vocational education. At the same time, it must increase the attractiveness of vocational education, improve vocational education support policies, and gradually implement a free system for

secondary vocational education. Special emphasis is placed on accelerating rural vocational education and strengthening vocational education as an important part of serving the construction of a new socialist countryside (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2018). It can be seen from this that the state requires various measures to enhance the attractiveness of secondary vocational education in rural areas to promote the healthy and sustainable development of secondary vocational education.

Secondary vocational education is an education for everyone (Zheng & Chen, 2018). Its goal is to improve people's quality, teach people their skills, and gain a foothold in society with their skills (Feng, 2018). Vocational education brings education to the doorstep. More importantly, it can train a large number of high-level skilled talents that our country currently urgently needs, and can guide people with different hobbies and abilities to corresponding professional positions, so that their personality characteristics and social needs Combine them to give full play to human potential and promote economic development. The dropout of secondary vocational students directly affects the development of vocational schools, causes a waste of educational resources, and is also a factor affecting social stability.

China's secondary vocational education has encountered a series of challenges: the number of students is insufficient, the overall quality is not high, students lack learning motivation and enthusiasm, and the number of dropouts has increased (Bank, 2001). Among them, the most prominent is that the problem of secondary vocational students dropping out has not been effectively resolved (Liu, n.d.). The dropout of secondary vocational students will not only involve a considerable number of young people's right to education after graduation from junior high school, but will also indirectly affect the current and future social and economic development of our country, and even hinder the growth of a country and the revitalization of a nation. In rural areas, the number of secondary vocational students who drop out of school is quite large. Li Yanjun found in his research that "the dropout rate of rural secondary vocational school students is generally between 10% and 20%, and in some areas, it even reaches 40% (Li, 2014)." However, most of the students who choose to drop out of school for various reasons are girls. From ancient times to the present, girls have been regarded as a disadvantaged group in society. In ancient times, there was a saying that "a woman who has no talent is a virtue," Now there is also a saying that "boys are preferred over women." Whether it was before or now, people always hold prejudice against the group of girls. With the progress of Society, this prejudice is gradually disappearing in most urban areas, and groups of men and women are becoming equal. In most rural areas, the idea of "gender inequality" is still severe. As a result, secondary vocational girls choose to drop out or are forced to drop out due to various reasons. The reason for this is a problem that needs to be discovered and solved urgently.

In China, rural area refers to a place where laborers mainly engaged in agricultural production live with specific natural landscapes and socio-economic conditions (Yang, n.d.). These places often have these characteristics: (a) The population is scattered; (b) The family is inhabited by family clans; (c) The development is slow, and the economic level is low; (d) The permanent population is mainly the elderly and children. The rural area in this study refers specifically to Village P in CenXi District, WuZhou City, GZAR. The girls who dropped out of secondary vocational schools in this article were all born in Village P and lived here for a long time.

Many scholars in China have conducted a series of studies on the phenomenon of student dropout. These researchers analyze the status quo at different levels and stages and propose countermeasures. However, it is a pity that there was no special study on the dropout

of secondary vocational students. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the reason for the dropout of secondary vocational female students. And the specific research questions are as follow:

RQ1: How do secondary vocational female students describe reasons for the dropout of secondary vocational school?

RQ2: What ways can reduce the dropout rate of secondary vocational female students?

Methodology

Research Design

This article aims to use a qualitative case study to describe the female subjects of secondary vocational school dropouts and their surrounding systems and collect data to explain the underlying reasons that affect and restrict secondary vocational school dropouts. A case study refers to the collection, research, and analysis of data for a specific individual, to explore the causes of special conditions or problems and propose appropriate solutions (Creswell, 2013). The case study is devoted to the whole process of the development and change of their behaviors. It has the characteristics of in-depth and comprehensiveness and is suitable for researching the dropout of secondary vocational school girls. Through case studies, we can obtain a comprehensive understanding of the reasons for dropping out of school for every girl who has dropped out of school. In this study, the researcher used interview method to gain an in-depth understanding of three secondary vocational school dropout cases.

