

Analysis of the Salary Gap and Rationality between Chinese and Foreign Teachers in Private High Schools in Hangzhou

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Abstract:

In recent years, international cooperative education has flourished in China. Private schools began to introduce foreign teachers, the huge salary gap between domestic and foreign teachers began to appear. But the rationality of the high salary of foreign teachers remains to be verified. This article takes an international school in Hangzhou as an example. Through interviews and in-depth communication with this school's students, domestic and foreign teachers, the salaries and contributions of domestic and foreign teachers within the school were analyzed. Based on the theory of human capital and the theory of distribution according to work, the rationality of the wage gap is analyzed. Finally, this paper concludes that there is an imbalance between the distribution of education degrees and wages in this school, and the distribution of wages does not conform to the theory of human capital and distribution according to work. Given the problems obtained from the research, this paper also puts forward solutions such as strengthening the quality screening system of foreign teachers, improving the salary standards, and changing the ideas of parents.

Keywords: Private high schools; foreign teachers; teacher salaries; pay gap; teaching quality

1. Introduction

With the development of international education, many private schools in China have begun to attract foreign teachers with high salaries. Although this is beneficial for improving the quality of education, some problems have also begun to emerge. For example, domestic and foreign teachers have similar teaching abilities, but within the same school, there

is a huge salary gap between them. Therefore, the wage gap between Chinese and foreign teachers and its rationality is a question worth exploring. Previous studies have shown that there are many problems in the management of foreign teachers in private schools in China and many solutions have been proposed. However, there is little literature on the reasonableness of foreign teacher salaries. This study takes Hangzhou as an example to analyze the salary

and contribution situation of domestic and foreign teachers in private schools. Through in-depth interviews with teachers in the school, this paper summarizes the general salary situation within the school and their personal views on the salary gap. Finally, identify the possible reasons for the wage gap and whether it is reasonable, and consider some solutions.

2. Literature Review

In the 2010s, China's economy flourished and international exchanges increased. Domestic universities had begun to introduce foreign teachers to meet social demands. However, there were many issues in the utilization and employment of foreign teacher resources. In terms of resource utilization, literature had pointed out that at that time, foreign teachers had problems such as low education and lack of experience. But some solutions had also been proposed, such as strict job requirements, training, scientific management, etc. [1]. Secondly, in terms of employment, there also had been detailed discussions in the literature. A survey questionnaire raised issues such as the recruitment system focusing only on quantity rather than quality, insufficient understanding of the purpose and role of recruitment, and the lack of a sound assessment mechanism. Then corresponding solutions were proposed, such as determining employment standards to ensure employment quality. And in terms of individual disciplines [2]. There was also literature comparing foreign teachers and Chinese teachers in the subject of ESL (English as the second language) through questionnaires [3]. In addition, there was much literature that describes foreign teaching management, such as Hu Siqi's analysis of the current situation and recruitment ideas of foreign teaching work in 2019, and Wang Ting's analysis of the foreign teacher recruitment experience of educational institution EF in 2019 [4,5]. In summary, this literature extensively discussed the issues of foreign teacher management at that time. But it started early and was targeted at private universities, not private basic education schools. So the situation may differ from the private high schools studied in this article. In addition, this literature did not mention any financial issues related to foreign teacher salaries, but the employment aspect is relevant to this article and can provide inspiration.

In the 2020s, research about foreign teachers in private basic education schools began to emerge, also in the area of foreign teacher management. Some literature used specific cities as examples to conduct detailed studies on the issues regarding foreign teachers in those cities, concluding that

the problems were quite severe at the time, leading to the phenomenon of "three-non teachers" (teachers who are non-certified, non-professional, and non-registered). The importance of managing foreign teachers had also been emphasized, and an ideal situation had been envisioned [6]. In addition, some literature analyzed the management of foreign education based on Sino-foreign cooperation projects and first pointed out the advantages of Sino-foreign cooperation. Then, current management issues were raised, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and cultural adaptation. These papers also analyzed the reasons for these situations and proposed the idea of using cross-cultural communication to improve the level of foreign teachers [7]. In addition, there was literature analyzing the management of foreign teachers in a single private school, which first introduced the basic situation of the school. Then some issues with the school's hiring of foreign teachers were pointed out, such as focusing only on quantity rather than quality, and insufficient training for foreign teachers. Finally, a solution was proposed to improve the management mode and reflect humanistic care [8]. In addition, there was also foreign literature that conducted in-depth interviews with three foreign teachers in China to study their role as a growing middle class in the world [9]. In summary, in the 2020s, there began to be research on foreign teachers in basic schools. These studies focused on individual cities, projects, and schools, and proposed corresponding problems and solutions. The 2020s were relatively recent and had significant reference value for this article. However, there was still no corresponding theoretical support for the financial issues related to salaries in these studies.