Sampling

The subjects of this study are Student1, Student2, and Student3, three female students who dropped out of secondary vocational school. Through observations in my hometown, I learned that many students have dropped out of secondary vocational schools in P village, and girls make up a large part of them. During the visit, I learned that many secondary vocational school dropout girls came back after only a year, and many still live in the village.

Registration Form for Girls Dropping Out of Secondary Vocational School

No.	Name	Age	Oral reasons for dropping out
1	STUDENT1	31	No money
2	STUDENT2	25	Not interested in learning
3	STUDENT3	16	I don't think I could keep up

The research object of this article is the residents of P Village, CenXi District, Wuzhou City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Village P has average annual rainfall and sufficient sunlight. With the government's leadership, many villagers are growing oranges on a large scale to earn income. Over time, nearly one-third of young men and women in the village chose to go out to work, and most of the resident population in the village is the elderly and children.

STUDENT1

Student1 is 31 years old this year and is a woman director of the P village committee. Student1 dropped out of school in 2010 when she was 19 years old, and it has been 12 years since she dropped out of school. Now, there are 6 people in Student1's family, and Student1 lives with her husband and two sons, and in-law parents. When Student 1 was still in school,

his father was the village meat salesman, and would sell pork and beef, for example. Student1's mother is an ordinary rural housewife who does housework and farm work every day. Student 1's older son is 9 years old and the younger son is 5 years old. When Student1 goes to work, it is her in-law mother who helps with the children. There are five sisters in Student1's family. She was ranked second. She has an older brother and two younger sisters and a younger brother. In Student 1's family, only she and her youngest sister did not go to college; the other three graduated from college. Today, Student1's brothers and sisters are all married, and only come back during New Year's Day.

STUDENT2

Student2 is 25 years old and has lived in P village since she was a child. Student2 chose to drop out of school in 2013 when she was 16 years old. There is a total of five people in Student2's family. Her parents make a living by growing oranges in the village. Student2 has an older brother who is 2 years older than her and had a younger brother. Student 2 is now working as a salesman in a car company in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province.

STUDENT3

Student 3 was my last interviewee. She is 19 years old. She is the youngest of all my interviewees. Student 3's parents left to work in Guangdong when she was very young and have been living there ever since. Student 3 has lived in the village with her grandparents since she was a child. Now, Student 3 is still a student at School XX. Previously, she had been expelled from school several times for not following school discipline, and after various efforts, she returned to school for high school. She has stated that she went to work for two years after being expelled from school and found the work very hard and very different from her sisters' work. Her three sisters all graduated from colleges, so she wanted to come back to school.

Data Collection

Data collection for this case study includes an in-depth interview and a Semi-structured interview. Through reading the literature, sort out the reasons for the dropout of secondary vocational school girls, and draw up an interview outline. The outline mainly uses a semi-structured interview method. The first interview is based on a prepared interview outline, starting from the problem and in-depth layer by layer. In the later period, based on the first interview, we will conduct a more in-depth analysis of the specific problems of different research objects. During the interview, the researcher found a breakthrough based on the interviewee's answers to the questions and collected information along the way. All interviews were recorded based on signing an informed consent form with the interviewees and kept strictly confidential. When the researcher conducts the interview, she tries to make a detailed record of the interview, especially focusing on the changes in the interviewee's expression, speech, and behavior in response to different questions.

Participants of the secondary vocational school dropout female students in the study were asked to answer the following open-ended questions:

- a. Do you remember why you dropped out of school?
- b. What is your experience of studying in a secondary vocational school?
- c. What plans do you have for your future life?
- d. In what way do you think the dropout rate of secondary vocational female students can be reduced?

Data Analysis

Analysis (Atlas-ti) - For 3 Secondary Vocational School Dropout Female Students. I conducted in-depth interviews with three female students who dropped out of secondary vocational schools and sorted out the interview data.

In this study, NVivo 11.0 software was used to analyze many qualitative materials in detail. First, I organize the interview data using WPS files and import them into the NVivo 11.0 software in a unified .docx format. Then, each piece of data was coded in the NVivo 11.0 software, and then all the nodes were adjusted as a whole, and the final summary was made.