Although there were many references on the management of foreign teachers, there were few descriptions of salary. There was a literature that mentioned that the salary of domestic and foreign teachers in an experimental school had increased to 600000 RMB per year. The attractive salary attracted a large number of foreign teachers, who also enjoyed housing and food subsidies, as well as insurance benefits. However, behind the high salaries, there were often "black foreign teachers". Some foreign teachers worked without certification, which greatly affected the quality of teaching, yet they still received extremely high salaries. Therefore, from the limited literature, it can be roughly known that foreign teachers had relatively high salaries compared to domestic teachers, but there were problems with teaching quality and management. This is closely related to the content of this study and is worth learning from.

3. Method and Result

3.1 Research Methods

This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the salary distribution between domestic and foreign teachers at a private high school in Hangzhou, as well as the contribution of students and the reasonableness of the salary gap. So this article selects 6 teachers from an international high school in Hangzhou, including 3 Chinese teachers and 3 foreign teachers. They have different job functions in the school, which can provide information for this study from different dimensions such as new hires and school leadership. This study conducted approximately 40 minutes of in-depth communication with these teachers in the form of interviews, ultimately gaining an understanding of the salary situation, personal opinions on salary gaps, and teacher contributions. Based on the theories of human capital and distribution according to work, this study analyzes the reasonableness of foreign teachers receiving high salaries by comparing the salary situation with teachers' contributions, then provides recommendations.

3.2 Research Results

In terms of salary, the salary of foreign teachers is about twice that of domestic teachers, plus medical insurance and benefits. The working hours are the same. In terms of threshold, both Chinese and foreign teachers need to be graduate students with about 2 years of work experience. However, only a few foreign teachers graduated from prestigious universities with high qualifications. Many foreign teachers graduated from unknown universities with limited qualifications, but they can still work as teachers here and earn high salaries. On the contrary, domestic teachers, even those who have graduated from top universities in the world can only receive lower salaries than foreign teachers when they return. Therefore, Chinese teachers with generally higher education levels have not received relatively high salaries. In terms of contributions to students, this study categorizes them into two types: classroom teaching and post-class communication. In classroom teaching, there is almost no difference in professional abilities, but there are certain differences in teaching methods. An interviewee mentioned that "foreign teachers usually have lower constraints in class, more interaction, opportunities to fill gaps, and complete tasks in groups. Chinese teachers, on the other hand, focus more on preaching and emphasize grades, completing exercises, and moving forward, which is direct and clear teaching." In terms of post-class communication, domestic teachers usually have better relationships with students and have more communication with children. Some interviewees

mentioned that "few students are willing to confide in foreign teachers, and only 1-2 foreign teachers in schools are chosen by students for small talk after class. However, in contrast, domestic teachers have better relationships with students, and students are more willing to communicate. This is not just a language issue. Some foreign teachers are just unwilling to communicate with students. Students are forced to choose someone else, not because they can't speak English. In summary, there is no difference between Chinese and foreign teachers in classroom teaching. However, for post-class communication, Chinese teachers spend more time talking to students after class and should receive higher salaries than foreign teachers. However, they only receive lower salaries than foreign teachers.

4. Reasons and Implications

4.1 Problem Analysis

Firstly, in terms of relationship between qualifications and salary. As mentioned earlier, only a few foreign teachers from this school graduated from prestigious universities with high qualifications. Domestic teachers, on the other hand, have relatively higher education levels, but even those who have graduated from top universities in the world can only receive lower salaries than foreign teachers when they return. Therefore, Chinese teachers with generally higher education levels have not received relatively high salaries. Based on the theory of human capital, which suggests that human capital can indirectly reflect teachers' income, teachers' income increases with their level of education. So this does not conform to the theory of human capital [10].

Secondly, in terms of student contributions, this study is based on the theory of distribution according to work, with the allocation scale determined by the quantity and quality of labor. The more or higher the quality of labor, the more resources should be allocated [11]. According to the analysis of the previous results, there is no difference between Chinese and foreign teachers in classroom teaching. However, for post-class communication, Chinese teachers spend more time talking to students after class and should receive a higher salary than foreign teachers. But they only receive a lower salary than foreign teachers, which does not conform to the theory of distribution according to work.