Results and Discussion

Research Question Responses

This study was guided by two research questions addressing participants' dropout experiences.

RQ1

With RQ1, I Sought to Understand the Learning Experience, and Reasons for the Dropout of Secondary Vocational Female Students

Regarding the learning experience, all three participants said that they lacked a good learning atmosphere at school. The learning environment has a huge impact on secondary school girls. A good learning environment and atmosphere will have a positive impact on students' learning. On the contrary, if the learning atmosphere is bad, it will affect students who originally want to learn. From the three research cases in this paper, it is easy to find that secondary vocational schools and classrooms often do not have a good learning environment. Generally speaking, students entering secondary vocational schools have weak foundation and do not like to learn in junior high school. These phenomena did not change after entering secondary vocational schools. Students with weak foundations still do not understand in class, so they strongly resist learning in class. Students who do not like to learn still do not like to learn. In this case, schools and teachers need to control the classroom and learning atmosphere. However, these students told me in their interviews that teachers only talk about themselves in class, do not manage the classroom order, and let students do their own thing. From their responses the researcher learned that teachers in secondary schools are not as responsible and do not have enough relationships with students as teachers in middle and high schools. Student 1 was not going to the middle school after one year, she felt that she learned very little knowledge and skills in the middle school. After a year of study, the school arranged a summer internship inside some factories in Guangdong. It is because of this internship that student 1 had the opportunity to explore the outside world and feel that it is better not to go back to school since she will end up working if she continues to study. At the beginning of the second year, Student 1 did not return to school and only one teacher asked why he did not come to school. The teacher did not persuade her strongly enough, and he did not want to go to school at that time, so she dropped out of school. Student 3 also felt that the school was not a good learning environment and that students played by themselves. In this kind of environment, the style of "not studying" will spread and students will think that being in school is a waste of time and they might as well go out to work. Or go home, leading many secondary school girls to choose to lose their interest and motivation to study and choose to drop out of school.

There are several reasons for dropping out.

Firstly, secondary school girls are easily disturbed by the external environment. Girls in secondary vocational schools are in the period of major physical and psychological changes. At this stage, students are in the rebellious period and need the relationship of parents and teachers. Student 1 has five siblings in her family, and she feels that she rarely feels the love of her parents. Her father always left early and returned late to sell pork in the village. Her mother was also often busy with the crops in the sky. From her description, she believed that their family was relatively poor, so after she found out that she could earn money by going to work, she would want to go out to work instead of continuing her studies. Also, the learning atmosphere at school was not very good and she felt that she was wasting her parents' money. Very importantly, some of her classmates around her also chose to drop out of school to work part-time. Therefore, she chose to drop out of school due to the lack of family care and the influence of her classmates around her.

Second, female students in secondary vocational schools have poor resistance to frustration. Girls in secondary vocational schools are competitive at this age, but the difference between reality and the ideal can cause students to be psychologically unable to withstand this sense of disparity. It is easy to be negative when things happen. Student 3 in this paper feels humiliated after being criticized by her teacher because of her bad grades at school. There are also older sisters at home who are doing very well in school, and this puts a lot of pressure on her. Parents want their children to be better. She would feel very defeated by the high demands of the school and her parents, and subsequently did not have the courage to continue her studies. Therefore, she chose to run away from school so that there would be no pressure to do well in school. As a result, she eventually chose to drop out of school.

In addition, indulging in games and other entertainment activities is also a cause of dropout. With the development of the times, more and more entertainment activities have penetrated the study and life of secondary vocational school dropout girls. The proliferation of online games is an unstoppable temptation for vocational girls who are immature in their minds. In this environment, secondary vocational girls who do not like to learn are obsessed with the virtual world under the temptation of games and even addicted to games. They are immersed in the happiness that the virtual world brings to them, regardless of people and things in real life. When someone stops them, they often cannot accept or even resist. In this article, student 2's brother is very good at games. Under the influence of his brother, Student 2 often plays games in the school dormitory. She would even choose not to go to class in order to spend more time playing. Student 2 has had a passion for games since graduating from junior high school. After class, her starring activities are all games. Under such circumstances, student 2 increasingly feels that studying at school is not just a waste of time and money. After all her companions choose to drop out of school, she is also inspired to finally find the pleasure of being a game anchor and choose to drop out. In this case, whether it is the parents of the students, the school, or even all sectors of society, they should take a certain responsibility to protect the minors from the temptation of games, which lead to a lack of learning. Not only that, but secondary vocational girls should also cultivate their willpower. They should not be overwhelmed by the momentary greed for pleasure to make some choices that will make them regretful.

RQ2

I sought to understand the ways that can reduce the dropout rate of secondary vocational female students. From the personal perspective of female secondary vocational students, there are three ways to reduce the dropout rate.

1. Cultivate the correct learning motivation and clear career planning

Learning motivation is "the internal drive that stimulates and maintains an individual's learning activities and makes the activity towards a certain goal. It can be divided into endogenous and exogenous. Inner motivation is the individual's participation in activities to seek challenges, fun, and satisfying curiosity." The tendency, external motivation is an individual's tendency to participate in activities for factors other than the activity itself (rewards, recognition, and evaluation by others, completion of superiors' instructions, competition with others, etc.)(Chi & Xin, n.d.)." The girls who have just entered the secondary vocational school are often not voluntarily entering the secondary vocational school to study, and even students who are seriously tired of studying. In this case, schools and parents need to work together to cultivate the correct learning motivation for secondary vocational girls. In short, no matter at any time, girls in secondary vocational schools must have a clear career plan to cultivate their correct learning motivation and avoid blindly choosing to drop out.

2. Improve the learning interest of girls in secondary vocational schools

Learning interest refers to an exploration of the unknown. It is a positive emotional tendency, which plays a vital role in the process of student learning. Learning interest can significantly improve students' intellectual activities, stimulate students' curiosity, increase students' enthusiasm for learning and provide them with continuous learning motivation(Piao & Pu, 2013). Many girls have a weak learning foundation before entering secondary vocational schools and have lost interest in learning or even wearied it. After entering secondary vocational school, this situation still exists. It can be seen from the interview that the most common problem is that they can't understand the content of the class. From the beginning, they want to study hard and gradually become tired of studying again. Although it is a vocational school, most secondary vocational schools still focus on cultural courses. Teachers only refer to books for teaching. They are limited to a solidified teaching model. This results in a lack of interest in learning for secondary vocational girls and increases their chances of dropping out.

3. Regularly conduct mental health education for girls in secondary vocational schools

Secondary vocational girls of this age in secondary school are at a stage of important changes in their psychological and thinking development. At this stage, they gradually mature from adulthood, and this change of roles makes their psychology and emotions sensitive and unstable(Bank, 2001). To help secondary vocational girls pass this sensitive stage smoothly, it is necessary to give them regular mental health education. During the interview, we also learned that many secondary vocational schools have weak mental health knowledge, cannot handle the relationship with students well, and tend to ignore students' emotions. Secondary vocational girls are sensitive and fragile. Secondary vocational girls in rural areas often bear more pressure. Therefore, to effectively reduce and prevent such students from dropping out, they must guide the healthy growth of secondary vocational girls and help them establish correct Views of life and values (Roscher, 2014).

Conclusions

From the systematic analysis of the parties who dropped out, it can be seen that the reasons for female secondary vocational school students dropping out include (a) secondary

vocational girls are susceptible to interference from the external environment, (b) secondary vocational female students have poor resistance to frustration, and (c) indulge in games—entertainment activities. To prevent girls from secondary vocational schools from dropping out due to personal reasons, the following can be done: (a) Cultivate correct learning motivation and clarify career planning; (b) increase the interest of girls in secondary vocational schools; (c) regularly study secondary vocational students Girls receive mental health education.

In response to educational issues, it is necessary to vigorously develop secondary vocational education to improve the level of education and knowledge, and skills of secondary vocational employees in order to meet the needs of social development. I believe that if the education authorities, Society, families, and schools all over the country take action to conduct in-depth discussions and reflections on the dropout of secondary vocational school girls in a certain area, it will effectively promote the dropout of secondary vocational school girls in China.

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