In terms of teacher satisfaction, salary distribution does not conform to the theories of human capital and distribution according to work. Some foreign teachers have low educational backgrounds and abilities and do not contribute much to their work. But with the identity of a foreign teacher, one can receive good treatment, a high salary, and

benefits. However, some Chinese teachers with high education, hard work, and great contributions to students can only receive low salaries and cannot enjoy some benefits due to their status as domestic teachers. This may cause dissatisfaction among some teachers, leading to issues such as passive work or job hopping. This not only makes the use of school funds inefficient but also leads to the loss of talent.

In terms of parents and students, some foreign teachers have poor teaching abilities and low qualifications, so their teaching is lacking. Additionally, there is the loss of some high-quality teachers. Students may not receive the ideal quality education in school, and their grades or other aspects may not receive any other improvements. This is not only a waste of high tuition fees paid by parents, but also greatly undermines the quality of teaching and affects a student's future.

Finally, due to the lower threshold for foreign teachers and salaries exceeding the average level of teachers. Becoming a foreign teacher in China will likely become a relaxed, less demanding, and profitable job. This leads to more low-qualified foreign teachers flocking to the area, creating a vicious cycle. This goes against the original intention of hiring foreign teachers (to improve teaching quality).

4.2 Cause Analysis

Firstly, it is due to the cost of migration for foreign teachers who come from far away from their hometowns. Some interviewees mentioned that "foreign teachers come to a different country. They must adapt to the new place, and not understand the culture, language, or food, and there are many things they need to accept. This is a difficulty for them, and they need some good reasons such as high salaries to choose to face these difficulties willingly." Secondly, it is because most foreign teachers come from the UK or North America, where the salary level is very high. If high salaries are not given, foreign teachers will not be willing to leave their own country.

In addition, the school also considers multiple aspects when hiring teachers. Firstly, in terms of market behavior, parents as consumers prefer foreign teachers. The interviewee mentioned in the interview: "Parents hope to see a white teacher with blue eyes and blonde hair who speaks with a certain accent. Parents will be happy because their children are educated by these people. It can be said that foreign teachers are the face of an international school." Secondly, foreign teachers bring cultural diversity and a global perspective. Foreign teachers have different cultural backgrounds and educational perspectives, and there are also differences in the way they think about their courses.

An interviewee mentioned, "The upbringing environment of foreign teachers is different from that in China, so it brings students some understanding of this foreign upbringing environment, which can make students feel the way of thinking abroad." Finally, the language advantage of foreign teachers is that hiring native English-speaking foreign teachers can ensure that students learn in a pure English environment, which is conducive to their language development and application. Domestic teachers cannot match in this regard.

4.3 Inspiration

Firstly, it is necessary to strengthen the quality screening system for foreign teachers, hire foreign teachers with high education and rich experience, be cautious in hiring foreign teachers with poor qualifications and teaching quality, and efficiently utilize the funds used for hiring foreign teachers. To improve the qualifications and teaching level of teachers, and enhance the quality of teaching. Next is the improvement of salary payment standards. For foreign teachers with poor qualifications and small contributions, their salary levels should be lowered. For some qualified and highly contributing Chinese teachers, their salary levels should also be raised. To prevent talent loss and negative work.

Finally, parents' thoughts need to change to alter the current market situation. Foreign teachers do not represent high-level teaching. Treating Chinese and foreign teachers equally mainly depends on their qualifications and educational level, rather than their nationality.

5. Conclusion

This study focuses on a private high school in Hangzhou and conducts interviews to investigate the wage gap between Chinese and foreign teachers and conduct a rational analysis. In terms of salary, due to the migration cost of foreign teachers, their salaries are roughly twice that of domestic teachers, and they need high salaries to work in foreign countries. In terms of contribution, there is no gap between Chinese and foreign teachers in classroom teaching. For post-class communication, the Chinese teacher spends more time talking to students after class. According to the theory of distribution according to work, Chinese teachers should receive more wages, but they only receive wages lower than foreign teachers, which does not conform to the theory of distribution according to work. In terms of qualification, Chinese teachers generally have higher education levels, with only a few foreign teachers coming from prestigious universities. Foreign teachers from very ordinary universities still receive high salaries. However, many domestic teachers graduated from top

universities in the world but earned low salaries, which does not conform to the theory of human capital. Finally, the school is willing to hire with high salaries due to the market demand for foreign teachers, parents' preferences, and the global perspective brought by foreign teachers. As a native English speaker, they have language advantages that domestic teachers cannot match.

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